

Documenting primary school teaching in mumbai (india)

[Education](#), [Teaching](#)



Introduction

A century ago, when we look back at the educational situation, it can be seen that the concept of 'primary education' was not seeded in the minds of the people. Most of the countries focussed on education as knowing of their religious needs rather than a preparation for one's active life. Only in 19th century did most countries make primary education compulsory and people began regarding education as a right (Amrunga & Gerald, 1999). Children usually enrol in primary schools by the age of 6 and it evolves as a five-year cycle and primary education forms as a basis for all further education and schooling and it is also the foundation to cope with the changing world and society (Pollard & Bourne, 1995). India's primary education is like a glass which is two-third full and one third empty having 67 million children aged 6 to 10 years attending primary schooling but 28 to 32 million children who are not (World Bank Publication, 1997). Millions of young children hailing from lower socio-economic, comprising nearly 40% never complete their primary schooling and those who can have to face a number of problems like poor qualified teachers, very high teacher-student ratio, inadequate teaching materials (Saxena, 2005). All these factors contribute to low quality of education that imparts only little or no learning. Teachers teaching in primary schools account for the largest steadily growing profession in India, with nearly 2.8 million primary and upper primary teachers employed in the year 2000 (Tilak, 1995)

It is rightly said 'upon the teacher rests the school'; the 'teacher' becomes the prime revitalizing force and plays a pivotal role in the education system.

Good teacher is the one who is T- thoughtful, E- Enthusiastic, A-Ambitious, C- Creative, H- Having high dignity, E- Executiveness and R- Reliability and it is the teacher who helps the child to build his self-concept (Devasenathipati, 2001). According to Miyan & Rastogi (2005), a primary school teacher can be called as 'competent' only when she/he has a varied range of knowledge in all spheres and skills to achieve her/his goals. Primary schooling is very complex as teachers introduce the children to mathematics, science, language and other social studies which can be very tough and boring for the children, so the onus lies in the hand of the teacher to make all these subjects interesting by using various techniques of teaching like games, music, books etc (Richardson & Stop, 1998). 'A unique human being- the teacher' who has to play multiple roles; of a listener, leader, psychological diagnostician etc and requires her/his total self, the personal and professional side to shape the personality of the child (Spodek, 1972).

In India till the 18th century, education was confined to conventional beliefs and thoughts. It was only later when great thinkers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy felt the urgency to introduce an 'institution for training teachers' to help the students cope with the changing educational system around the world (Saxena, 2005). Cheng (1996) commented that "A teacher with 'low educational efficacy' believes that education cannot affect student's performance, whereas a teacher with 'high educational efficacy' believes that education does positively affect learning outcomes. High educational efficacy has been constantly correlated with child centred (developmentally appropriate) environments and positive student outcomes". Developmentally

Appropriate Practice (DAP) is a term coined by the 'National Association for the Education of Young Children' which talks about the teaching techniques that identify and foster the developmental needs of children (Bredekamp, 1997). Documenting these practices which can be named as 'best practices' will help teachers to enhance their skills and help them improve for the better, at the same time documentation will also prove as a link between the teaching fraternities globally giving birth to more systematic and educational system along with this it will be a boon for the upcoming generation of teachers to adopt these protocols.

Hypothesis & Rationale

Many a time's teachers are criticised for not doing their best in schools. There could be many reasons; either it could be ineffectiveness of the teacher or lack of resources. Hence it will be very useful to identify the best/healthy practices carried out by teachers with or without resources. This study will help in knowing and understanding the teacher's effectiveness in primary schools and documenting the best practices so that other teachers who work under similar circumstances with similar goals and constraints get an idea of effective teaching. The teachers will be observed, recorded and documented in 4 areas: Teacher as a Person, Teacher as a Professional, Teacher's Interpersonal Relationship and Qualities of the Teacher.

Literature Review

The literature is based on past researches done on teachers and primary school teaching and it is presented on the following subtopics:

Teacher's Quality

Teacher's Interpersonal Skills

Teacher's Qualification

Documentation of the best practices

Primary school teachers and primary education

Teacher's Quality

According to Hammond (2000) teachers preparations and teachings are the strongest correlations of the student's achievement and teacher's quality is the most vital educational investment. Similarly Rvikin, Hanushek and Kain (1998) reported the student's performance outcomes to the teacher's quality, they analysed 400, 000 students in 3000 schools from New York, which concluded that school quality is the most important factor in students achievement however teacher's quality is the most important predictor whereas size and teacher education plays a very small role.

Relationship between teachers' personality and academic and social development was analysed by Heil and Washburne (1998). They found out that children made the greatest progress under the guidance of self-controlled teacher and least under fearful teachers. They also reported that children seem to grow as friendlier under self-controlled teachers.

Teacher's Interpersonal Skills

Dasgupta (2004) observed that those teachers who had a strong interest in their students as individuals and were sensitive to their needs, the students could relate themselves with such teachers in a much better way creating a

level of comfort with them. On the other hand, those teachers who are friendly but make no attempt to know their students, the children feel anxious being with them and they even doubted the teacher's ability to perform. Similarly, those teachers who did not show any interest, the students believed that the teacher had a very low ability to perform and was low self-motivated.

A significant body of research reported that academic achievement and students' behaviour is influenced by the quality of the teacher-student relationship. It also suggests that the emotional aspect of the teacher-student relationship is far more important than the conventional advice on methods and techniques of teaching (Gerald, 1999)

Teacher's Qualification

Cheng (1996) conducted a study on high school students' performance using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Studies (1998) and found that fully certified teachers have a significant positive impact on student test scores as compared to teachers who are not well qualified and certified.

Heil (1998) through his study concluded that teachers who had been out from teacher education since long and were away from on-going professional development lacked familiarity with current knowledge. She also commented that there was a significant difference in strength of developmentally appropriate practice beliefs between novice teachers and veteran teachers. The more oriented teachers scored significantly high on measures of developmentally appropriate practices.

Documentation of the best practices

A study was conducted by Miyan in 2005 documenting the best practices on 25 children in 7 schools and it was seen that the most prominent best practices carried out were providing children with positive reinforcement, treating all children equally, spontaneity while teaching and innovativeness in teaching methods.

Similar study conducted by Rastogi (2005) found out that the best teaching practices were using teaching aids and creative methods to teach like dramatizations, providing children with a stimulating environment.

Primary school teachers and primary education

According to Dasgupta (2004), 'play' should be the central activity of children even in primary schools and primary school teachers should teach children using the play way method as it helps children to relate to what is being taught. Introducing games in classroom is one of the ways of encouraging cooperation and motivating the children to study and learn the concepts.

Washburne (1998) surveyed primary school children to see the kind of the teachers liked by them and those who were disliked. He found that physical characteristics such as grooming, nice voice, and pleasing personality were found to be more important along with teacher's qualities like interest in teaching, enthusiasm, innovativeness etc. At the same time children also laid

equal emphasis on the personality traits like being cheerful, fair, non-judgemental etc.

Methodology

Aims & Objectives

To identify and document the ‘ best practices’ of teachers, nominated as ‘ effective teachers’ by principals/supervisors

To identify the practices that need improvement

To observe, record and document the ‘ best practices’ of primary school teachers in 4 areas: Teacher as a Person, Teacher as a Professional, Teacher’s Interpersonal Relationship and Qualities of the Teacher.

To compare the teachers best practices in relation to the fee structure

To compare the teachers best practices in relation to his/her years of teaching experience

To compare teachers best practices in relation to the teacher child ratio.

Operational Definitions

Effective Teachers: These are the teachers having innovative and creative teaching practices and who will be nominated by the principals/supervisors

Primary Teacher: Teacher teaching to children in 1st and 2nd grade

Low Fee Structured Schools: Schools having fees ranging from Rs. 15/- to Rs. 350/- per month

High Fee Structured Schools: Schools having fees ranging from Rs. 350/- to Rs. 450/- per month

Data Collection

Sample

Primary school teachers serving in the schools having low and high fee structure and located in Mumbai, India will be approached using an introductory letter. The schools will be selected keeping in mind the indicators like fee structure, location of schools, medium of instruction and minimum 5 years of establishment. 10 schools will be approached and nearly 30 teachers will be observed and interviewed. From these 10 schools, 5 schools will represent schools having low fee structure and remaining 5 schools will represent high fee structure.

Research Design

The school authorities will be approached with a prior appointment and the school supervisor/principal will be given an introductory letter conveying the nature of the research (refer to appendix 2). The information and the facts about the school (profile of the school) will be obtained from the authorities including details of the school like the name, number of teaching staff, fee structure, teacher-child ratio etc. The principal/supervisor will be asked to nominate three teachers who according to them are effective in their teaching, in short who are exemplary. The teachers will be given a consent form (refer to appendix 1) which will agree their part-taking in the research.

Research Tools

The research tools that will be used for this study will be a fact sheet, an observation record & documentation sheet along with an interview questionnaire. The sample of the research tools is provided in the appendix.

The fact sheet will have two parts to it; first it will help in gathering the profile of the school and second one to gather the nomination of the teachers made by the principal/supervisor (Refer to appendix 3)

The observation record sheet will be again divided in two parts. First part will focus on gathering the teacher's profile (age, qualification, number of years of experience) whereas the second part of the sheet will help in observing the nominated teacher in four criteria namely- Teacher as a Person, Teacher's Interpersonal Relationship, Teacher as a professional and Qualities of the Teacher (Refer appendix 4a. & 4b). The documentation sheet will help in documenting the best practices of teachers along with those practices which need improvement. This will also help in understanding the teacher-child interaction and noting down the minuscule but important details of classroom teaching (Refer to appendix 5)

The interview questionnaire will help in interacting with the teachers on one to one basis. The nominated teachers will be interviewed on the basis of the four criteria namely- Teacher as a Person, Teacher's Interpersonal Relationship, Teacher as a professional and Qualities of the Teacher. The interview will consist of open end questions will be give a chance to the

teachers to be more expressive, so that all the details could be captured.

(Refer appendix 6)

To summarise, the researcher will visit the schools during the school hours for observation. Observation will be done for each teacher for 3 days and each session would be for an hour. The observation record sheet and the documentation sheet will be carried to the classroom to record the verbal comments as well as the non-verbal gestures of the teachers along with the recording of the best practices. So the researcher will observe 3 teachers for 3 days in each school (schools having high as well as low fee structure), one hour per teacher in each school. The researcher will then interview the teachers during the school hours according to the convenience of the teachers. The interview session would approximately last for an hour.

Data Analysis

The observation record sheet will be analysed both quantitatively as well as qualitatively where as the documentation and interview sheet will be analysed qualitatively only. The data for the quantitative analysis will be encoded using the SPSS and co-relational analysis will be conducted for the statistical analysis. The data for the qualitative analysis will be encoded using the analysing conversation technique and the IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) so that a rich data is collected.

Reliability and Validity of the research

To understand the reliability and validity of the research, a pilot study will be conducted on two schools. During the pilot study the effectiveness of the tool will be checked. A meta-analysis can also be conducted to understand the nature of previous researches done and certain improvisations in the present study can be made on the basis of the systematic review of meta-analysis.

Ethical Issues

Any research and the practical applications of the procedures come under the scrutiny of professional ethics (Anastasi & Urbina, 2004). Even for this research certain ethical issues have to be taken care of in a systematic manner. A formal approval will be taken from the principals/supervisors of the school who decide to become a part of the study, even the nominated teachers would be asked if they would like to participate and be one of the respondents, they will also be entitled to sign a consent form. All the data collected will be confidential. No one except the researcher will be allowed to access that data. There are no foreseeable risks involved with the tools used for the research. They will be assured that all their information will be kept confidential and privacy will be maintained. While conducting the observations and interview there could be some risk involved like anxiety and questions in the respondents mind. All the participants will be explained the nature of the study, objectives. They will be assured that all their information will be kept confidential and privacy will be maintained.

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