

Pre-service Teachers' Beliefs about Moral Aspects of Teaching in reference to Bhopal City

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This paper examines the beliefs of pre-service teachers of Bhopal about the moral work of teaching. A questionnaire containing open-ended questions was used in the data-collection process of this research. Forty students teachers from secondary teacher education institutions answered the questionnaire. Three categories of beliefs, namely psychological, educational and teaching beliefs of the pre-service teachers were analyzed in relation to the moral work of teaching. The paper suggest the need for teacher educators to pay attention to the moral work of teaching in the pre-service teacher education programme.

Background

Schools offers opportunities to children to form valuable relationships with teachers and serve as a context for development of the child. In the short span of an academic year, the teachers have an important role to play in the child's epistemic, emotional, intellectual and moral development. The teacher requires relational capabilities that offers the crucial wellspring for development of the children's social experiences, academic competencies and above all the formation of morality. Thus teaching is a purposive activity aimed at ensuring child's well-being, and bringing about shifts in not only the learners' knowledge and skills but also in the values and dispositions towards others, society, family, school and self. Teaching is also viewed as a moral endeavor that places responsibility on the teacher for the formation of moral sensibilities among the young once.

This partly entails examining the pre- "Service teachers' beliefs and attitudes regarding their moral work of teaching, and helping teachers understand that teaching is a moral practice.

Teaching as a Moral activity

Teaching is fundamentally a relational and moral activity aimed at the development of the young ones. Teaching has long been understood as a moral activity with a rich history in philosophy. Philosophers like Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Kant and others maintained that the core of teaching involves a moral relationship between the teacher and student.

Pre-service teacher beliefs about moral aspects of teaching

Pre-service teacher education is the first phase of contact between a teacher and their prospective profession. The student teachers as adult learners enter the programme with an array of previous social experiences and often unexamined assumptions, beliefs about education, children, teaching etc. Beliefs are personal beliefs, which are subjectively true for the person in question and have links to cognitive, affective and behavioral elements.

Studies such as the present one, which help gain entry into the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the moral work of teaching can help teacher educators gain knowledge about how pre-service teacher acquire and interpret these dimensions. It may help reveal how these notions about the moral work of teaching may be infused in the goals and curricula of the TE programmes. The key research questions of this study: 1. What are the beliefs of the pre-service teachers with respect to the moral aspects of teaching?; 2. What are the key processes or aspects of the TE programme through which understanding the moral work of teaching can be introduced or initiated?. This paper addresses only the first question. The moral aspects of teaching conceptualized for this study will build on the moral work of teaching (MWT) framework by Sanger and Osguthorpe (2011) that includes: psychological beliefs, moral beliefs, educational beliefs and 4 Contingent factors. The table below outlines the various categories of beliefs and their corresponding descriptors, which form the framework for the present study.

Categories of beliefs	Descriptors of the beliefs relevant to moral aspects of teaching (MAT)
Educational beliefs	Aims of education in society and the scope of schooling
Psychological beliefs	Moral development and functioning of young people, and how it can be influenced
Good/responsible teaching beliefs	Meaning and scope of morality/good / right Teaching as an intellectual and moral activity Qualities of teachers
Contingent factors	Personal aspects of an individual's experience, history, culture, political or institutional factors that help to explain the beliefs.

I use this framework for guiding my study as it a) brings together several theoretical and

conceptual orientations that may be explored on the moral work of teaching, b) It aligns with the broader set of ideas that is derived from the literature review of this study on the moral dimensions of teaching c) The framework allows to identify pre-service teachers beliefs, establish inter-linkages between beliefs and draw out curricular and pedagogical implications.

Methodology

The sample consisted of pre-service teachers at two colleges of secondary teacher education (B.Ed colleges). These colleges have a long history of reputation for running quality teacher education programmes. Sixty pre-service teachers constituted the sample size. There were totally 44 female participants and 16 male participants.

Analysis

Analysis of different beliefs of the pre service teachers as follows

Educational Beliefs

Educational beliefs refer to beliefs about the nature and aims of education as well as the scope of schooling. The pre-service teachers were asked, “what according to them are the aims of education and aims of schooling?” Only purpose of schooling is analyzed here. Student teachers expect schools to: (a) encourage all-round development; (b) Nurture academic capabilities; and (c) prepare students for adult life. Many candidates used this word- “all-round development” to mean that the experiences provided by the school should address the physical, social, emotional and moral development of children.

Psychological Beliefs

Psychological beliefs refer to beliefs about how we develop and function as moral beings. Majority of the teacher candidates shared that teachers should influence the moral development of children in order to ensure the well-being of the society and child’s individual growth. Forty percent of the respondents observed that children were young, less knowledgeable and less experienced and they may go in the wrong path and therefore teachers should care about their moral development.

Teaching beliefs

The pre-service teachers were asked, “what in your view is good teaching”? Two broad categories of notions emerged. One, good teaching as referring to helping students understand core subject matter, i.e., good teaching is about helping children understand, good planning, making concepts clear. And the second category included characterizing teaching as helping

students with content matter along with a moral or affective characterization.

Discussion

The pre-service teachers in this study have expressed their beliefs about the moral nature of teaching. While they were uncertain about some of the aspects, their ability to articulate their beliefs and their willingness to learn and engage is a testimony that they only need more opportunities to develop their moral knowledge. Teaching is viewed as moving beyond helping learn content knowledge to include nurturing moral qualities, developing sensitivity, encouraging child needs etc., While they have identified a range of moral qualities such as justice, care, open-mindedness etc., that can affect children profoundly.

It is the attunement of the teacher educators' moral sensibilities to perceiving the moral nature of classrooms and teaching that is most essential to elicit or provoke moral imagination of their students. We need to nurture in ourselves the moral dispositions that we seek to develop in our student teachers. It may be worthwhile for teacher educators to use their own contexts of practice to further their understanding of the moral work of teaching. It is only when teacher educators, policy makers and others associated with the curriculum and practice of pre-service teacher education programmes believe that being good, doing right and caring for others is as important as the three R's, can curricular and pedagogical imagination of the moral work of teaching flourish in teacher education programmes.

References

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