



PERSPECTIVES OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS ON THE CURRENT TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN KERALA

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Abstract

The dynamic landscape of education demands a reimagining of teacher education programmes to meet the requirements of 21st-century classrooms. This qualitative research investigates the perspectives of prospective teachers in Kerala regarding the effectiveness of existing teacher education programmes. The findings reveal significant gaps in technological proficiency, pedagogical adaptability, and alignment with modern educational challenges. This article underscores the need for transformative reforms to bridge these gaps and prepare educators for the evolving demands of their profession.

Key words- *Teacher education, Prospective teachers, Teacher training programme*



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Introduction

The rapid evolution of educational paradigms necessitates a critical reevaluation of teacher preparation programmes. In Kerala, a state recognized for its commitment to educational reform, there is an increasing urgency to align teacher education with contemporary demands. This alignment is crucial as the educational landscape shifts towards more integrated, technology-driven approaches that require teachers to be not only knowledgeable but also adaptable and innovative in their teaching practices. Understanding the perspectives of prospective teachers is essential in this context. These individuals are at the forefront of implementing educational changes and will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of education in Kerala. Their insights can illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of current teacher education practices, providing valuable information for stakeholders involved in curriculum development and policy-making.

The current teacher education programmes in Kerala have undergone several revisions aimed at enhancing the quality of training provided to future educators. The State Council of

Educational Research and Training (SCERT) has been instrumental in this process, revising curricula to meet the standards set by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). For instance, the introduction of a two-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme reflects a shift towards a more comprehensive training model that emphasizes both theoretical knowledge and practical skills (Department of Teacher Education and Extension, 2018). However, despite these advancements, many prospective teachers express concerns about their preparedness for the realities of modern classrooms.

One significant area of concern is technological proficiency. As classrooms increasingly incorporate digital tools and resources, prospective teachers have voiced apprehensions about their ability to effectively integrate technology into their teaching. Many feel that their training has not adequately prepared them for this aspect of teaching, leading to fears of being outpaced by students who are often more technologically savvy. This disconnect highlights a critical need for teacher education programs to evolve and incorporate training that focuses on essential digital competencies. Moreover, prospective teachers have identified a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application within their training. While many programs emphasize pedagogical theories, there is often insufficient focus on developing the practical skills necessary for effective classroom management and instruction. This gap can hinder the ability of new teachers to translate their knowledge into effective teaching practices, ultimately impacting student learning outcomes.

In light of these challenges, this study aims to explore the perspectives of prospective teachers regarding the current teacher education programme in Kerala. By focusing on their perceived strengths and weaknesses, as well as identifying areas for improvement, this research seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions about enhancing teacher preparation programmes. Ultimately, aligning these programmes with 21st-century educational standards will help ensure that future educators are well-equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students in an ever-changing educational landscape.

Need and Significance of the Study

The need for this study arises from the ongoing transformation within educational paradigms, particularly in Kerala, where teacher preparation programs are under scrutiny to meet the demands of 21st-century classrooms. As educational practices evolve, it is crucial to understand how well current teacher education programs equip prospective teachers with the necessary skills and competencies. This research aims to explore these perspectives, providing insights into the strengths and weaknesses of existing training practices.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the field of teacher education by identifying gaps in current training programs. It extends existing theories related to effective teaching practices and pedagogical approaches by integrating the voices of prospective teachers. By highlighting their experiences and perceptions, this research can refine or challenge established models in teacher education, leading to a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes effective teacher preparation in contemporary contexts.

The practical implications of this study are substantial. The findings will inform policymakers, educators, and training institutions about the specific needs and challenges faced by prospective teachers in Kerala. By addressing these concerns, educational stakeholders can implement targeted reforms that enhance teacher training programs, ensuring that they are aligned with technological advancements and pedagogical innovations. This alignment is essential for preparing educators who can effectively engage students in diverse learning environments, ultimately improving educational outcomes.

Research questions

1. What are the perceptions of prospective teachers regarding the adequacy of current teacher education programs in preparing them for 21st-century classrooms?
2. How do prospective teachers perceive the relationship between theoretical knowledge and practical application in their teacher education programmes?
3. What challenges do prospective teachers' faces when transitioning from teacher education programs to actual classroom teaching, and what support do they believe would help mitigate these challenges?

Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative research design was employed to gather in-depth insights from prospective teachers and teacher educators. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to express their views freely.

Participants

The study involved 30 prospective teachers enrolled in the two year B.Ed programmes across Kerala. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of experiences and backgrounds.

Data Analysis

Inductive thematic analysis was utilized to identify key themes and patterns within the qualitative data. Responses were coded and categorized to derive meaningful insights regarding the participants' perceptions of their training.

Findings

1. Concerns About Technological Preparedness

Participants expressed significant concerns regarding their preparedness to integrate technology into their teaching practices. One respondent noted:

“In today's generation where robotics, coding and digital mechanisms rule the classrooms we are going to be helpless in front of the students regarding our technological skills” (Participant Response).

This sentiment reflects a broader anxiety among prospective teachers about their ability to keep pace with rapidly advancing educational technologies.

2. Emphasis on Teaching Skills

Another critical theme that emerged was the importance of effective teaching skills. A participant stated:

“Teachers' performance in the class is highly dependent on teaching skills. Its practice and mastering will surely contribute in making the teaching more effective” (Participant Response).

Despite many prospective teachers possessing higher academic qualifications, they indicated a lack of practical skills necessary for effective classroom management and instruction.

3. Need for Updated Training Programmes

The analysis highlighted several areas where current teacher training programmes need reform:

Integration of Techno-Pedagogy: Future educators must be trained to effectively blend technology with traditional teaching methods.

Dual Training for Online and In-Person Instruction: Programs should prepare teachers for both online and face-to-face teaching environments.

Subject-Specific Challenges: Educators should understand challenges specific to different subjects to enhance their teaching effectiveness.

Incorporation of Digital Tools: The inclusion of digital resources in language teaching can significantly improve learning outcomes.

Flexible Assessment Practices: Assessments should be adaptable to various teaching formats, particularly in online learning contexts.

Active Teaching-Learning Strategies: Implementing interactive strategies is crucial for engaging students effectively.

Connecting Theory to Practice: Bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application is essential for developing competent educators.

Feedback from Experienced Practitioners: Involving seasoned educators in training can provide valuable insights.

Peer Collaboration: Facilitating collaboration among peers enhances professional development opportunities.

Global Perspectives: Integrating global educational perspectives can enrich teacher training programs.

The findings from this qualitative study underscore a critical need for reform in teacher education programs in Kerala. By addressing gaps in technological proficiency, pedagogical strategies, and practical skills, teacher training can evolve to produce educators who are not only knowledgeable but also adaptable and innovative. The voices of prospective teachers highlight an urgent call for educational stakeholders to implement necessary changes that will better prepare future teachers for the challenges of modern classrooms. This study investigates the perspectives of prospective teachers on the current teacher education program in Kerala, focusing on their perceived strengths and weaknesses, as well as the necessary updates to meet 21st-century educational standards. Through qualitative research methods, including open-ended questionnaires and interviews, key themes emerged that highlight both the challenges and opportunities within the existing training framework.

The findings indicate that prospective teachers feel inadequately prepared for the technological demands of modern classrooms. Many express concerns about their ability to integrate digital tools effectively into their teaching practices, emphasizing the need for enhanced training in technological competencies. Additionally, there is a recognized gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in teacher education programs. While many participants appreciate the theoretical foundations provided by their courses, they often feel unprepared to implement these theories in real-world classroom settings. Strengths identified within the current programs include a solid grounding in educational theory and opportunities for experiential learning. However, participants suggest that these strengths could be better leveraged by incorporating more practical teaching experiences and peer collaboration into the curriculum. Furthermore, prospective teachers advocate for a more flexible and responsive approach to assessment practices that reflect diverse teaching environments, particularly in light of increasing online education.

Conclusion

The findings advocate for a comprehensive review and update of current training practices to ensure that future educators are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in 21st-century classrooms. As Kerala continues to advance its educational reforms, incorporating these insights will be crucial in fostering a generation of teachers who are not only competent but also innovative and adaptable to changing educational contexts. Overall, the study underscores the importance of aligning teacher education programs with contemporary educational demands. By addressing identified gaps and enhancing existing strengths, teacher preparation in Kerala can evolve to produce educators who are not only knowledgeable but also adept at navigating the complexities of modern teaching environments.

In conclusion, this research highlights critical areas for improvement within teacher education programs in Kerala. The perspectives of prospective teachers reveal a pressing need for reforms that enhance technological proficiency, bridge the gap between theory and practice, and provide more robust support systems for new educators. By focusing on these areas, educational stakeholders can work towards developing a teacher preparation system that is responsive to the needs of both teachers and students in an increasingly complex educational landscape.

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