

ASSESSING SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS TEACHING PROFESSION

Tripta Trivedi

Effective and productive learning on the part of pupils can be achieved only by teachers with desirable attitudes. This paper discusses about development of an attitude scale and its application for assessing attitude of secondary school teacher's towards teaching profession..

INTRODUCTION

When we ask someone about her / his attitude towards something, say her / his job, we are primarily interested in finding out how s/he feels about her / his job and, in particular, whether s/he likes or dislikes her/his job. Attitudes have been defined in a number of ways. The simplest definition is that, it is a feeling for or against something (Remmers, Gage & Rummel 1960, p. 67). According to Britt (1958, p. 52), it is a mental set of response. Fishbein (1967, p.12) defines it as a mental disposition of the human individual to act for or against a definite object. Allport (1935, p.34) defines it as a mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related. Thurstone (1946, p. 39) has defined attitude as the degree of positive or negative affect associated with some psychological object. By a psychological object, he means any symbol, phrase, slogan, person, institution, ideal or idea towards which people can differ with respect to positive or negative affect. A particular job, for example, may be a psychological object.

In the literature of psychology, the terms 'affect' and 'feeling' are used interchangeably. An individual who has associated positive affect or feeling with some psychological object is said to like that object or to have a favourable attitude towards the object. An individual who has associated negative affect with the same psychological object would be said to dislike that object or to have an unfavourable attitude towards the object. The above definitions show that an attitude is a preparation or readiness for response. It is incipient rather than overt and consummatory. It is not behaviour, but the pre-condition of behaviour.

Characteristics of Attitudes

Favourableness

Favourableness is the degree to which a person is for or against a psychological object. This dimension determines the direction of attitude. A person may have positive or negative attitude. S/he may like or dislike an object. S/he may approve or disapprove certain practices. When people say that family planning is a must, it indicates their favourable attitude.

Intensity

Intensity refers to the strength of the feeling. How strongly a person feels about something, reveals the strength of her/ his feeling. For example, Reeta disagrees with co-education system, while Sita strongly disagrees with it. It can be inferred that Sita's feelings are stronger against co-education system. Moreover, two people may have attitudes of equal intensity, but their direction may differ. Mohan strongly approves reservation policy, while Rohan strongly disapproves it. Intensity is equal but in opposite direction. The more favourable or unfavourable an attitude, the more intense it is. However, people who are neutral in their feelings have the least intense attitudes.

Saliency

Saliency means how freely or spontaneously an individual expresses his attitude. It is the readiness or promptness with which the individual gives vent to her/his feelings. A person may express her/his attitude freely towards caste system or rising prices, but may not express her/his attitude about sex. Saliency is affected by cultural permissiveness.

Attitudes are acquired

Attitudes are not inborn or innate. They are not inherited by the individual but are acquired by her/him during the growth process. At the time of birth, the child does not inherit any preference for food, but as s/he grows s/he develops positive and negative attitudes towards certain types of foods.

Attitudes are more or less permanent

Attitudes, once acquired, become permanent. They are lasting and enduring. They become stable over a period of time. Since they are more or less permanent, an individual's future behaviour can be predicted on the basis of her/his attitudes.

Attitudes involve subject object relationship

Attitudes are not formed in vacuum. They are always formed in relation to some person, object or situation.

Attitudes involve affective, cognitive and action components

Affective refers to feelings, cognitive to knowledge and action to predisposition. A person will have some idea or knowledge about psychological object; will also have feelings towards it and predisposition to act positively or negatively.

Attitudes are inferred

Attitudes of a person cannot be known directly because s/he will not express them frankly. Attitudes therefore, can be inferred from individual's actions, behaviour or words.

'Teaching is a profession' is not as important an issue as important is this that 'Teachers are professionals'. Maximum problems related to teaching-learning can be handled safely without giving too much financial inputs, if teachers possess healthy professional attitude. In India, teaching is the third largest workforce; thus a large number of people enter in this profession. Lack of professional attitude among this group has made it difficult to ensure uniform standards. The increasing demand for professional service with quality has put the onus on the teaching profession to be responsible and more accountable to the needs and conditions of service. Due to lack of professional attitude among teachers, continuous and adequate efforts are not made to recognise the best ideas in time, practice and role in action for self renewal and sustenance.

Teachers have to carefully understand the new prominent characteristics of professional modern age viz. scientific temper, objectivity, achievement motivation, merit excellence and faith in change. The teacher who will have a healthy professional attitude will not act in a manner that will bring bad name to herself/himself or her/his profession. S/he is proud of the fact that s/he belongs to this profession. S/he will always conduct herself/himself in a dignified manner. The professionals will not wait for or allow regulation of their professional work by others. They will regulate their conduct themselves. Remuneration is not considered as important as to overshadow the sense of satisfaction which a good professional gets when s/he has done the work as it ought to have been done. These are some of the dimensions which reflect professional attitude in teachers.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Teachers who are generally unenthusiastic about the teaching profession (i.e. having a negative job orientation) reported in one study, that they were more distressed about their teaching situation than were teachers who were enthusiastic (Litt & Turk 1985, p.180). Thus, for the professional growth of the teachers and improvements in education, the attitudes held by them are very important. How a teacher performs his/her duty as a teacher is dependent, to a great extent, on his/her attitudes, values and beliefs. A positive favourable attitude makes the work not only easier but also more satisfying and professionally rewarding. A negative and unfavourable attitude makes the teaching task harder, tedious and unpleasant. In addition, a teacher's attitude also influences the behaviour of her/his students. Thus effective and productive learning on the part of students can be achieved only by teachers with desirable attitudes. Thus, teacher's attitude towards teaching profession forms the major variable for the present study on secondary school teachers.

Operational Definition of Professional Attitude: In this study, professional attitude is the teacher's attitude towards teaching profession. An attitude is a more or less stable set or disposition of opinion, interest or purpose, involving expectancy of a certain kind of experience and readiness with an appropriate response. In the present study, attitude of teachers towards the profession of teaching is assessed as 'Favourable' and 'Not-so-Favourable'.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the professional attitude of secondary school teachers.

2. To compare the professional attitude of different groups of secondary school teachers made on the basis of gender, subject stream taught and medium of instruction.

HYPOTHESES FOR THE STUDY

Aims and objectives of the study are the driving force for the formation of hypotheses. According to Best and Kahn (1996, p.27), "the null hypothesis relates to a statistical method of interpreting conclusions about population characteristics that are inferred from the variable relationships observed in samples." The null hypothesis merely states that no significant difference or relationship exists between variables under study. However, if differences or relationships are observed, they merely result from chance errors or fluctuations inherent in the sampling process. Keeping this in mind, the investigator formulated the following null hypotheses.

1. Male and female teachers do not differ significantly in their professional attitude.
2. Arts and Science subject stream teachers do not differ significantly in their professional attitude.
3. Hindi medium teachers and English medium teachers do not differ significantly in their professional attitude.

DELIMITATIONS

1. The present study was confined only to the teachers of recognised secondary and higher secondary schools situated within Lucknow city.
2. Only those teachers who were teaching Arts and Science subject streams were included in the study.
3. Only those teachers who were teaching class IX to XII were included in the study.
4. The schools imparting general education were taken in the study. The institutions giving special or any other type of education (i.e. sports, technical, professional, minority/religious etc.) were not included in this study.
5. The private, unaided schools (i.e. schools where students appear as private candidates in the final examinations of X & XII) were beyond the purview of this study. Evening and night schools are also not included in this study.
6. The present study focused on professional attitude as perceived by the individual and not through the indicators of professional attitude.
7. The tool used for the quantitative study is self-reporting device and thus has an inherent limitation due to its nature.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study falls under the category of descriptive research. Thus, survey method was adopted to carry out the work. In this study, emphasis was given on inferential quantitative approach to compare the different variables.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Looking at the nature of this study, stratified random sampling technique was used to select the required sample of teachers. There were 323 secondary schools in Lucknow city. Out of these 323 schools, 15 were randomly selected. The required number of teachers (i.e. 160 male teachers and 160 female teachers) was chosen from these schools using stratified random sampling procedure. Further, each group comprised of 80 Science stream (40 Hindi medium and 40 English medium) and 80 Arts stream (40 Hindi medium and 40 English medium) teachers. In total, the number of units (teachers) chosen as a sample was 320.

TOOLS

A self developed tool namely Professional Attitude Scale for Teachers was used.

PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE SCALE FOR TEACHERS

It might seem logical to assume that if one wants to know how individuals feel about some particular psychological object, the best procedure would be to ask them directly, but many individuals with negative attitudes might not care to express their attitudes publicly because of fear of social disapproval. Only when the social atmosphere is free from felt or actual pressures toward conformity, might we expect to obtain evidence about a person's attitudes by means of direct questioning. Some individuals may not be aware of their feeling towards a given psychological object. In other cases, some individuals who profess great dislike of something may in fact be reacting against unconscious impulses of the opposite nature. Also,

sometimes our feeling about a psychological object are so mixed and confused that it is difficult for us to evaluate how we feel. We may, for example have both positive and negative affect associated with the same psychological object.

Another approach to the problem of investigating attitudes has been to observe the behaviour of individuals with respect to a psychological object. There are limitations to this approach also. A research worker interested in the attitudes of a large number of individuals towards some object may not have the opportunity to observe in detail the behaviour of all interested. S/he might spend considerable time waiting for the desired behavioural interactions between the individuals and the psychological object towards which the attitude is to be measured. If the behaviour with respect to the object does eventually occur, it, of course, may also fail to reveal the feelings of the individual. In many cases, behaviour is designed to conceal feelings. We are all aware of situations in which we have acted contrary to the way in which we felt because of various reasons.

A quick and convenient measure of attitudes that could be used with large groups has led to the development of attitude scales. Attitude scales also provide us with one means of obtaining an assessment of the degree of affect that individuals may associate with some psychological object. A well constructed attitude scale consists of a number of items or statements. An individual responds to these statements by indicating his/her agreement or disagreement with that statement. Although many limitations of attitude scales have surfaced, however, until more precise measures are developed, the attitude scale or opinionnaire remains the best devices for the purpose of measuring attitudes and beliefs and therefore are widely used in the fields of Education and Psychology. They determine the direction and intensity of a person's feelings for or against some belief or practice. They are also used to survey the attitude of a large number of individuals.

Scale Construction

The researcher wanted to measure the attitude of teachers towards teaching profession. Although several readymade teacher attitude scales constructed and standardised by different psychologists and educationists were available, they were found to be focused on the 'active' stage of teaching and were confined to teacher's role within the boundaries of a classroom. The researcher wanted to measure the attitude of teachers who were already in the 'trade'; their holistic viewpoint on teaching as a profession, its status in society; role in future building, code of conduct, ethics, requirements etc. along with classroom interactions and dealings with students. A thorough scrutiny of the available tools deduced that they did not suit the purpose of this study i.e. they could not measure the professional attitude of the teachers, according to its operational definition. Thus, the researcher constructed her own tool.

There are basically two major types of scaling techniques and they go with the names of their authors. They are: (i) Thurstone's method of scale construction which is also known as method of equal appearing intervals and (ii) Likert's method of scale construction which is also known as method of summated ratings. For the present study, the researcher opted Likert method of scale construction i.e. the method of summated ratings. The steps involved in its construction are described below:

Planning

This included setting up the objectives of the test and analysis of the source material pertaining to it. The first step towards it was to understand the nature of teaching as a profession and determine its dimensions. After browsing and scanning a lot of literature on teaching as a profession and also discussing with the field experts, following ten areas were considered as best covering the aspect of teaching as a profession.

- Professional identification: Pride in belonging to teaching profession and belief that it provides important service to the society.
- Ethics: Belief in possession of sound moral character.
- Maintenance of standards and belief in the regulation of professional work by its members.
- Code of conduct: Belief in setting of rules regarding behaviour in a manner that it does not bring bad name to the profession.
- Lack of mercenary interest: Belief that monetary reward or remuneration is not important in return of services rendered.

- Professional commitment: Belief that practitioners feel a life-long sense of calling and sense satisfaction when work is done as it ought to have been done.
- Cause positive changes: Showing positive difference between input and output.
- Autonomy: Belief that individuals should have the right and freedom to make decisions in their work without the approval of others and contribute to policy making by not just criticising but suggesting remedies too.
- Belief in preparation of a satisfactory scheme of valuation/planning before commencing any work.
- Sensitivity to the needs, interest and welfare of the students.

Development and Selection of Statements

To prepare the first draft of the scale, eight to ten statements related to each of the above mentioned dimension were framed. While wording the attitude statements, the suggestions of Wang (1932), Thurstone and Chave (1929), Likert (1932), Bird (1940), and Edward and Kilpatrick (1948), as summarised by Edward (1969, p. 54), regarding the construction of attitude scales were followed. The summary of their suggestions is presented below.

- Avoid statements that refer to the past rather than to the present.
- Avoid statements that are factual or capable of being interpreted as factual.
- Avoid statements that may be interpreted in more than one way.
- Avoid statements that are irrelevant to the psychological object under consideration.
- Avoid statements that are likely to be endorsed by almost everyone or by almost no one.
- Select statements that are believed to cover the entire range of the affective scale of interest.
- Keep the language of the statements simple, clear, and direct.
- Statements should be short, rarely exceeding twenty words.
- Each statement should contain only one complete thought.
- Statements containing universals such as all, always, none, and never often introduce ambiguity and should be avoided.
- Words such as only, just, merely, and others of a similar nature should be used with care and moderation in writing statements.
- Whenever possible, statements should be in the form of simple sentences rather than in the form of compound or complex sentences.
- Avoid the use of words that may not be understood by those who are to be given the completed scale.
- Avoid the use of double negatives.

In all, 104 statements were framed covering all the dimensions of professional attitudes of teachers.

Collection of Opinion of the Experts

The opinion of the experts from the field of teacher education, regarding the validity and weightage of these dimensions to assess the attitudes of teachers was sought. Suggestions regarding content coverage, language and nature of the items were also gathered from them. On the basis of the expert opinion, the researcher made required changes in the scale. Six items were discarded, leaving 98 items in the scale.

Pre-testing of the Preliminary Draft

The retained dimension-wise items were reshuffled from the view-point of the content. The scale so prepared was administered to 15 secondary school teachers to see whether they felt any problem in the test scale. Their opinion about the content and the items was sought, after they completed the test. This helped the researcher to discover whether the language of the scale was ambiguous to the respondents and whether they understood and followed the instructions clearly. Changes in the instructions, language and content were made after considering the reactions and comments of these teachers.

Try-out of the scale for Item Analysis

Instructions for administration and scoring procedure were finalised and the scale was made ready for tryout. The scale was then administered on a group of 100 secondary school teachers who were asked to respond to each item in terms of their own agreement or disagreement with the statement. The administration procedure of the scale was not a difficult one. The instructions given on the front page were self explanatory and needed no further guidance.

First of all, the teachers were expected to fill up the personal data sheet. For each item, there were five response categories namely strongly agree, agree, uncertain or undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The teachers were asked to mark their responses, which described their attitude best. There was no time limit for completing the test. The respondents were permitted to return it as soon as they completed it.

The items were then scored. In the cases of positive items (favourable attitude) the strongly agree response was given a score of 5, the agree response a score of 4, uncertain response, a score of 3, the disagree response, a score of 2 and the strongly disagree response, a score of 1. In the case of negative items, scoring procedure was reversed i.e. the strongly agree response was given a score of 1, agree, a score of 2, uncertain, a score of 3, disagree, a score of 4, and strongly disagree, a score of 5. A total score for each individual was obtained by adding up scores on each item.

Selection of Items

In Likert method, the items are selected on the basis of their discriminative values. The total scores of each subject on all the items were arranged in descending order i.e. from highest to lowest. Taking 25 per cent of the subjects with the highest total score and also the 25 per cent of the subjects with the lowest total scores, two criterion groups were formed. The responses of both the groups on each item were compared by 't' test. The t value is a measure of the extent to which a given statement differentiates between the high and low groups. As a crude and approximate rule of thumb any t value equal to or greater than 1.75 shows that the responses of high and low groups differ significantly (provided that in each groups there are 25 or more subjects). Thus, this criterion was adopted to select the items for the final scale.

The Final Scale

In the final scale, 42 statements which differentiated between high and low groups were selected. This was done by arranging the t values from highest to lowest and then taking the items with high t values (i.e. 1.75 and above). The final draft so prepared was printed and used for data collection. The selected items in the final scale were of both types - positive and negative. Each item was rated on a five point scale as per the scheme followed at try-out level. This scheme of scoring assured that favourable attitude on each item fetched 4 or 5 points irrespective of the fact that the item was positive or negative. Thus, with 42 total items in the final scale, the range of scores for each respondent was 42 to 210 (minimum $42 \times 1 = 42$ and maximum $42 \times 5 = 210$). Range of scores for favourable attitude was 168 (42×4) to 210 (42×5) and respondents who were uncertain 126 (42×3). Those who held unfavourable attitude ranged between 42 (42×1) to 84 (42×2) scores. For categorising each respondent into favourable attitude or not-so-favourable attitude group, the cut-off point was arbitrarily determined by the researcher as 168, because this score as well as scores above it denoted clear-cut favourable attitude. Scores below 168 showed either mixed trend or uncertainty or unfavourable attitude towards teaching profession and thus they were all clustered together under the group Not-so-favourable.

Logical Validity

Logical validity of the developed scale was established. At the outset, all the accumulated knowledge on the construct was critically studied and on the basis of this, the components which constitute the construct were identified. The identified components were defined by specifying the universe of behaviours which may describe the construct. Such identified components of the construct and universe of behaviours of each of the components were referred to experts for their reactions. Incorporating the suggestions of experts, the construct was operationalised. Following this, a pool of statements representing each one of the components identified to constitute professional attitude towards teaching were developed. These statements along with specifications of behaviours which may be sampled under the components and specific directions for making the judgment regarding the representatives of the statements developed, acted as the guideline against which judgments were made by competent persons. On the basis of the opinions and suggestions and discussions with competent persons suitable modifications were brought in the format.

Reliability

The reliability of the developed scale was estimated by split-half technique. The reliability coefficient obtained by correlating scores on the odd numbered statements with those on the even numbered statements was found to be 0.86.

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND RESULTS

Objectives of the study were to assess the professional attitude of secondary school teachers and compare the professional attitude of different groups of secondary school teachers made on the basis of gender, subject stream taught and medium of instruction.

On the basis of the scores obtained on the Professional Attitude Scale the teachers were categorised under two heads; favourable (score 168 & above) and not-so-favourable (score below 168). Percentages of cases for favourable and not-so-favourable professional attitude were calculated for the total sample as well as for its sub groups formed on the basis of gender, subject stream taught and medium of instruction which are given in Table No. 1 and their 't' values for significance of difference between means is given in Table No. 2 (a) (b) & (c). Bar graphs are also drawn for comparative assessments.

Table No. 1
Number and Percentage of Teachers of Different Groups on Professional Attitude

Category	Gender				Subject Stream				Medium				Total Sample N=320	
	Male N=160		Female N=160		Science N=160		Arts N=160		Hindi N=160		English N=160			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Favourable	46	28.75	72	45.00	50	31.25	68	42.50	47	29.38	71	44.38	118	36.88
Not-so-favourable	114	71.25	88	55.00	110	68.75	92	57.50	113	70.62	89	55.62	202	63.13

Analysis and Interpretation:

Table No. 1 reveals that the total sample of teachers has a tilt towards Not-so- favourable attitude towards teaching profession as 63.13% of cases come under this category and only 36.88% cases are showing a positive or Favourable attitude. Similar trend is visible in all the sub-groups of teachers. This means that most of the teachers (63%) irrespective of their gender, medium or subject stream do not have favourable attitude towards teaching profession. Within sub-groups, females have more number of cases (N =72) with favourable attitude than males (N =46). The Arts subject stream teachers are more positive in their attitude towards teaching profession (N =68) than their counterparts i.e. Science stream teachers (N =50). Hindi medium teachers, on the other hand, are less favourable (N=47) than English medium teachers (N=71) who are possessing a favourable attitude towards their profession. Fig. Nos. 1 (a) (b) & (c) show the graphical representation of these comparisons.

Fig. No. 1 (a)

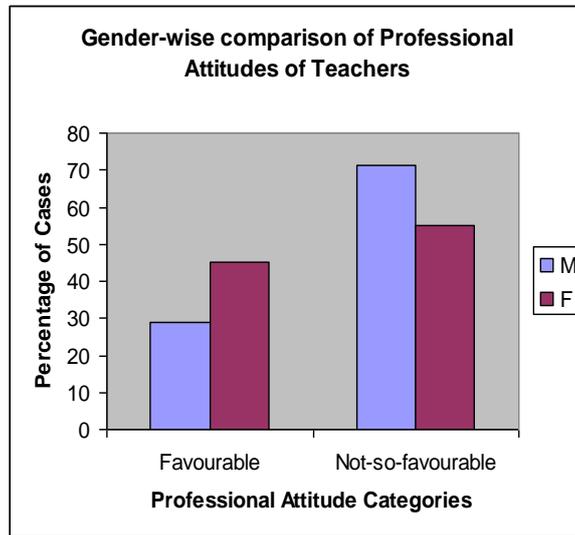


Fig. No. 1 (b)

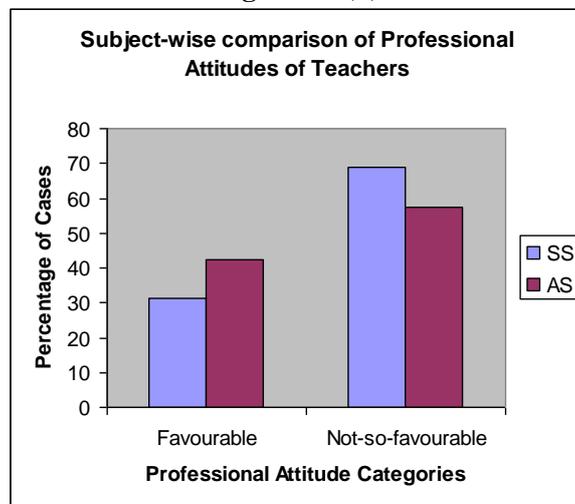
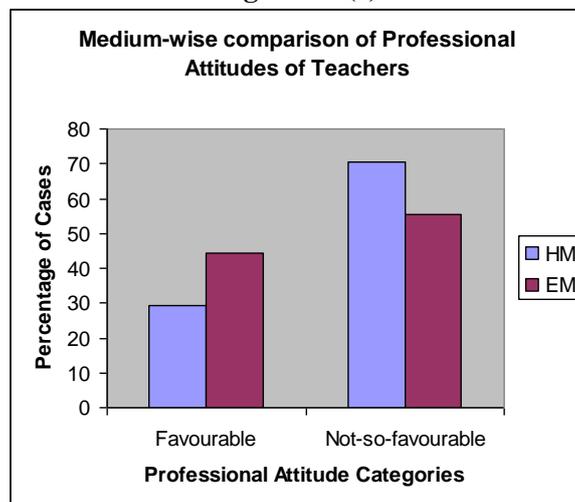


Fig. No. 1 (c)



Through Table No. 1, number and percentage of teachers who have favourable attitude and who have not-so-favourable attitude towards teaching were presented and studied. It is also necessary to compare the different subgroups for their attitude means. For this, 't' values were calculated which are presented in Table No. 2

Table No. 2
Significance of Difference between Means of Different Subgroups of Teachers for Professional Attitude

Demographic variables		N	Mean	SD	t	Level of sig.
Gender	Female	160	162.97	14.50	2.6	.01
	Male	160	158.33	17.31		
Subject stream	Science	160	158.33	15.92	2.60	.01
	Arts	160	162.97	16.02		
Medium of instruction	Hindi	160	159.26	15.12	1.55	Not sig.
	English	160	162.04	16.98		

Table No. 2 shows that out of the three 't' values, two 't' values are significant at .01 level. The 't' values for significance of difference between mean values of professional attitude of male and female teachers and between Science stream teachers and Arts stream teachers are significant at .01 level, which denotes that there is significant difference in professional attitude of males and females and also between Science stream and Arts stream teachers. Mean value of females is higher than males. This means that female teachers have comparatively more favourable professional attitude. So far as Science teachers and Arts teachers are concerned, Arts teachers have higher means and more favourable attitude. The 't' value for Hindi medium and English medium teachers is not significant. Thus, the observed difference in their means could be due to chance or sampling error.

The study found that most of the secondary school teachers irrespective of their gender, medium or subject stream do not have favourable attitude towards teaching profession. Male and female teachers differ significantly in their professional attitude as females possess more favourable professional attitude than males. The Arts subject stream teachers are more positive in their attitude towards teaching profession and differ significantly from than their counterparts i.e. Science stream teachers. Though Hindi medium teachers are displaying less favourable attitude towards their profession than English medium teachers, but the difference between them is not significant and may be due to chance factor.

CONCLUSION

A very significant area explored in the present study was professional attitude of teachers, where it was found that majority of secondary school teachers displayed lack of positive or favourable attitude towards their teaching profession. Teachers subdivided on the basis of gender showed difference in their level of professional attitude. Males had less positive professional attitude than females. This connotes that professional attitude of male teachers is highly negative than of female teachers. Healthy attitude of teachers towards their profession is a pre-requisite for a healthy school system. If teachers will lose faith in their profession and its contribution in making of the mankind and causing progress in the society; if the honour of the 'noblest of all' profession is not acknowledged and respected by the teachers, then their job satisfaction level will go down and the high position of teaching community will also be lowered. The implication of current state of teachers holding less favourable or positive attitude towards their profession is very dangerous as it not only kills the 'professional self' of a teacher but also dampens the spirit of the school life. Teachers performing their duty only for the sake of salary and not liking or respecting the job in which they are engaged bring forth a catastrophic situation taking the school system nowhere.

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Author

Dr. (Miss) Tripta Trivedi, Asso. Prof., Dept. of Education, University of Lucknow, Lucknow-226 007.