

EVALUATION OF PRE-PH.D. PROGRAMME IN ENHANCING RESEARCH SKILLS

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Abstract:

The present research was undertaken with the aim of evaluating the Pre-Ph.D. programme in enhancing the research skills of the Ph.D. scholars. The research adopted the Descriptive Survey method. The participants of the study included 18 Ph.D. research scholars in the field of education from Greater Mumbai. The primary data was collected through feedback forms. The results revealed that students were very much satisfied with the overall experience of the coursework and felt that the programme was highly successful in meeting the course objectives. The results also indicated that the course had provided theoretical insight and practice in comparing methods, techniques and procedures used in educational research operations. The students were also of the opinion that the course has helped them to gain deeper understanding of the quantitative and qualitative research designs and has enhanced their research skills in the field of education.

Keywords – Programme, Research skills, Effectiveness.

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Introduction:

Research is a systematic and rigorous inquiry that requires knowledge, skills and guidance. This requires a thorough instruction on the several aspects of research. It has been noted there exists moderate level of stress in Ph.D. research scholars which impacts their performance. The Pre-Ph.D. programme therefore aid in the strengthening of research skills to make their research journey stress free, meaningful and enjoyable. Hence, the Pre-Ph.D. programme can be comprehended as a valuable instrument in the reduction of the squandering of time, money and other resources.

The present Pre-Ph.D. programme at the Department of Education, consists of three courses which have been developed with the objective of providing the research students the maximum guidance in conceptualization, theorization, research designing, data collection and analysis of their particular topic of doctoral research. The programme is made up of three courses in research methodology. The course 1- Research Methodology in Education aimed to equip students with the requisite knowledge of research methodology in education including research methods, variables, hypotheses, sampling, tools and techniques. The Course 2- Statistical Techniques and Computer Applications in Educational Research was designed to make students aware of various statistical techniques for descriptive data analysis and for testing hypotheses including parametric and non-parametric techniques. It also includes the use of computers in a conceptual and empirical literature review, drawing of graphs and data analysis. Course 3- Qualitative and Mixed Methods Research is designed to familiarize students with various aspects of qualitative and mixed methods research methodology.

As academic research in the field of education plays a significant role in understanding the education system at different levels in our country. It is important that the research scholars must undertake that research with good

research knowledge, skills and due ethical considerations. The present Pre-Ph.D. programme aims to impart an in-depth understanding of research skills among research scholars which are required to conduct good research work. The present research, therefore, was undertaken with the aim of understanding the extent to which the Pre-Ph.D. programme is effective in enhancing the research skills of the Ph.D. scholars at the Department of Education, University of Mumbai.

Literature Review:

Ried et al., (2008) studied the impact of the research workshop on research skills in Australia. The objective of the study was to investigate the impact of the research training workshop on participants' skills, confidence, interest in research and research activity. The study adopted a cross-sectional postal survey to five groups of registrars who participated in the annual workshop. The findings of the study indicated that the self-reported research skills increased over time for the whole group most significantly for those with little or no research experience. The impact of the workshop on capacity, confidence and interest in research was rated highly. The study recommended that such training have the potential to increase knowledge of research methods, which might augment future research activity in general practice. Abdulghani et al., (2014) studied a comprehensive, multi-modal evaluation of the assessment system of an undergraduate research methodology course. The objective of the study was to evaluate the assessment system of the Research Methodology Course using utility criteria i.e., validity, reliability, acceptability, educational impact, and cost-effectiveness. The research used qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate the course assessment components. The results of the study indicated that a positive educational impact was found in the form of the research project assessment driving students to present/publish their work in conferences/peer reviewed journals. Duangmanee et al., (2015) conducted research to study need assessment in research methodology. The objective of the descriptive research was to study the needs for Naval Medical Department personnel to understand research methodology. The random sampling method was used to select 324 samples which consisted of medical professionals. The study used descriptive statistics for need assessment. The findings of the study highlighted the need to include information about the aspects such as research introduction, operational definition of variables writing and variables identification, research design, statistics used and the data analysis, conclusions and findings, discussion research publication, article writing and the presentation in academic conference. Prasad (2017) studied the causes of stress among PhD research scholars. The objective of the study was to assess six independent stress causing factors Work overload, Role ambiguity, Role overload, Physiological factors, and Behavioral Approach and Avoidance strategies and their effect on a dependent factor performance. The study adopted descriptive correlation design. The sample of the study included 50 research scholars who participated in the Pre-PhD Course work at CP & Berar E.S. College, Nagpur. The findings of the study revealed the medium level stress among the research scholars and behavioral avoidance coping strategies has significant effect on reducing the stress whereas the physiological factors significantly contributed to the stress among the research scholars. Gyuris (2018) Emma conducted research to evaluate the effectiveness of postgraduate research skills

training and its alignment with the Research Skill Development framework. The objective of the study was to focus on facilitating deliberate practice while explicitly aiming to develop postgraduate students' basic research skills. The findings of the study indicated many students, while achieving much improvement in their proposal score, did not demonstrate in their portfolios an awareness of the processes that allowed them to improve. The study recommended to equip students with the skills to be competent, self-regulated learners, so they can understand and practice the metacognitive skills that allow them to perform at their highest level as it is important in research training and as reflecting on and understanding the reasons for success or failure in the research endeavors are critical attributes of accomplished researchers. Amaral & dos Santos (2018) conducted a study to explore combining research methodology courses with project-based learning and community-based research. The study followed a mixed-method research approach, analyzing the students' responses to a survey and focus group activities. The sample of the study included 22 first-year undergraduate students studying Administration at the Federal University of São Paulo, Osasco, Brazil. The findings were as follows: 1) The students faced difficulties working in groups, scheduling meetings with the community partners, and creating the articles; 2) The project-based learning approach improved the students' learning; 3) Doing community-based research was rich and meaningful experience to the students; 4) The course was successful in developing the students' research skills. Language et al., (2021) conducted research on outcomes of the online course in research methodology taught online under Covid-19 condition. The sample of the study included undergraduate students at the Faculty of Arabic Language, Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech. The objective of the study was to report on the methodology implemented in disseminating the course including description of the objectives and the components of the course such as digital lectures, interactive practices and quizzes. The results indicated that teaching and learning research methodology in online courses is under researched and showed that success of an online course in research methodology requires learned knowledge of the appropriate methodology to use in the course online. The study reflected on recommendations for the practitioners and field decision makers concerned with strategies of teaching and evaluating online courses in research methodology. Daniel (2022) studied the role of research methodology in enhancing postgraduate students Research Experience in New Zealand. The objective of the study was to understand the critical factors that can enhance postgraduate students' research experience. The study identified several factors that can significantly enhance the postgraduate research experience, including the quality of supervision, institutional and department support, personal investment, and financial support. Despite the demonstrated significance of research methodology in postgraduate education, findings revealed that students were generally dissatisfied with the design and teaching of current courses on research methods. Students were of the opinion that courses on research methods are pedagogically monolithic, conceptual challenging, and inflexibly adaptive to individual future career trajectories.

While reviewing the studies, it was found students' perspective conveyed a belief the coursework on developing research skills among scholars had a lot of challenges and required further exploration in terms of meeting the desired learning objectives of the course. Ball and Pelco (2006) posited that the instruction of any research methodology course poses a formidable challenge due to the intricacy of the subject matter and the inclination

of learners to exhibit disinterest in acquiring methodological knowledge. In order to provide research scholars a meaningful research experience the coursework must be designed in a way so as to give students a deeper understanding of research designs, theoretical insights and practice of statistical tools, confidence in data analysis and facilitates learning to enhance research skills. The present research was undertaken with the aim of understanding the extent to which the Pre-Ph.D. programme is effective in enhancing the required research skills of Ph.D. research scholars.

Aim of the Study:

The aim of the study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Pre-Ph.D. programme in enhancing research skills among Ph.D. research scholars in education.

Objectives of the Study:

The study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To study the extent to which the course was successful in meeting course objectives
2. To study the extent to which the course provided theoretical insights and practice.
3. To study the extent to which the programme was successful in providing an understanding of research designs.
4. To understand the level to which the opportunities were provided to the students to interact with each other.
5. To understand the extent to which the course objectives, lectures and assignments were aligned with each other,
6. To understand the extent to which the course assignments facilitated learning.
7. To evaluate the overall experience of the programme in enhancing research skills.

Research Question:

How effective has the Pre-Ph.D. programme in enhancing research skills amongst Ph.D. research scholars in education?

Methodology of the Study:

The study adopted the Descriptive Survey Research method to examine the effectiveness of the Pre-Ph.D. programme in enhancing research skills among Ph.D. research scholars in education.

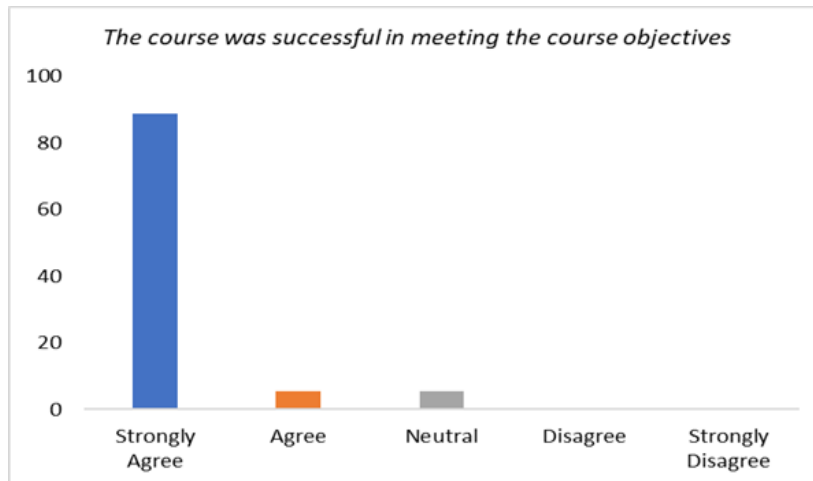
Sample of the Study:

The participants of the study were 18 Pre-Ph.D. research scholars in education from Greater Mumbai.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

The responses to the various items were studied under the following heads:

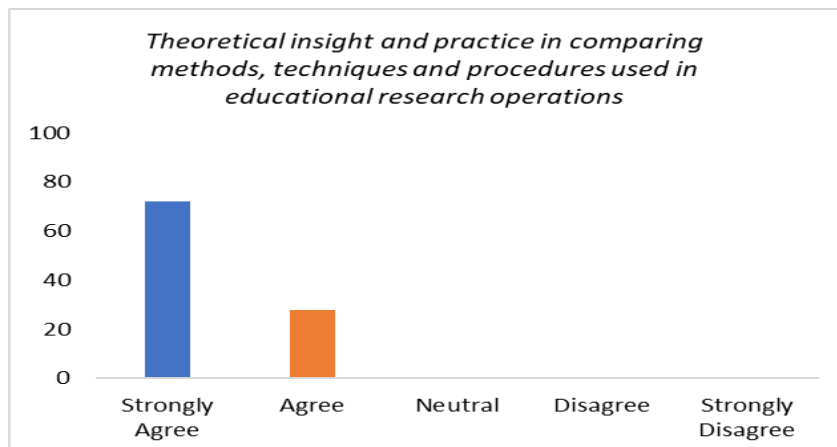
I. Meeting Course Objectives



Graph 1.1

From Graph 1.1, it is evident that around 94% of the participants believed that the Pre-Ph.D. programme at the Department of Education was successful in meeting the course objectives. This observation suggests that the various courses of the programme proved to be highly efficient in attaining the intended results.

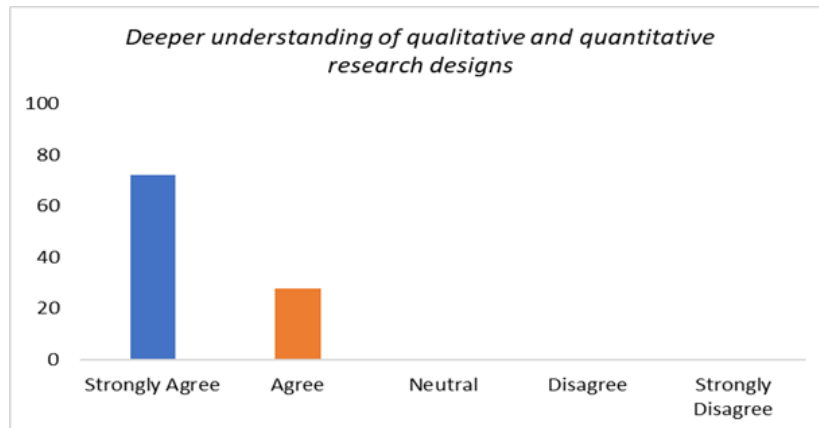
II. Theoretical Insights and Practice during the Course



Graph 1.2

From Graph 1.2, it is evident that 100% participants of the course felt that the Pre-Ph.D. programme at Department of Education has provided them theoretical insights and practice in comparing research methods, statistical techniques and procedures used in educational research operations. The results therefore indicate that all the three courses in the programme have effectively given research scholars a greater degree of knowledge and confidence in undertaking their doctoral research work.

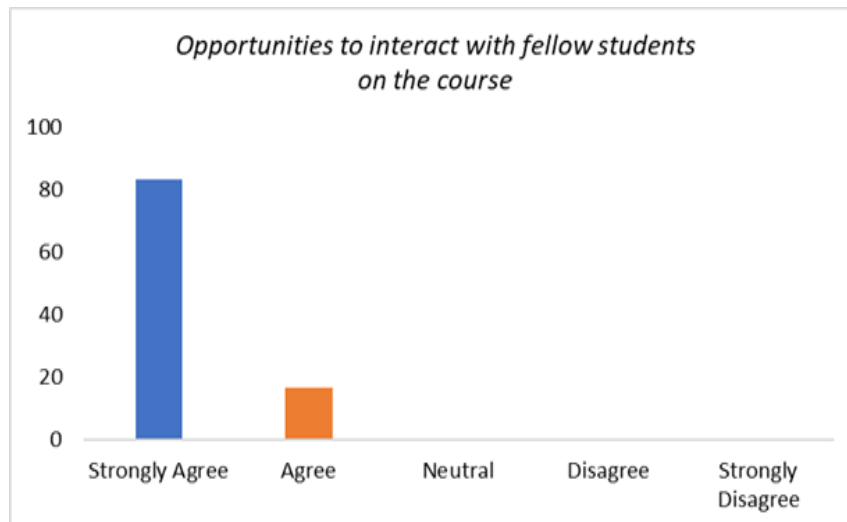
III. Understanding Research Designs



Graph 1.3

From Graph 1.3, it can be concluded that 100% participants of the programme believed the courses have provided them the basic foundation of research by providing deeper understanding of quantitative, qualitative and mixed method research designs. In addition, the research scholars emphasized that their ability to use ICT for literature reviews, reference management and data analysis has improved as a result of this course.

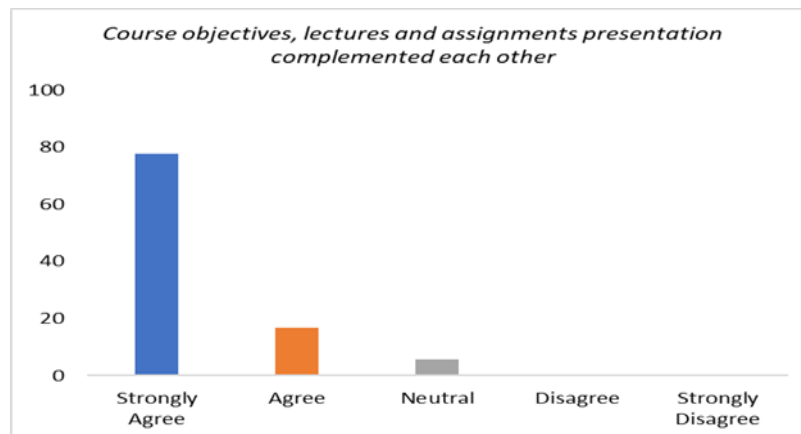
IV. Opportunities for Interaction



Graph 1.4

From Graph 1.4, it is evident that 18/18 research scholars were of the opinion that the Pre-Ph.D. programme provided them a lot of opportunities to interact with fellow students and resource persons during the coursework. This observation suggests that the course environment was conducive for participants to effectively express their ideas, opinions for all kinds of academic deliberations that took place during the programme.

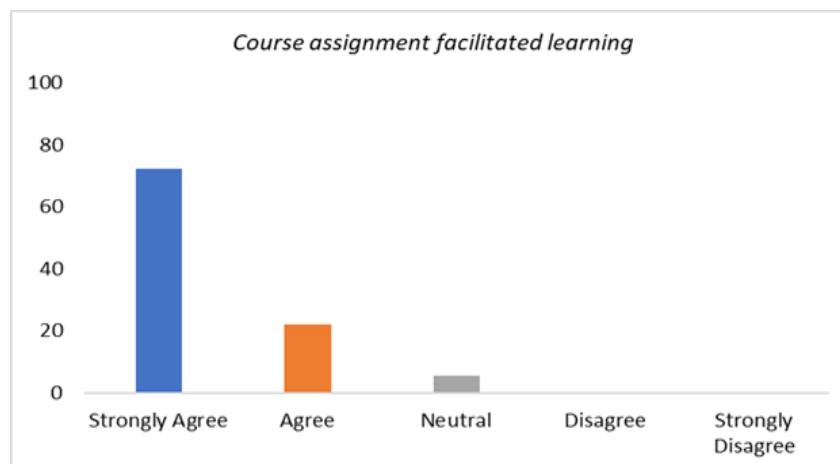
V. Course objectives, Lectures and Assignments



Graph 1.5

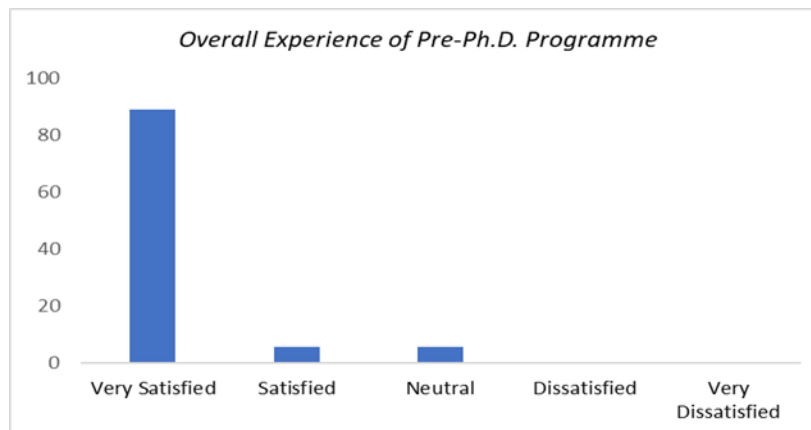
From Graph 1.5, it is evident that 94% participants were of the opinion that the course objectives, lectures, assignments were aligned and complemented each other. Furthermore, the discussions and interaction during lectures have assisted research scholars in preparing effective presentations and assignments that would have aided in achieving the course's objectives.

VI. Learning through Course Assignments



Graph 1.6

From Graph 1.6, it is evident that the course assignments as perceived by the students were beneficial in promoting the learning of research methodology in the field of education. The indicates that the research they expressed a deep sense of contentment and fulfillment regarding the tasks they were assigned. The positive feedback from the research scholars reflected their strong appreciation for the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of the assignments in contributing to their overall academic and professional growth in educational research.

VII. Overall Experience of the programme in enhancing Research Skills.**Graph 1.7**

From Graph 1.7, it is evident that 94% of participants were satisfied with the overall experience they had during the Pre-Ph.D. programme. Additionally, research scholars believed that the programme had given them a comprehensive understanding of the research methodology skills which will strengthen their base in the research for the advancement and progress in their research work. Their satisfaction signifies that the programme successfully met their expectations, fulfilled their learning needs, and provided them with a rewarding and enriching research experience.

Conclusion:

The participants have found coursework as a valuable resource for gaining an understanding of research designs through theoretical insights and practical applications. In addition, in the context of above findings, it was evident the learning environment was conducive to participants to effectively express their ideas and opinions during the academic deliberations that took place within the framework of the programme. Furthermore, the research scholars were very much satisfied with the overall experience of the coursework and felt that the programme was highly successful in meeting the course objectives. Therefore, the Pre-Ph.D. programme at Department of Education, University of Mumbai was significantly impactful in enhancing research skills amongst research scholars in education.

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