Prospects of School Psychology in India

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India is the second largest country to provide school education to her children. More than 130 million children are in the classrooms. The Government of India is taking several initiatives to educate all her children between the age groups of 6 and 14 years. This paper analytically discusses certain basic issues related to school psychology and its future prospects in India. The major objectives are (i) To explore the international perspectives of school psychology so as to apply it in India, (ii) To examine current research trends in school psychology in India, and (iii) To describe the role of professional organisations in school psychology. To achieve these objectives, the researcher used psychological literatures and the documents on current practices. The analytical discussion encourages that there is a scope for developing school psychology related research in India as a potential major discipline so as to cater to the needs of the children. It also encourages the policy makers, psychologists, parents and teachers to show concern on school psychology.

In India, school psychology is a new field of study. It has not been widely introduced in the university departments. The University of Pune offers a diploma programme in school psychology. In western countries school psychology is a popular subject of study. It mainly applies principles of clinical psychology and educational psychology to the diagnosis and treatment of children's behavioural and learning problems. The school psychology is intertwined with issues related to education and psychology of children. As the children grow the role of school psychologists are vital and essential.

Since there is no specific graduate program in school psychology, the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in association with Commonwealth of Learning, Canada offers International Diploma in Guidance and Counselling – a one year Diploma Course for training of professionals in guidance and counselling, combining distance/online and face-to-face modes. The course is open to teachers, teacher educators, educational administrators and untrained guidance personnel from India, Other SAARC, and Afro-Asian countries (NCERT, 2010). This course will train teachers to counsel students regarding different issues e.g. career- related problems, personal, social and value conflicts. It will be based on the 'teacher-as-counsellor' model and will be a six month course, including an internship. At present, some schools in the metropolitan cities have counsellors. Government schools have educational vocational guidance counsellors (EVGCs), who are in charge of two to three schools in a district (Banerjee, 2005). In India, school psychologists are generally known as counselling psychologists or counsellors. The psychological services available to schools are extremely limited in relation to the hundreds of thousands of schools spread over the country (Mukhopadhyay, 2005).

Indian School Education

The modern education system in India is largely borrowed from western education.

The Indian constitution provides directives to develop education in the country. School education had been categorised under the State list till 1970. It has been shifted to the concurrent list in 1976 so as to provide effective school education to the children. The present school education is free and compulsory and a fundamental right of the children from the age of 6-14 years since April 2010. The different stages of school education are as follows: The primary school stage (Classes I – V) age group of 5 to 10 years; The middle school stage (Classes VI – VIII) age group from 11 to 13 years; The secondary school stage (Classes IX and X) of age group 14 to 15 years. The senior/ higher secondary school stage (Classes XI and XII) comes under the age group of 16 to 17 years. Given in the educational structure the school education is having different modes of instructional designs.

As far as the school education scenario in India is concerned, there are in fact no school psychologists to whom students affected by psychological problems could be referred for behaviour modification, or for addressing emotional or learning difficulties (Paliwal, 1984). However, recently initiatives were taken to introduce the concept of school psychology in India. There are quite a few school psychologists trained in USA working as professionals in India. A study was conducted to give awareness about school psychology among school teachers to develop themselves as school psychologists in the country by properly training them with school psychology curriculum (Ramalingam, 2009). There is a pertinent need to popularise the concept of school psychology and the role of school psychologists in educational settings. This is a new field to emerge as a potential area of study to cater to the needs of the children.

The current effort of the government to implement inclusive education in all schools is another issue that has a considerable impact on school psychology. Most teachers, parents and even students need to be counselled and sensitised to accept the presence of children with disabilities in their schools. The role that school psychologists play in ensuring a smooth transition and stress-free implementation of inclusive education is a crucial one (Dutt, 2008). In fact, every year, when the final examination results are declared, many students who fail or are disappointed with their marks commit suicide. The Nation's schools should consider the gravity of the present problems and take necessary and prompt action to overcome them. In such an alarming scenario, the interventions of a school psychologist are urgently required. However at present there is no association of School Psychologists and in fact, "the profession does not really exist." (Farrell, 2005).

In India, there is an emerging situation to develop school psychology to guide and support school system. Here it is worth mentioning the views of Farrell (2005) that 'some professionals in the teaching profession hold a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. This knowledge, together with the experiences they have in working with children, facilitates the development of a career as a school psychologist. Despite the fact that parents and children have proclaimed a desperate need for more support and guidance in the areas of severe learning disabilities and coping problems in mainstream schools, no positive steps have been taken to tackle this problem. Clinical Psychologists who work in hospitals rarely visit schools.' Given this educational scenario, school psychology is having better scope in future to progress as an independent discipline.

Technical terms

School Psychology: It is a specialised branch of psychology to provide services that enhance academic performance, design strategies and programs to address problems of adjustment, consult with other educators and parents on issues of social development

and behavioural and academic difficulties, conduct psycho-educational assessment for purposes of identifying special needs, provide psychological counselling for individuals, groups, and families, and coordinate intervention strategies for management of individuals and school wide crises (California Association of School Psychologists, 2010). As such, the term also refers to and is meant to include educational psychologists and others who display qualities this document associates with school psychology (ISPA, 2008).

School Psychologist: School psychologists are highly trained in both psychology and education, completing a minimum of a specialist-level degree program (at least 60 graduate semester hours) that includes a year-long supervised internship. This training emphasizes preparation in mental health and educational interventions, child development, learning, behavior, motivation, curriculum and instruction, assessment, consultation, collaboration, school law, and systems. School psychologists must be certified and/or licensed by the state in which they work. They also may be nationally certified by the National School Psychology Certification Board (NSPA, 2011).

School Education: It provides the base for the future education of a child. There are various types of schools in India such as residential schools, boarding schools, government schools, day schools, primary schools and secondary schools. All the schools in India are governed by the rules and regulations of the respective boards under which they run. The State boards, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Council for Indian School Certificate Examination and National Institute of Open schooling are some of the school boards that look after school examination in India.

InSPA: The Indian School Psychology Association (InSPA) started functioning on August 15, 2009. It was affiliated with International School Psychology Association (ISPA). Its primary aim is to develop and to promote school psychology: human values-based education and training to meet the needs of society and particularly to elevate the poor from poverty through school education.

School education in India is a challenging task to the policy makers, educationists, teachers and parents. It is trying to establish need based educational setting so as to meet the basic requirements of culture and value system. The present education system needs national level continuous scientific psychological assessments with the trained school psychologists. Given the education scenario, the major objectives of the present article are:

Objectives:

(i) To explore international perspectives of school psychology

(ii) To examine the current research trends in school psychology in India

(iii) To describe the role of professional organisations in school psychology

To achieve these objectives, the researcher used psychological literatures and the documents on current practices.

Analytical Discussion

In terms of analytical discussion in the paper, the researcher has made three aspects to discuss such as international perspective of school psychology, current research trends in India and the role of professional organisations in India.

The greater the understanding of school psychology services in different countries to ensure that the school psychology services in India is having potential contribution to set up. The changing cultural, individual, political, social and psychological environment in India entering into the third millennium encourages need of school psychology services. The

rapid growth of population, the culture of poverty, numerous instances of inequality, increasing number of illiteracy, learning disabilities of children urge to the immediate need of school psychology services. Hence there is a need to understand the school psychology services in other countries. The fast developing school psychology services of different countries are presented below:

i. School Psychology: International Perspectives

In the Western countries the school psychology was developed as a separate discipline and a fast growing one in multi dimensional way. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the school psychology was developed in the United States of America. The school psychologists are interested in childhood behaviours, learning processes and disorders. They are very keen in understanding the causes of the behaviours and their effects on learning. In a study conducted by Shane, Kaitlyn, Mary, Santiago, and Heather (2009), it was found that over 76,100 school psychologists throughout 48 countries from which estimates were available as of 2007. When considering the total number of school psychologists in a given country, it is essential to also consider the number of school-age children. The school psychologist-to-student ratio provides an omnibus indicator of the development of the profession of school psychology in countries around the world.

There are many researchers who conducted surveys in the area in different regions of the world. Shane, Mohammad, Abdel-Hameed and Mahmoud (2010) made the International School Psychology Survey (ISPS) to gather information about the characteristics, training, roles, activities, preferences, research interests and the challenges experienced by school psychology specialists in Egypt. It reveals that the data are representative of the school psychology specialists in Egypt, and it

appears that the vast majority of school psychology specialists have bachelor degrees. The greatest proportion of their work involved counselling students, providing direct services to students, and providing primary prevention programmes. The results from this survey were considered in relation to the social and cultural context of school psychology practice in Egypt.

In the same way Paul and Niels (2011) prompted a study on international perspectives on psychologists' response to crises. One service within the United Kingdom (UK) learnt from the experience of other psychologists and a survey was constructed and subsequently completed by 277 psychologists from around the world including Australia, Canada, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Scandinavia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, and USA. The survey provides insight into the experience of psychologists in responding to crises, for example, the nature of the crises, the extent of collaboration with others, the level of training undertaken, and the level of confidence psychologists have in this area of work. Of particular interest are the models, resources, and theories that psychologists have used and the advice that they have found helpful. A number of international comparisons are made. The survey findings suggested that collaboration is seen as highly important to effective practice.

The School psychology services began in France in 1945. Slowly the number of appointed school psychologists reached 3000 by the 1980s. With an administrative status of a 'special teacher' working in school psychology, and a professional training quite insufficient so that most of them improve by themselves, French school psychologists seem in a poor professional situation by comparison with many other developed countries (Jean-Claude, 1984). Jason, Yvonne, and Donald (2009) conducted a Survey of Roles and Functions, Challenges

and Aspirations of School psychology in Canada and viewed that the school psychology is now recognized as an area of specialization within professional psychology, and graduate training programs follow a more prescribed curriculum, especially at the doctoral level. This survey was intended to provide a glimpse of the current practices and profession of Canadian school psychology as viewed by the practitioners. Sergey, Philipp, Daria and Pavel (2005) investigated the current status and development of the school psychological service in Moscow and compared the demographical, social and psychological characteristics of psychologists working in different settings within the Moscow school psychology services (schools, kindergartens, psychological centres).

Like wise, Carlo, Guido and Julia (2008) conducted a national research in Italian school psychology, and the findings from the research suggested that school psychology in Italy has followed a distinct evolution which has developed thus far into refined forms of consultation that are strongly correlated with relational ties between school psychologists and their schools. Penny, Fredrick, and Harvey (2007) conducted a survey on School psychologists working in Nova Scotia (NS) to determine their current practices and preferred future roles. Results of the surveys indicated that there have been dramatic changes in the practice of school psychology in NS over the past two decades. Along with increasing numbers of positions and more specific training, there has been an increase in time spent in psycho educational assessment as well as further diversification of roles (intervention, prevention, consultation).

In another study Michael (1985) examined the practice of school psychology in Saudi Arabia. At the present time native based training of school professionals with some of the competencies of school psychologists is taking place. There is a growing awareness of the necessity for professionals to serve the developmental needs of children in schools. The Albanian Association of School Psychologists (AASP) is the only organization attempting to address professional issues and problems of school psychologists. AASP is collaborating with the ISPA Research Committee to compare the status of school psychology within Albania with that of other countries. AASP took the initiative to promote school psychologists and to have school psychologists licensed. Due to AASP's initiative, the Ministry of Education is has establishing a plan that may allow school psychologists to work in schools and to include them in Albania's educational system (Bashi, 2004).

As far as the country Estonia is concerned, major problems occurring during the last few years have been connected with the system for qualifying as a school psychologist. According to the new system, the educational qualifications of several school psychologists do not meet the previously described standards for employment in schools as a psychologist. The situation causes insecurity and the need for finding solutions for people who have been working in schools for years but have insufficient education and thus do not meet current standards as a school psychologist. Initiatives have been attempted in an effort to address these challenges (Kikas & Kanter, 2004).

These studies prompted possibilities of advancing the school psychology services in India. The International School Psychology Association (ISPA) will contribute their support and training strategies to develop school psychology in India.

The responsibilities of school psychologists are linked to the pressures of the present education system, (that is the pressure to perform and do well academically) on both students and their parents. The

educational counsellors have to intervene in cases where these pressures affect the students' performance and apart from counselling them, they need to network with teachers, families and, if need be, with other professionals like doctors, psychiatrists and child psychologists, to help the students cope with and overcome their problems (Dutt, 2005).

ii. Current Research Trends in India

There is no systematic approaches to develop school psychology services in India. The researchers have contributed a lot in the filed of psycho social issues of concern related to school children. Voigt (2010) viewed that "raising problems in urban settings, where traditional social networks are getting lost, stagnation in rural places, global factors creating hopelessness, frustration and despair, these are the growing issues influencing young children, creating problems for teachers and parents. As I had the chance to talk to headmasters, teachers, psychology students in different places, I realised that psychology is gradually perceived as helpful, as well by its cognitive, but more still by its affective and behavioural support".

There are plenty of studies related to children and school setting published in various journals published in India. The Journal of Indian Academy of Applied Psychology is regularly publishing articles related to educational, clinical and other areas of applied psychology. In the past two decades mostly studies related to school children were conducted. Some of the studies were: on adjustment and academic stress, eg: academic stress and adjustment among High School Students (Hussain, Kumar, & Husain, 2008), adjustment problems among school students (Raju & Rahamtulla, 2007), adjustment patterns of socially disadvantaged pupils (Ushasree, 1987), studies on depression, eg. depression, anxiety and stress among the Indian and Iranian students (Ghaderi, Venkatesh

Kumar, & Sampath Kumar, 2009), depressive features in learning disabled children (Sethia, Sinha, & Saxena, 1994), etc.

Likewise, self-efficacy and well-being of adolescents by Singh and Udainiya (2009), the effectiveness of self focused intervention for enhancing students' well-being (Singh & Choubisa, 2009), efficacy of study skills training in managing study habits and test anxiety of high test anxious students (Saughvi ,1995), efficacy of yoga in deviant school boys (Kannappan & Lakshmi Bai, 2008), ego-identity status and Its relationship with self-esteem among adolescents (Basak & Ghosh, 2008), emotional Stability of visually disabled in relation to their study habits (Sharma, 2006), a remedial intervention for addition and subtraction in children with Dyscalculia (Beygi, Padakannaya, & Gowramma, 2010), alienation and emotional intelligence of adolescents with internalising symptoms (Shrivastava & Mukhopadhyay, 2009) etc. were examined.

There are many studies related to clinical setting of school children and differently challenged children such as impact of rational-emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) on adolescents with conduct disorder (Venkatesh Kumar, 2009), mathematics anxiety, mathematics performance and overall academic performance (Karimi & Venkatesan, 2009; Venkatesh Kumar & Karimi, 2010), meaning in life and psychological well-being in pre-adolescents and adolescents (Rathi & Rastogi, 2007), memory deficits in dyslexic children (Singh, Gupta, & Broota,1994).

In recent years several researchers have been conducting studies on perceived emotional intelligence and ways of coping among students (Shah & Thingujam, 2008), perceived problems and academic stress in children of disrupted and non-disrupted families (Ganesh & Magdalin, 2007), performance among the high and low self-efficacious students (Zinta, 2006), personality

correlates of learning disabled children (Sood,1994), personality differences between pupils of Sainik and non-Sainik schools (Dhila & Yagnik, 1999), psychological stress and coping strategies of the parents of mentally challenged children (Venkatesh Kumar, 2008), psychosocial profile of preadolescent rural children (Usharani, Rao, Naidu, Reddy, 1994), self-esteem and academic achievement of adolescents (Shobhna Joshi & Rekha Srivastava, 2009), self-esteem and emotional stability of visually challenged students (Tarannum & Khatoon, 2009), socio-personal variables and examination anxiety (Singh & Broota, 1992), state self esteem and causal attribution in reattribution training among self worth protective students (Sinha & Gupta, 2006), the role of self-efficacy and gender difference among the adolescents (Kumar & Lal, 2006)

These studies indicate that there is a scope for developing research activities in school psychology so as to contribute to the knowledge addition. These studies advance the existing literatures in school psychology and also encourage the young researchers to concentrate on the emerging area of research on school psychology in India.

iii. Professional Organisation

In India a person can practice psychology with a Masters degree; no license is required. However the process of developing laws relevant to this field) has already started. All professionals (including psychologists), working in the field of rehabilitation, which covers the area of special education, have to register with the Rehabilitation Council of India. Often, teachers take on the role of school psychologists, since there are very few school psychologists in India (Mukhopadhyay, 2005). Properly trained school psychologists in all schools are unquestionably among the most pressing needs of the day. Research in this area is not a priority at the moment. What is important is that the Government should take

the initiative and start an association for School Psychologists Association and to take the lead in establishing the profession (Dutt, 2008).

In India, there are no organisations specifically for school psychology. However, there are a few mental health institutes and counselling and therapy training centers that train psychology students in doctoral degrees or diplomas in psychotherapy and counselling only for Masters degree holders with a theoretical knowledge of psychology (Dutt, 2008). In India, academic psychology predominantly is dominated by Western concepts and principles. School psychology programs ensure that candidates have a foundation in the knowledge base for psychology and education, including theories, models, empirical findings, and techniques in each domain. According to the National Association of School Psychologists (2000), school psychology training programs ensure that candidates demonstrate the professional skills necessary to deliver effective services that result in positive outcomes in each domain of practice.

The Indian School Psychology Association (InSPA) was started functioning on August 15, 2009. It was affiliated with International School Psychology Association (ISPA). Its primary aim is to develop and to promote school psychology: Human values-based education and training to meet the needs of society and particularly to elevate the poor from poverty through school education. The objectives are:

i. To promote communication among professionals who are committed to the improvement of the mental health of children in schools.

ii. To encourage the training and employment of school psychologists in India.

iii. To promote the psychological rights of all children throughout the country.

iv. To initiate and promote cooperation

with other organizations working for causes similar to those of ISPA in order to help children.

v. To condemn any discrimination of a racial, religious or sexual nature and recommend its members conduct their professional life consistent with this principle.

vi. To mobilise human resources and other resources to utilise them effectively to realise the aim.

vii. To establish education, training and counselling centres/units to promote social and economic development of the community through education.

viii. To establish and promote high quality School Psychology Programmes and Centres to meet the needs of specific groups, particularly the children and teachers.

ix. To establish education, training and counselling centres at schools, colleges and universities to promote School Psychology.

x. To organise local, regional, national, and international seminars, conferences, exhibitions, lecture meetings, workshops and training programmes.

Presently there are 100 founder members and two life members actively involved in the process of promoting school psychology in India. Among them eight members are governing council members to look after the day to day affairs of the association and 24 members are state level conveners. Prof. G.P. Thakur is the President of the association. The other office bearers are Dr. B. Mukhopadhyay (Vice-President), Dr. V. Muthu (Vice-President), Dr. Panch. Ramalingam (Secretary), Dr. S. Renukadevi (Joint Secretary), Dr. R.J. Solomon (Joint Secretary), and Dr. B. Rangaiah (Treasurer). It is publishing a quarterly newsletter and initiated to organise 33rd annual conference of the International School psychology Association in 2011 at Chennai. It is the need of the hour" and holding our ISPA-conference in India is a crucial step and signal to make

psychology in the educational and political field visible, adequately used and functioning as a catalytic agent between parents, teachers, administrators and politicians (Thakur, 2009).

In her fourth visit to India (Erika, 2010) commented as "I talked to students, parents, teachers, headmasters, psychologists. Broadly discussed critics concern all schools, but are much more claimed from state schools: authoritarian teaching and treatment of students, poorly up-dated curricula, predominance of rote-learning, extreme examination-pressure, heavy work-load, school and class management by rules and often punishment, paucity of personal support and encouragement. The themes of our lively exchange were: challenges of training teachers for and from rural areas, early education in Indian context, giving support to teachers and parents in preschool and primary age, residues of Tsunami induced traumata, school absenteeism, bullying, inclusion and adequate support for children from poor background or alternatively challenged, influence and acceptance of foreign NGO's".

Recommendations

A study conducted by Jimerson (2008) with 192 member States of UN revealed that school psychology is available in 83 countries. Keeping in view of this emerging need of the school psychology, In India the Indian School Psychology Association (InSPA) was established to promote school psychology in India. At the inaugural session of the InSPA one the Parliament members stated that 'I strongly believe that the Indian School Psychology Association will definitely play a vital role in the school education not only at the regional level but also national level' (Kannan, 2010).

The following are the important issues of concern related to Indian approaches to practice in the schools:

i. It is suggested that each and every school must have trained school psychologists to look after the psychological issues of children

ii. The research scholars may take a lead to conduct researches in school psychology services in India so as to advance the school psychology research in India.

iii. Potential psychology departments of the universities and other higher education institutions may start Postgraduate programme in school psychology and Diploma in school psychology

iv. The funding agencies in social sciences may encourage research projects in school psychology services and research areas in bullying, learning disabilities, giftedness, etc.

v. It is an appeal to the Indian sub continent psychologists who are practicing with school setting may enrol themselves in the InSPA so as to strengthen the professional activities in India.

vi. The InSPA in collaboration with ISPA should take an initiative to organise school psychology training programmes in India.

vii. The InSPA should take an initiative to the Government of India and the State Governments to establish School Psychology Council (SPC) so as to register, issue of license, and monitor the school psychology services in India.

Conclusion

This paper discusses three pertinent issues related to school psychology such as international perspectives, current research trends in India and professional association activities in India. It also recommends some of the need based issues to strengthen the school psychology services in India. There is tremendous scope for trained school psychologists in Indian school settings. The school psychology is having future prospects in India with the support and guidance by International School Psychology Association (ISPA). 'It seems that ISPA is in the right place at the right time. It is exciting to actually be at the birth of a new profession and to see the tremendous possibilities in starting school psychology in a country of over 1.3 billion people. Currently there are no training programs nor Indian trained school psychologists' (Pfohl, 2011). It encourages policy makers in education and psychologists in the country to look forward the future prospects.

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