

Measuring Prospective Teachers' Collaborative Problem Solving Skills

Abstract

The aim of the present study is to explore the significance of Collaborative problem solving Skills among prospective teachers. Collaborative problem solving provide an ability for critical thinking and problem solving, and also helps to develop social skill and self-esteem amongst prospective teachers. Data was collected from fifty prospective teachers of Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya College of Education, Coimbatore. This study proposes Interview Questionnaire to explore prospective teachers' Collaborative Problem Solving skills that need in handling their classroom problem situations. The Collaborative problem solving skills close-ended Questionnaire allows prospective teachers to answer the questions in their own words. Measuring prospective teachers' collaborative problem solving skills by these instrument help to identify their strength and weakness and finds the ways to apply these skills in classroom situations.

Key Words: Collaborative problem solving skills, Critical thinking skill, Problem Solving Skill, Social Skill, Self-esteem

1. Introduction

Handling conflict in a classroom situation is a challenging task for prospective teachers. To maintain a positive classroom atmosphere, the prospective teachers have to acquire the collaborative problem solving skills. Collaborative Problem Solving is a method of conflict resolution that was originally developed for working with very difficult children. Collaborative problem solving involves two constructs - collaboration and problem solving. The assumption is that collaboration for a set of skills are essential because some problem-solving tasks are too complex for an individual to work through a particular skill or the solution will be improved from the joint capacities of a various skills. Prospective teachers vary in their knowledge, capability and understanding of classroom problems. They have to solve a particular problem by applying various skills jointly rather than separately.

2. Collaborative Problem Solving Skills

Prospective teachers have met lot of problems in classroom situations. To handle such a situation they have to possess many skills. Critical thinking skill is required to solve a problem at an instance. Problem solving skill is needed to identify, analyze and rectify the problem. Social skill is necessary to communicate properly with the students. Self-esteem is mandatory to assess about oneself and to know the strengths and weaknesses. Critical thinking skill, problem solving skill, social skill and self-esteem are collectively known as Collaborative problem solving skills.

2.1. Critical Thinking Skill

Critical thinking is the objective analysis of facts to form a judgment. Critical thinking is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It is a form of reflective reasoning that evaluates information and arguments by applying a range of intellectual skills to reach clear, logical and coherent judgments within a given context. It entails effective communication and problem-solving abilities, as well as commitment to overcome the ego centrism and socio centrism.

2.2. Problem Solving Skill

Problem solving is an ability to handle difficult or unexpected situations in the classroom as well as complex educational challenges. The process or act of finding a solution to a problem is known as problem solving. To solve all the problems efficiently and in a timely manner without difficulty, Problem solving skill is required.

2.3. Social Skills

A social skill is any competence facilitating interaction and communication with others where social rules and relations are created, communicated, and changed in verbal and nonverbal ways.

2.4. Self-esteem

Self-esteem reflects an individual's overall emotional evaluation of their own worth. It is the decision made by an individual as an attitude towards the self. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs about oneself, as well as emotional states, such as triumph, despair, pride, and shame. Smith and Mackie (2007) defined it by saying "The self-concept is what we think about the self; self-esteem, is the positive or negative evaluations of the self, as in how we feel about it".

3. Measuring Collaborative Problem Solving Skills

Interviews are suited to working with small sample and are useful for studying specific situations or for supplementing and validating information derived from other sources used for making safety diagnoses. The semi-structured interview is the most common form of interviewing (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). In this paper, twenty semi-structured close-ended Interview questions are constructed based on collaborative problem solving skills including critical thinking skill, problem solving skill, social skill and self-esteem.

3.1. Collaborative Problem Solving Questionnaire

In this paper, twenty semi-structured close-ended Interview questions are constructed based on collaborative problem solving skills including critical thinking skill, problem solving skill, social skill and self-esteem. The twenty questions including four parts for semi-structured interview is in Appendix.

3.1.1 Part 1: Interview Questions for Critical Thinking Skill and findings

Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. It includes the ability to engage in Reflective thinking. Critical Thinking skills solve problems systematically. It can help an individual separate out facts from opinions. The questions from 1 to 5 are designed to understand the importance of applying critical thinking skill to manage conflicts in classroom situations. Most of the prospective teachers have critical thinking skills. They can apply critical thinking in handling classroom problems.

3.1.2 Part 2: Interview Questions for Problem Solving skill and findings

Problem-solving skills are traits that highly useful in other areas of life like relationship building and day-to-day decision-making. The questions from 6 to 10 are assigned to explore the significance of adopting problem solving skill in problematic situations. Prospective teachers' have the ability to manage classroom problems individually. In some occasions, they avail the help from peer group and subject experts in the field.

3.1.3 Part 3: Interview Questions for Social Skill and findings

Social skills are the skills that use to communicate and interact with each other, both verbally and non-verbally, through gestures, body language and the personal appearance. The questions from 11 to 15 are intended to explicate the social skills of prospective teachers. Prospective teachers possess good communication skills. They have better relationship between the students as well as the environment they belongs to.

3.1.4 Part 4: Interview Questions for Self esteem and findings

A feeling of satisfaction that someone has in himself or herself and his or her own abilities. The questions from 16 to 20 are deliberated to evaluate the self-esteem of prospective teachers. Prospective teachers have the ability to evaluate themselves. They think themselves as a socially responsible person. They felt good about their physical appearance and the chosen teaching profession. They have better relationship between the students as well as the environment they belongs to.

Conclusion

The most important goal of this paper was to identify prospective teachers' collaborative problem solving skills. This paper serves as a step to understand the prospective teachers' collaborative problem solving skills. To sum up, four collaborative problem solving skills of prospective teachers' as critical thinking skill, problem solving skill, social skill and self-esteem can be improved based on some initiatives taken by the educational institutions.

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Appendix - Collaborative Problem Solving Skills Questionnaire

Part 1: Critical Thinking Skill

1. Do you take initiative in creating new innovations in teaching?
2. Do you learn new skills of teaching quickly?
3. Do you have difficulty in understanding new techniques of teaching?
4. Do you able to solve the difficulties and problems of your students?
5. Do you put any effort to improve backward children?

Part 2: Problem Solving Skill

6. Do you make decisions on the spur of the moment to solve classroom problems?
7. Do you have the ability to manage difficult situations?
8. Do you take any help from other persons to solve your problems?
9. Do you feel discomfort in handling classroom problems?

10. Do you frightened about the problematic situations in the classroom?

Part 3: Social Skill

11. Do you encourage the students to ask questions while teaching in the classroom?

12. Do you have the habit of consulting and getting guidance from subject experts?

13. Do you make your classroom communication interesting by using gestures?

14. Do you embarrassed to express your opinion in a classroom?

15. Do you accept the ideas and suggestions given by your peer group?

Part4: Self esteem

16. Do you feel happy about your education?

17. Do you think that you are physically and mentally fit for teaching profession?

18. Do you show think of you as a responsible person in the school?

19. Do you have close relationship with your students?

20. Do you like to participate in group discussions?

