

# Education, State, and Psychology : A Study of Students' Pre - and Post-Perceptions of Training Intervention

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## Abstract

The study undertaken was an endeavor to understand the pre- and post-effects of state intervention on the perceptions of the ultimate stakeholders, that is, students engaged in education at the college level, with regard to their perceptions toward the effort taken by the state in enhancing higher education possibilities, their attitudes toward the state, and the level of trust that these students had in terms of the perception about education system practices and policies that are formulated by the state and ability of the government to bring about education reforms. The study used a quasi-experimental design. A self-constructed questionnaire containing 57 items was administered to 145 students. Cronbach's alpha reliability of the questionnaire was found to be .95. Our study sample comprised of education institutes at the undergraduate level in and around Delhi - NCR. This was followed by an awareness training by faculty about government interventions with regard to the policies introduced for enhancing the quality of education. The same set of students was asked to fill the questionnaire again after the sensitivity intervention to record their post-intervention responses. Personal interview technique was also used to probe certain issues to get further clarity. A paired *t*-test was used to compare two population means, wherein we had students engaged in an intervention and a pre- and post-analysis was conducted. The paper highlighted a clear requirement of many such government interventions and approaches to implement them at the realistic level on the one hand, and enforcement of psychological understanding and protean career orientation by faculty and institutions on the other hand.

**Keywords :** education, political system, pre- and post-intervention, psychology, state

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As India goes on to emerge as a knowledge-based economy, its major strength resides in its human capital. The need to garner the human capital highlights many loopholes in India's infrastructure for delivery of education, especially higher education. The structure of the educational institutions is largely affected by the political system in India. The Indian political system has a federal setup and the Constitution makes "education" as the primary responsibility of both: the Centre and the State (PriceWaterhouse Coopers, 2012). There is a common consensus that the social and economic progress of India depends on its education and its realization depends on the powers responsible for its policy formulation (Naik, n.d.). The Government of India is trying to bring up its higher education at par with those of universities abroad. There has been a constant rise in the number of academic institutions coming up in India in the last decade. There are more than 329 universities under government, 102 universities under private, and 130 universities under deemed banners in India that are majorly

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working in imparting higher education to the generations of this nation. With so much basic structure and millions of students enrolled in different courses in these institutions, it becomes imperative for the government to make tremendous effort to acquire trust of people, especially students, so that their policies can actually reach to the right clientele. The trust vested in the government is composed of different factors like legitimate experiences with the political and administrative systems and some particular experiences with the government and its services (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2001).

Trust in government has both institutional and personal aspects, which means people may trust the central political leaders and officials at the administration or state level. On the other hand, they may trust the system but not the actors involved in the decision-making (Christensen & Lægheid, 2005). Proximity also plays a significant role in the trust of public in the government. The officials who are close by are trusted more than those who are not, and the far ones are believed to be lazy and incompetent. The attitudes of the students seeking courses in higher education depend on many personal factors such as urge to continue studies, employment opportunities, family support, and family income. They consider higher education to be a normal extension to undergraduate studies and do not consider it to add some value to their resumes. In addition, the courses seem to be very expensive for a normal average household in India (Maheswari & Haridas, 2013).

Although the government has launched many schemes addressing this segment of people, it has failed to generate trust of its people in these schemes. The major issue that arises is of “awareness” as these schemes are most talked of on the Internet and web portals that is not readily accessible by the masses. The government machinery does not seem to be well equipped with its approach in reaching people and making them aware about their schemes, which eventually leads to their failure ("Why does Government fail to implement a scheme successfully?" 2016). In the light of “new career” concepts such as protean career orientation, it has become imperative for the students to make career decisions based on their personal value system and self-directedness. This orientation transforms the way they think and behave, which further affects their trust and attitude level (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). According to Kumar and Shekhar (2017), knowledge sharing plays a pivotal role in Indian higher education that enables the academic stakeholders to take critical decisions.

Studies in the similar area have focused majorly on the internal environment of the Indian higher education system and we could not find much published information about measuring the pre- and post-perceptions of the respondents with respect to any intervention made by the government. The present study attempts to map the perceptions of the budding professionals concerning the efforts taken by the government toward education, their trust in the schemes proposed by the government, and attitudes that they hold for the political system of India. Furthermore, their perceptions have been mapped when state interventions/schemes launched by the government and implemented by the state were explained to the students. The very nature of the study accentuates the need to look into the reasons responsible for the responses received. The study can help the higher authorities, regulatory bodies, and academia at large.

## **Literature Review**

The higher education system of India stands third in the world after the United States and China. It boasts of nearly 45,000 academic institutions and over 26 million students enrolled in different courses (Shaguri, 2013). The federal structure of the government in India distributes responsibility of delivering higher education at two levels: the Centre and the State. The agencies playing a significant role in the policy making of higher education in India are :

- (1)** Ministry of Human Resource Development, responsible for laying down the National Policy on Education.
- (2)** Central Advisory Board of Education, striking coordination between the Centre and the State in the field of education.

**(3) State Councils for Higher Education**, maintaining coordination between government, universities and other regulatory agencies in the State.

These authorities have a major task of formulating and delivering policies to the public in their intact form. For this, trust of the public has to exist in this political system. Trust plays an important role in understanding the relationship of public with political actors. The behavior of citizens in a democratic government is also moderated by this trust (Seyd, 2016). Easton (1965) opined that trust in government encompasses two main components: process and output ; process is more concerned with the decision-making and approach to problems, solutions, rules, and competence of the officials ; whereas, output refers to the result that people get by supporting their government. In India, the prevailing practices involve a lot of corruption, which is deteriorating the trust of the public in the policies laid by the government. The political actors involved in the policy formulations are believed to derive personal profit motives, and thus, tarnish their image in the eyes of the masses (Borah, 2012). High political trust is said to be related to a better economy, whereas lack of political trust is believed to lead to less effective implementation of reforms and schemes in a nation (Zmerli & Hooghe, 2011). The youths do not seem to take interest and seek involvement in the political affairs of their country, which is a serious attitudinal issue. In addition, when citizens of different mindsets, orientations, and attitudes interact on a daily basis, it is believed to affect political trust (Zmerli & Newton, 2008). The government, on the other hand, is working day and night at its end to bring up schemes that can be beneficial for the students aiming to pursue higher education courses in order to change this attitude of our youth.

Some of the schemes are : (a) Higher Education and Skill Development Credit Guarantee Scheme has been launched with an initial corpus of ₹10 lakhs, which will be given by banks at maximum of 2% more than the base interest rate to be paid in 15 years ; (b) Merit cum Means Scholarship : Scholarship scheme would be a fee waiver scheme for the needy students who pursue higher studies in any of the state universities of Delhi. A 100% fee waiver for category of students coming from a BPL family, 50% fee waiver for students from families with income upto ₹ 2.5 lakhs per annum, and 25% fee waiver for students from families with income above ₹ 2.5 lakhs and not exceeding ₹ 6 lakhs per annum ; (c) Yuva Nirman Scheme : Scholarship/reimbursement of half of the tuition fee to socially and economically backward students of professional courses (non-technical) in universities in Delhi ; and (d) Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme : It provides financial assistance to SC students studying at post-matriculation or post-secondary stage to enable them to complete their education (Directorate of Higher Education, Government of NCT of Delhi, 2017).

There has been a slight shift in the attitude of students in the light of these reforms and attempts made by the government. Many senior officials have been seen promoting these schemes at different portals physically and through the web. Although the awareness campaigns are restricted to very limited places and are not in the remotely located constituencies, students have welcomed these initiatives ("Delhi govt. to spread awareness among students against bursting crackers," 2017). However, the role of the faculty cannot be ignored in this context. The quality of teachers is also of prime importance in establishing this trust and maintaining attitudes of the students toward the existing political system of education in India. The recruitment practices are also believed to be corrupted by the system and, hence, the general masses feel that this reduced quality of faculty will result in an uninformed student force that will be clueless about their career direction later (Kingdon & Muzammil, 2008).

The career decisiveness of the students is largely affected by the trends that are prevalent in the employment environment globally. One such latest phenomenon is that of "protean career" that focuses on the self-directedness and values driven approach to pursue a career or take decisions about it. The ability to take better decisions along with resilience and personality dispositions is said to affect the psychological well-being of the students (Venkatesan & Rohatgi, 2018). The concept of protean career is psychological in nature and depends entirely on an individual. Thus, protean-oriented students are supposed to be responsible, self-aware, and free at

will to make their own career choices (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). The personal values of an individual can affect attitude-based cognitions, which further can affect career decision-making and behavior of the students. The self-directed orientation leads one's actions toward a particular aim. Therefore, a protean orientation consists of (a) cognitive element, (b) behavioral component, and (c) evaluative aspect (Fearon, Nachmias, McLaughlin, & Jackson, 2018). The psychological nature of these phenomena makes them much intrinsic to an individual and thus much affected by one's own self. The garnering of this orientation, however, can lead to a better understanding of the environment in which individuals have to make decisions. The introduction of this concept can be brought about by the faculty at the academic institutions to propagate the idea of self-interest and can act as a catalyst for government by bridging the gap. This study has been conducted on the students pursuing higher education courses in Delhi - NCR and focuses on their trust vested in the political system of education in India, perceptions toward effort made by the government, attitudes toward such efforts, and their protean career orientation in light of these efforts. Very few studies have been conducted in this area and empirical research is very scanty. The research findings will benefit regulatory bodies at State and Central levels, administrators, and academia at large.

## Research Methodology

The study undertaken is an endeavor to understand the pre- and post-effects of state intervention on the perception of the ultimate stakeholders, that is, students engaged in education at the college level, with regard to their perceptions toward the effort taken by the state in enhancing higher education possibilities, their attitudes toward the state, and the level of trust that these students have in terms of the perceptions about education system practices and policies formulated by the state, and ability of the government to bring about education reforms. The study has a quasi-experimental design to study the effect of interventions and government and state initiatives for enhancing the quality of higher education in the Delhi - NCR region.

A self-constructed questionnaire on the trust of the effort taken by the government, attitudes toward the state, and protean career orientation based on literature review was used for the purpose of the survey. A questionnaire containing 57 items on a 5 - point Likert agreement scale has been used to measure the responses, including demographic and few dichotomous questions. To check the validity of the questionnaire, it was subjected to review by experts. Cronbach's alpha reliability of the questionnaire was found to be .95. Our study comprised of education institutes at undergraduate level in and around Delhi - NCR. The study was conducted with 145 students who responded to the questionnaire on the above - mentioned parameters. This was followed by an awareness training by faculty regarding government interventions about the policies introduced for enhancing the quality of education. The same set of students was asked to fill the questionnaire again after the sensitivity intervention to record their post-intervention responses. The personal interview technique was also used to probe certain issues further to get clarity. The duration of the study was from December 2018 – March 2019. In the light of the above discussion and literature review, the following hypotheses have been formulated :

- ↪ **H<sub>01</sub>** : There is no significant difference in pre- and post-perceptions toward the trust students have in the state in enhancing their education system.
- ↪ **H<sub>2</sub>** : There is a significant difference in perceptions of students regarding attitudes toward the state in enhancing quality of education system pre- and post-intervention training.
- ↪ **H<sub>3</sub>** : There is a significant difference in perceptions of students toward efforts taken by the state in enhancing quality of education system pre- and post-intervention training.
- ↪ **H<sub>4</sub>** : There is no correlation between protean career orientation and perceptions of students toward effort taken

by the state, attitudes toward the state, and trust students have in the state in enhancing quality of education system post-intervention training.

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

A paired  $t$ -test is used to compare two population means wherein we had students engaged in an intervention and a pre- and post-analysis was conducted such that before-and-after observations on the same subjects were recorded by means of a structured questionnaire, in which observations in one sample could be paired with observations in the other sample.

To test the hypothesis  $H_{01}$  with regard to the perception toward the trust students have in the state in enhancing their education system, pre-training ( $M = 3.2717$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ) and post-training ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 0.486$ ) means are recorded in Table 1. Prior to conducting the analysis, the assumption of normally distributed difference scores was examined. The assumption is considered satisfied as the skewness and kurtosis levels are well within the acceptable limits of  $\pm 2$  (Field, 2000 ; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014 ; Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). Table 2 shows the correlation between the pre- and post-training observations ( $r = 0.549$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that paired  $t$ -test is appropriate in this case. In Table 3, the null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) that there is no significant difference in perceptions toward the trust students have in the state in enhancing their education system is rejected ( $t = -3.183$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). There exists a significant difference in the perceptions regarding the trust students have in the state pre-training

**Table 1. Paired Sample's Statistics**

		Mean	N	SD	Std. Error Mean
<b>Pair 1</b>	Students' trust in the initiatives taken by the State (Pre)	3.2717	145	.87263	.07247
	Students' trust in the initiatives taken by the State (Post)	3.4897	145	.86335	.07170

**Table 2. Paired Sample's Correlations**

		N	Correlation	Sig.
<b>Pair 1</b>	Students' trust in the initiatives taken by the State (Pre & Post)	145	.549	.000

**Table 3. Paired Sample's Test**

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
					Lower	Upper		
<b>Pair 1</b>	Students' trust in the initiatives taken by the State (Pre & Post)	-0.21793	.82442	.06846	-.35326	-.08261	-3.183	.002

and post-training. The students' perceptions of trust in the state are strengthened in the post-training observations. This is because the trust in the education system is more of a belief now with the backup of great policies already established since the times of gurukuls in India (Kashalkar - Karve, 2013). The trust is strengthened as students feel that the intelligent brains working in shape of officers from the Indian Administrative Services (well recognized for their capable disposition in India) on the conceptualization of policies are definitely going to boost the quality of the education system (Maheswari & Haridas, 2013). The post-training means are statistically significantly higher than the pre-training means. At the conceptual level, the awareness of the policies through the training hence helped to further endorse the trust that students have in the system.

To test the hypothesis  $H_2$  with regard to the perception of the students toward attitude of the state in enhancing quality of education system, pre-training ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = .42$ ) and post-training ( $M = 3.25$ ,  $SD = .41$ ) means are recorded in Table 6. Prior to conducting the analysis, the assumption of normally distributed difference scores is examined. The assumption is considered satisfied as the skewness and kurtosis levels are well within the acceptable limits of  $\pm 2$  (Field, 2000 ; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014; Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). In Table 4, the correlation between the pre- and post-training observations is ( $r = .554$ ,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting that paired  $t$ -test is appropriate in this case. In Table 5, the hypothesis ( $H_2$ ) that there is a significant difference in perception of students regarding attitudes toward the state in enhancing quality of education system pre- and post-intervention training is rejected ( $t = -1.5$ ). There exists no difference in the perceptions regarding students' perceptions of the state pre-training and post-training. The students' perceptions of attitudes toward the state are mapped by their

**Table 4. Paired Sample's Correlations**

		<i>N</i>	Correlation	Sig.
<b>Pair 1</b>	Students' attitude toward the initiatives taken by the State (Pre & Post)	145	.554	.000

**Table 5. Paired Sample's Test**

		Paired Differences				<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	<i>SD</i>	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
					Lower	Upper		
<b>Pair 1</b>	Students' attitude toward the initiatives taken by the State (Pre & Post)	-0.05204	.39883	.03312	-.11750	.01343	-1.571	.118

**Table 6. Paired Sample's Statistics**

		Mean	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>	Std. Error Mean
<b>Pair 1</b>	Students' attitude toward the initiatives taken by the State (Pre)	3.2019	145	0.42673	0.03544
	Students' attitude toward the initiatives taken by the State (Post)	3.2539	145	0.41741	0.03466



skepticism regarding the authorities in terms of implementing the policies fairly and transparently. Not only this, the Indian education system has been engulfed by many benefits given to students from specific caste, creed, and regions, which could have been the cause of apprehension of the students that fairness in execution was in question (Shaguri, 2013). Despite training, the attitude failed to strengthen in a positive direction for the state. At the attitudinal level, the effect of real implementation, which was endorsed even in the personal interview sessions on a one-to-one basis conducted by the researchers, was under scanner for the students.

Paired *t*-test is applied to test the hypothesis  $H_3$  with regard to the perception of students toward efforts taken by the state in enhancing quality of the education system. In Table 7, pre-training ( $M = 3.39$ ,  $SD = .80$ ) and post-training ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = .83$ ) means are recorded. Prior to conducting an analysis, the assumption of normally distributed difference score is examined. The assumption is considered satisfied as the skewness and kurtosis levels are well within the acceptable limits of  $\pm 2$  (Field, 2000 ; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014 ; Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). In Table 8, the correlation between the pre- and post-training observations are ( $r = .585$ ,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting that paired *t*-test is appropriate in this case. In Table 9, the hypothesis ( $H_3$ ) that there is a significant difference in perceptions of students toward effort taken by the state in enhancing quality of education system pre- and post-intervention training is rejected ( $t = -1.827$ ). There exists no difference in the perceptions regarding students' perceptions of the state pre-training and post-training. The students' perceptions about effort taken by the state are mapped by their belief that the government is more involved in promotional activities rather than working at the grass-root level. Despite training, their perception regarding the effort taken by the state failed to strengthen in a positive direction for the state. At the effort level, they believe in more action than words by media and the state, and even the faculty who are the stakeholders of enhancing quality of higher education. There is a need to give impetus to walk the talk and deliver results by all the stakeholders involved in enhancing the education system in the country ("Why does Government fail to implement a scheme successfully?" 2016).

Table 10 depicts the Pearson moment correlation used to measure the relationship between respondents' perceptions toward protean career orientation (measured through self-directedness and value-driven approach),

**Table 7. Paired Sample's Statistics**

		Mean	N	SD	Std. Error Mean
<b>Pair 1</b>	Effort taken by the State (Pre)	3.3903	145	.80849	.06714
	Effort taken by the State (Post)	3.5041	145	.83748	.06955

**Table 8. Paired Sample's Correlations**

		N	Correlation	Sig.
<b>Pair 1</b>	Effort taken by the State (Pre & Post)	145	.585	.000

**Table 9. Paired Sample's Test**

		Paired Differences					<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	<i>SD</i>	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
						Lower	Upper		
Pair 1	Effort taken by the state (Pre & Post)	-0.11379	.74996.	.06228	-.23690	.00931	-1.827	144	.070

**Table 10. Correlations**

		Protean Career Orientation (Post)	Students' Trust in the Initiatives Taken by the State (Post)	Efforts Taken by the State (Post)	Students' Attitude Toward the Initiatives Taken By the State (Post)
Protean career orientation (Post)	Pearson Correlation	1	.681**	.676**	.613**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.000	.000	.000
	<i>N</i>	145	145	145	145
Students' trust in the initiatives taken by the State (Post)	Pearson Correlation	.681**	1	.908**	.820**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	-	.000	.000
	<i>N</i>	145	145	145	145
Effort taken by the State (Post)	Pearson Correlation	.676**	.908**	1	.831**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	-	.000
	<i>N</i>	145	145	145	145
Students' attitude toward the initiatives taken by the state (Post)	Pearson Correlation	.613**	.820**	.831**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	-
	<i>N</i>	145	145	145	145

**Note.** \*\* Denotes statistical significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

attitudes of students toward the state ( $r = .613, p \leq .01$ ), effort taken by the state ( $r = .676, p \leq .01$ ), and trust in state ( $r = .681, p \leq .01$ ). There is a positive correlation between the different variables of state's perceptions and protean career orientation, signifying the relevance of self-directedness and value-driven approach, which is otherwise intrinsically determined. Although research signifies that protean career orientation is more psychological in its approach, the more this approach will be strengthened at the graduate level through various means, the greater will be the positive orientation toward the state and the effort taken by the state. This is because it was observed that students who are self-motivated for their career try to harness every opportunity that is provided rather than rely only on the state's assistance. Hence, the hypothesis  $H_4$  is refuted.

## Managerial Implications

The research throws light and gives new food for thought for researchers, policyholders, and regulators of the education system who now need to work parallel on two planes.

On the one side, they need to strengthen the base and linkage with their stakeholders in terms of putting incremental effort and working toward deliverables, and on the other side, at the level of making our students self-directed and self-oriented. If the focus is on only providing opportunities, it may lead to overdependence. The education system in India, since its genesis, has been working on 360 degree development. Hence, the state, faculty, and systems have to join hands to work at the individual student level by giving them ease in terms of assistance, yet it would be incomplete if the interventions at the disburser, that is, faculty level are not done to enhance and inculcate self-directedness and value-driven approach in students. The teaching pedagogy, if well equipped with the latest technology, can have a significant impact on the learning and awareness levels of the students (Nath, Behura, Kumar, Kanak, & Sundararajan, 2019).

The research is conducted in a quasi-experimental design setup, and hence, many variables are uncontrollable, and therefore, it has many constraints. The data were collected from an experimental group of few students and need to be revalidated at the greater level. However, this paper is a small yet important step to identify the relationships and map perceptions about factors in purview. It presents a clear requirement of many such



government interventions and approaches to implement them at the realistic level on the one hand, and enforcement of psychological understanding and protean career orientation by faculty and institutions on the other hand. We, as a nation, have to start working from both sides wherein the faculty and the state join hands to develop professionals with interventions in terms of policies, practices for professional development and assistance, and psychological interventions for garnering strong student protean career orientation for the kind of skilled youth we are looking forward to excel at the global level.

## Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

There are certain limitations of the study that open avenues for further research. The study was conducted on a limited sample and, hence, the results cannot be generalized for the entire segment of students. The time to conduct the study posed another constraint. The future studies can involve faculty as respondents as teachers are considered as carriers of knowledge and information since Vedic times. Thus, their personal competencies and emotional intelligence levels can also influence students' overall development (Joshi & Bisht, 2019). This was endorsed by Sangeetha and Natarajan (2019) in their study that emotional intelligence and teaching efficacy positively affected the self-esteem of the faculty.

Further research can be done on a larger sample, and academicians responsible for making strategic decisions must be contacted for their views on the similar aspects or findings so obtained.

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