Content and Sources of Prospective Teachers' Personal Practical Theories (PPTS) at University of Punjab

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Abstract

Teachers' personal theories depends upon Teachers perceptions, their learned experiences and knowledge have an implicit or explicit impact on their learning. Researches on "personal practical theories (PPTs)" evidenced that these perceptions can have impact on their practices in classrooms. At present time students have more opportunities of learning than before. This research was mix method in nature and interviews and questionnaire were used for data collections to study the opinions and perceptions of teachers about themselves. The research was carried out to investigate the perceptions of prospective teachers of elementary level. Study found diverse opinions from the participants because they have their various personal practical theories and different sources played the role for development of these theories. The aim of this study was to aid teacher educators for improved understanding of the prospective teachers' beliefs that these prospective teachers bring to their teacher education program. These beliefs may influence the knowledge and practice of prospective teachers.

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Introduction

This research was conducted to investigate personal practical theories (PPTs) of prospective teachers of elementary education and the sources from which these beliefs are derived contributed in the formation of their theories; these theories will influence their classroom practices and their behavior as teachers. It is significant for teacher education to find out these personal practical theories (PPTs) and the contributory sources and try to address these beliefs during program. Current researches regarding teachers' beliefs are focusing on the areas like craft knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge of teachers, practical knowledge and personal practical knowledge, and (Harry, Sturges, & Klinger, 2005). All these results are combined with teachers' thinking to form into personal theorization and ultimately guides their practices. Researchers have minimally understood this phenomenon and have developed keen interest in this field of research. Clerk and Peterson (1986) presented three categories of teachers' thinking: (a) teachers' thoughts in description of content, (b) teachers' actions depend upon their judgements, and (c) the domains of teachers' knowledge. Schwab, (1983) stated that number of studies were conducted to explore teachers' theories and beliefs as well as contextual nature and practical tasks of teachers' work. Clandinin, (1986) stated that practical context of teachers should be taken into consideration. Other researchers like Fenstermacher, (1215), studied teachers' practical knowledge and practical theories. The teachers' beliefs are related to their actions therefore it is important to investigate teachers' personal theories and beliefs (Clandinin, 2012).

All of this type of knowledge is coupled with teacher's thinking and develop into personal theorization and ultimately guides practices. Researchers have minimally understood this phenomenon and have developed keen interest in this field of research. Clerk and Peterson (1986) presented three categories of teachers' thinking: (a) teachers' thoughts in description of content, (b) teachers' actions depend upon their judgements, and (c) the domains of teachers' knowledge. Schwab, (1983) stated that number of studies were conducted to explore teachers' theories and beliefs as well as contextual nature and practical tasks of teachers' work. Clandinin, (1986) stated that practical context of teachers should be taken into consideration. Other researchers like Fenstermacher, (1986), studied teachers' practical knowledge and practical theories. The teachers' beliefs are related to their actions therefore it is important to investigate teachers' personal theories and beliefs (Clandinin, 1986).

Teachers' personal theories are affecting "self-efficacy" and professional grooming. Furthermore, the willingness for change is also developing and teachers are taking educational change as challenge and coming up with innovative ideas to bring innovation in their ways of teaching. Elbaz (1981) "defined five sources of teachers'

practical knowledge: situation, personal, social, experiential, and theoretical". Practical principles, rules of practice, and images construct practical knowledge that guides actions. Other parallel terms are used such as "personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1986), practical arguments (Fenstermacher, 1986), practical theory (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986), practical philosophy (Goodman, 1988) are used, interactions between knowledge, practices and beliefs as theory of action (Marland & Osborne, 1990), and personal practical theories or PPTs (Cornett, Yeotis, & Terwilliger, 2000)".

Review of Literature

Cornett et al. (2000) states that "individual teacher's PPTs was defined as empirically warranted claims-to-know about their own teaching practice." In this study derived from the premise that both teachers' practical knowledge (derived from experiences) and personal theories (their beliefs) ultimately lead to their actions in the classroom.

Although researches are not evaluating this claim but above mentioned research is making link between "teachers' beliefs and actions". Though we do not dig into teachers' professional identity development and more recent scholarship. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop, (2004), trust that identity development is partly related to beliefs. Identity, influenced by social, cultural, political, and historical contexts, agentic, positional, and socially constructed, appears to be ever changing which is also true of some beliefs (Harry, Sturges, & Klinger, 2005). Despite the fact that not the motivation behind this investigation, reflection on and explanation of one's convictions as PPTs, in addition to recognizable proof of the wellsprings of educators' communicated convictions, might be helpful for those intrigued by future investigations of instructor character and the procedure of personality advancement.

To date, not very many investigations of teacher educators' convictions have centered around the wellsprings of teachers' convictions." Most investigations about teachers' PPTs, which we contend are likewise an intermediary for instructors' convictions, have been led by following just a couple of instructors into the classroom (Chant, 2004)." These investigations can be applied on a bigger scale due to individualized and setting based nature of educator PPTs.

This study highlights and provided collaborations among information, practices and convictions that are valuable for assisting teacher educators to better comprehend their ability and have impact prospective teachers' considerations and activities at the pre-service teacher training level. Earlier research about educator convictions presumed that beliefs can't be altered by the weak intervention of a couple of years in teacher training program (Richardson, 2003). It was found that amid instructions can washes out

the previous beliefs of prospective teachers which they have prior to entering the pre-service training (Levin & He Ye 2008). We likewise realize that teachers' convictions impact their judgments and activities in the classroom, which thus have impact students' learning and performance. There is not any experimental research evidenced that has developed regarding the wellsprings of teachers' convictions, that might be an aspect irrespective of whether teacher educators' competitors' convictions can amid on teachers training. A few individual contextual analyses have demonstrated that educators utilize their PPTs as their own controlling speculations in the pre-dynamic (arranging), intelligent (instructing), and post dynamic (intelligent) phases of their instructing. These analysts asked educators what led their reasoning about instructional method or translated their convictions from what instructors expressed, stated they proposed to do, or what they really did amid perceptions of their instructing (Chant et al., 2004; Richardson2003). Different study provides evidences that teachers use their Personal Practical Theories to drive their academic choices about instructing and learning (Stipek, Givvin, Salmon, & MacGyvers, 2001; Gess-Newsome, Southerland, Johnston, & Woodbury, 2003). Richardson, 2003 studied that how teachers' knowledge and beliefs, outside the classroom, are grounded in their (personal) experiences and their (practical) experiences inside the classroom. In this earlier research, the link between teachers' PPTs and their classroom practice is clear. Nevertheless, large scale studies about PPTs, indicating the sources of teachers' PPTs or beliefs, and research with pre-service teachers have been scarce". Prospective teachers have their metaphors as beliefs which affect their practices (Saban, Kocbeker, & Saban, 2007)

Questions and Significance of the Study

This study has focused on following questions:

How do prospective teachers of elementary education perceive their personal practical theories? What is the content of personal practical theories of elementary education prospective teachers?

Which sources of elementary education prospective teachers are related to personal practical theories?

This study contributes in developing understanding of prospective teachers of elementary education and assists teacher education program to address prospective teachers' personal practical theories.

Methodology

Mixed method research design was applied for this exploratory research. There was a need to investigate the major beliefs of prospective teachers therefore the interviews were conducted and on the basis of interviews a survey questionnaire was developed. Interview was taken to find the type and nature of personal theories. From these theories a questionnaire was developed to assemble information from the prospective teachers of B.Ed (Hons) Elementary Education.

Prospective teachers of B.Ed. Honors Elementary studying at University of the Punjab are the population of study. The prospective teachers of 4th, 6th and 8th semesters who have attended some teaching practice were taken as participants of study. Three students were interviewed regarding their practical personal theories. In interviews it was asked that how they develop their beliefs regarding various teaching and learning areas and what are the sources of these beliefs. Based on these interviews a questionnaire was developed. The data was collected from 100 prospective teachers 80 females and 20 males on self-reported questionnaire.

 Following responses were taken from participants:

1. Create inquiry skills in students

2. Make variety of formal and informal assessments

3. Students learn from social interactions.

4. Respecting students motivate students for learning.

5. Planning and organization is necessary for increased learning.

Participants' had given their perceptions regarding "PPTs, including self-identification of the sources of each PPT", this was the data for this study.

Data Analysis Procedures

Interviews from three respondents were taken and content analysis on the received data was conducted to specify the categories so that the content of the "PPTs" can be described. The thematic contents of text are investigated by Content analysis and forms the basis of inference (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Firstly, researcher carried out manual coding of each. Then questionnaire was developed and data was collected from 100 teachers. The data was analysed by using descriptive statistical techniques through SPSS computer software. Each PPT was analysed for mean and percentage. In the same way sources of PPT were analysed for percentage.

Findings

PPT Content Categories

PPTS was organized into ten categories which are planning, organizations, professional development, responsibilities, roles, qualities of good teacher, instructional strategies evaluation and assessment, classroom management, respect, relationship and nature of student learning. Each of these categories further has two statements identified from the interviews.

Each PPT was analysed to find the number of teachers have the particular PPT. The following table shows the results of teachers' practical personal theories.

Table 1

Prospective Teachers "Personal Practical Theories" (PPTs)

PPT Categories	Statements	No. of PPTs	%age of PPTs
Organizations and planning	Careful planning and preparation and is vital".	43	43
	Organization and planning is essential for maximum learning.	57	57
Professional Development	Believe teacher as a student forever.	51	51
	Teachers need organized training for teachers	49	49
Roles	Teachers role is a facilitator of learning	62	62
	Teachers role is transmitter of culture	38	38
Responsibilities	Teacher has to provide opportunities for learning	43	43
	Teacher has responsibility of students' learning	57	57
Qualities of good teacher	Good teachers is a passionate to towards students	61	61
	Good teacher is the one whose students show good results	39	39
Instructional Strategies	Involve learner actively through collaborative learning activities.	45	45
	Deliver lesson in a very structured way to help students to learn.	55	55
Evaluation and Assessment	Carefully planned assessment to assess students in objective way.	58	58
	Make variety of formal and informal assessments	42	42
Classroom management	Implement fair and consistent management	56	56
	For effective interaction displace is mandatory	44	44
Respect	Every child deserve respect	48	48
	Respect makes learning enjoyable	52	52
Relationship	Expectations help students achievements	61	61
	Positive expectation provide direction	39	39
Nature of Student learning	Students learn from social interactions.	55	55
	Development occur in predictable stages	45	45

Table 1 shows the following results:

(a) Organization and planning
- 43% prospective teachers believe that "preparation and careful planning is vital".
- 57% prospective teachers believe that "Planning and organization" is needed for the better learning

(b) Professional Development
- 51% prospective teachers believe that teacher as a student forever.
- 49% prospective teachers believe that Teachers need organized training for teachers

(c) Roles
- 62% student teachers believe that teachers role is a facilitator of learning
- 38% student teachers believe that teachers role is a transmitter of culture

(d) Responsibilities
- 43% prospective teachers believe that teacher has to provide opportunities for learning
- 57% prospective teachers believe that teacher has responsibility of students' learning

(e) Qualities of good teacher
- 61% prospective teachers believe that good teachers are passionate to towards students
- 39% prospective teachers believe that good teachers are those whose students show good result

(f) Instructional Strategies
- 45% prospective teachers believe to involve learner actively through collaborative learning activities
- 55% prospective teachers believe to deliver lesson in a very structured way to help students to learn.

(g) Evaluation and Assessment
- 58% prospective teachers believe in carefully planned assessment to assess students in objective way.
- 42% prospective teachers believe to make variety of formal and informal assessments

(h) Classroom management
- 56% prospective teachers believe to implement fair and consistent management
- 44% prospective teachers believe that for effective interaction displace is mandatory

(i) Respect
- 48% prospective teachers believe that every child deserves respect
- 52% prospective teachers believe that respect makes learning enjoyable

(j) Relationship
- 61% prospective teachers believe that expectations help students' achievements
- 39% prospective teachers believe that positive expectation provide direction

(k) Nature of Students' learning
- 55% prospective teachers believe that students learn from social interactions
- 45% prospective teachers believe that development occur in predictable stages

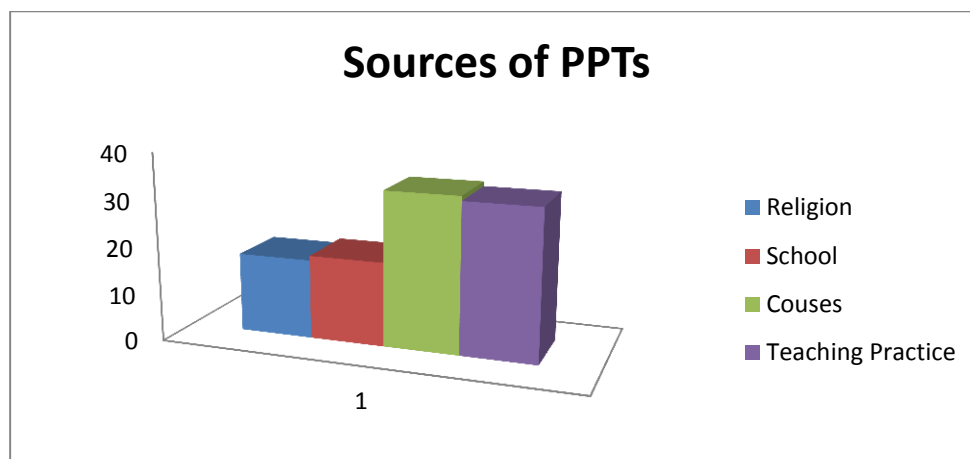**Sources of Practical Personal Theories (PPTs)**

Fig1. Sources of Teachers PPTs

Based on participants' self-reporting of the sources for each of their PPTs, these were merged into four major categories: (a) religion (b) Their own school experiences of 12 years and family background (b) Teaching experiences during their field experiences and observations (c) coursework in their teacher education program, (d) teaching practice. The above graph shows that:

(a) 17% PPTs are from Religion
(b) 18% are from School and Family
(c) 33% are from Coursework of B.Ed. Education
(d) 32% are from Practice Teaching.

Nonetheless, after we combined PPTs that came from courses, theories, readings, and workshops into one category in order to describe beliefs that resulted from their teacher education course-work, 33% of all their PPTs came from their teacher education coursework. Furthermore, findings that 32% of their PPTs came from observations and their personal teaching experiences during required field experiences by their teacher education program, showed that in this study, 65% of the PPTs had their foundation in either the explicit curriculum of their teacher education program or the learning experiences offered by being placed in schools and classrooms for pre-student teaching field experiences.

In the content category of beliefs regarding the teacher, most of these participants' beliefs about teachers come from their religion, own family background and school educational background (35%) and from their more recent observations and teaching experiences in their field placements (32%). Their teacher education program coursework seemed to have the most influence (33%) on their beliefs about instruction, whereas these participants' family background and school educational experiences had the least influence on evidence that reveals what the sources of teachers' beliefs are, connected by teachers themselves to their explicitly stated beliefs, which were elicited in this study in the form of their PPTs. As explanation of the sources of teacher candidates' beliefs, the content of those beliefs, and the percentages that each of the three main source categories contributes to the four main belief categories describing the content of these teacher candidates' PPTs".

Discussion and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that teacher education program in Department of Elementary Education is a major source (65%) of the B.Ed (Hon) prospective teacher's practical theories and these will affect their subsequent classroom practices and their professional attitude and Beijaard, Verloop, Vermunt, (2004) presented similar results from their study. These PPTs influence the vital parts teaching like; how to instruct a subject, the classroom setting, and their confidence about the parts and duties of teachers, arranging and association, the characteristics of a good teacher, and students' identity as students. In any case, we likewise realize that extra practice of teaching during teacher education program have impacts instructors' PPTs (Levin, Yi Hi, 2008; Gess-Newsome 2003), so the study shows that other sources impacts upon prospective teachers' PPTs are 17% PPTs are from Religion and18% from School and Family. Prospective teachers' are influenced from relationships in the families. They also have influence of their own teachers of schools that participate in formulation of beliefs and PPTs. Similar results were reported by Chant, Heafner, and Bennett, (2004) and Levin, Yi Hi, 2008; Gess-Newsome (2003).

This shows that teacher education training plays an important role along with family, school and religion to the convictions of imminent teachers and fill in as channels what they realize in their educator. Thus teacher education program contributes to prospective teachers' beliefs by strengthening what desirable beliefs they already have from their family, school and religion. Teacher education program also assists them to alter their established beliefs to fit into needs of their profession. This program also facilitates them to formulate new beliefs and PPTs which in future will affect their professional life

Teacher education program is major contributor in formation of PPTs as per results of the study, the PPTs of B.Ed Hons. prospective teachers need to be addressed through their teacher education program. For organization and planning more prospective teachers (57%) focused on organization rather than teachers' preparation (43%) for the class. This shows that prospective teachers will pay more attention to teacher centered activities than students centered activities. It means that prospective teachers will spend more time in organization of their work rather than preparation of activities for students; thus teacher education institution needs to look into this and prepare teachers who are organized but also focus on student centered activities. Similarly, for Professional Development of teachers; 49% still belief that there is need for organized training pre-service training for teachers rather than lifelong professional development of teachers, this can also be rectified through teacher education program. Similar results were evidenced in Cornett; Yeotis; and Terwilliger (2000) and Chant; Heafner; and Bennett (2004).

More prospective teachers (57%) believe that teachers have the responsibility for students' learning. In the same way 55% prospective teachers believe to deliver lesson in a very structured way to help students to learn instead of involving students in activities for leaning. These beliefs are required to be addressed though teacher education programs by involving prospective teachers in meaningful learning activities.

Only 42% prospective teachers believe to make variety of formal and informal assessments and majority belief in formal and planned assessments. The prospective teachers need to make theories that can help prospective teachers for overall development of students.

The study provided evidence that teacher education training can and do have an influence on prospective teachers' beliefs regarding important aspects of teaching classroom context, the curriculum, and their beliefs about responsibilities and role of teachers, organization and planning, the qualities of a good teacher and abilities of students to learn. However, we also know that additional experience like their own schooling, family, religion and practice teaching as it was stated by Chant et al., 2004; Clandinin, 1986; Cornett; Yeotis; and Terwilliger, 2000.

The teacher educators need to be more deliberate regarding their role in instructing the prospective teachers regarding the importance of responsibilities and roles of teachers and having more discussion about assessment. They need to plan to continue influencing personal theorizing process (Chant et al; 2004) of prospective teachers.

In this study only self-reported data was collected regarding sources and content of PPTs of prospective teachers. For better understanding whether our teacher education program influence our prospective teachers' beliefs and their subsequent actions in their classrooms, we need to follow these prospective teachers into the field, collect their PPTs at various points in time, and observe their actions in the classroom. Further study can be conducted with experienced teachers to see the content and sources of their PPTs and how these PPTs are affecting their practices in the classrooms.

Conclusion

There were many studies in the past indicating that teachers' beliefs can guide their practices in the classrooms and their professional behaviors. This study found out the contents and sources of these Personal Practical Theories (PPTs) of prospective teachers. Teacher education program is found to have major contributions in formation of PPTs. Therefore, teacher education program can be applied to influence prospective teachers PPTs and their subsequent practices in practical field and in professional life.

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