

Pedagogical Process and Issues of Learning Social Studies at Upper Primary Schools in a Slum Area of Maharashtra

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to analyse the classroom observation and insight of the teachers during the social studies teaching-learning process at upper primary schools nearby slum dominated area of Mumbai Urban and Suburban district of Maharashtra State. The main focus of classroom observation was to discuss the problems of teachers and students during social studies pedagogical practices and process with regards to involvement of learners, use of different strategies, assessment and feedback practices, assess the joyful learning, use of TLM and ICT integration in teaching-learning process. The data triangular method was used for theme-wise analysis of pedagogical process from three different characteristics of sample schools under study. It is found that teachers faced problem in communicating the content of social studies, rare participation of students in group activities, too meek to ask question and clear doubt in classroom even provided the freedom and opportunities to students, more specifically who belongs to socio-economic backwards area of slum students. It is suggested that teachers must highlight the connection between text and context and also they should provide space for articulation of thoughts of students in the classroom through various student-centric activities. The importance would be given to those teachers who are significantly dealing with the classroom situation in a democratic way by providing equal opportunity to all the students, more over to those who belongs to slums and underprivileged section of society.

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INTRODUCTION

Learning of children at upper primary level is indispensable in the pedagogical process of present global educational scenario. Because the lack of learning experience among different backgrounds of children affects quality of education in the subsequent classes. Many programmes and policies have been initiated by government of India for improvement of quality basic education for all children, like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). SSA provides interventions for children out of school through learning enhancement programmes including innovative activity for girls' education and children with special needs, early childhood care and education, provide equal opportunity for improving human capabilities and life skill for all children, incentive for children belonging to SC/ST, minority community, deprived children from slums in urban areas and computer education to bridge the gap in digital world specially for upper primary level. Thus, the main focus of Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 is the responsibilities and accountability of teachers in education systems would need to ensure that children are learning with right in an environment as free from stress and anxiety (Sec. 29) and less burden on curriculum. Even after the implementation of SSA and RTE Act, 2009 in the country, the researcher raises question like *is there any increased participation of diverse*

children in the schools to change the traditional composition of classrooms today? This needs to address the learning difficulties and potentiality of the children from culturally diverse background (Surehatia, 2017). In addition the curriculum and teaching strategies required to be changed to cater the needs of all the children.

The issue of learning social studies is important and of major concern at the elementary level in the context of modern education system. The teachers in 21st century should teach the students in such a way that to develop not only all such ability of the children to be more critical, creative and higher order thinking, but also facilitate how to acquire these skills in the global citizenship education. The children, therefore not only required a suitable platform in schools but also indispensable to have a conducive home learning environment. More specifically the students belong to slums and children of low socio-cultural background are facing the major challenges of learning social studies in India. A slum is an overcrowded area of a city basically inhabited by poor and migrant labour in search of employment opportunities and living condition of slum's family not so good or suitable learning platform at home environment. More over slums are a centre for many anti social activities such as crimes, drug abuse, alcoholism, etc. That is why, the teachers at upper primary level face a major challenge to cope

up with children and improvement of quality of education among them. The moment we talk about inclusive education with growth and development of children, the duty of teachers need to improve in quality of education lower strata of children in the developing countries. So, it is a matter of concern of the teachers that the students of slum and socio-economic backward children get equal opportunities of learning at school.

Social studies is the study of people in terms of their physical location, environment, economic activities, past culture and event, government, citizenship and democracy. The social studies is an important subject in school education as distinct from physical, biological and environmental science, where one can understand how human beings are behaving in the society. Society is therefore, considered as a laboratory through which children can understand the different concepts and issues in social studies. Society is changing drastically; hence there are many social issues which the students are trying to understand in the changing society. The life skill of children needs to develop to participate in debate and discussion for proper understanding of the social issues at upper primary level. Children's behaviour cannot be controlled as they belong to different backgrounds while learning and changing their activities frequently in everyday life. In this regards, research raises the question that are

the teachers developing moral and social value among the students in the teaching-learning process?

In the National Seminar on *Research in Social Science Education in Indian Schools*, organised by DESS, NCERT, New Delhi, during March 15-17, 2017 some important questions were raised related to social science classroom practices and pedagogical processes adopted by concerned teachers and schools in teaching of social studies such as— what extent they promote active participation of students in the process of generating knowledge? How dialogue with community helps in improving the quality of learning experiences? To what extent, do the classrooms encourage alternative thinking and questioning by students and going out of the classroom to engage with social reality around them? Research is needed to understand how teachers and students resolve in dealing with the issues of socio-political and cultural perspectives inbuilt in social science syllabus and textbooks (NCERT, DESS, 2017).

However, one of the very few exception to lack of qualitative research on faculty satisfaction, which set out an agenda for qualitative research approach to assessing faculty satisfaction as a mean of helping institution retain staff (Ambrose et al, 2005). They suggest that the qualitative research work was not only enhanced by the use of semi-structured interview but also other methods of qualitative research

like ethnographic field work and participation observation. With this background, an attempt was made to study the “Classroom Observation on Pedagogical Process in Social Studies” at upper primary schools near slums area of Maharashtra state. The analytical framework of this study is based on schools’ classroom observation that whether slums and socio-culturally backwards students are facing the problems of knowledge or skill in learning social studies. This study is delimited only to the terminal Class VIII students at upper primary level.

DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

This study was based on both primary and secondary sources of data. The secondary data was collected from RAA Mumbai, SCERT, Pune and School records. Other government publications like Census of India, books, journals, newspapers etc were used. The sample of L Ward slum dominated area of Mumbai Suburban districts of Maharashtra State is purposively selected based on secondary database of District Census Handbook 2001 and 2011 as it was found highest around 5.85 lakhs numbers of slums populations. The location and information about three sample schools under study obtained from Regional Academic Authority (RAA), Mumbai Office. These sample schools are purposively selected on the basis of three different characteristics. Representing first one is KV, subject to scope for better

academic performance students; the second one is a BMC School selected from backward area with lack of development forces and third one is private management school i.e Mahila Mandal Madhyamik Vidhyalay, Mumbai. The total sample of 106 students and 6 social science teachers of Class VIII were taken into account of three schools selected under study.

The variables with regards to social studies classroom observation on pedagogical aspects and practices such as involvement of learners, teaching strategies, assessment practices, joyful learning, TLM and ICT integration during teaching-learning process were taken into account to identify the learning difficulties of students and problems of teaching of teachers. A structured questionnaire for “Classroom Observation” based on above variables and principal’s information scheduled for school profile was used as a tool for primary data collection. The triangulation method was used to analyse qualitative data collected through school profile and classroom observation schedule with regards to teachers and students of three sample schools as well as perspective of principal investigator.

PROFILE OF SAMPLE SCHOOLS

The three sample schools are co-educational institutions at different level such as primary to senior secondary in KV where as only secondary level in private school and

both primary and secondary level in BMC School. The KV and BMC School have beautiful campuses with availability of classroom and better financial and administrative support to initiate different innovative ideas like ICT enabled education, use of various learning resource, provision of in-service teacher training programme etc. But, these facilities are not available to the same degree in the private school and located at overcrowded area as adjacent to Kurla railways station. In this study, the maximum number of students from slum area were found in private school (30.19%) followed by BMC School (29.25%) and very less slum students in KV (2.83%). The academic performance of the private and BMC School were not so good as compared to KV. The infrastructural facilities with regards to educational opportunities of private school have been found to be very less as compared to KV and BMC schools.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION IN PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS

During the period of 15 days fieldwork, the total numbers of six social studies classes were observed minutely through the help of self prepared observation schedule. As NCF, 2005 gives emphasis on constructivist approach of teaching, prioritise activity-based learning and focuses on participation of learners during teaching learning process. During the classroom observation, it

was observed that how social studies teachers were teaching? Whether they were giving opportunity to all learners to participate in different activities during classes or not and Whether the teachers were making group works during class or not? Our prime objective was to observe teachers' approaches and strategies of teaching social studies as well as learning of students. After investigation, observed data have been tabulated dealing with different aspects of classroom teaching-learning process. With regards to different variables of classroom observations, an attempt was made to provide a comparative picture of how social studies teachers in different schools set up dealing with irrespective of their class.

Involvement of Learners in Teaching-learning Process

Student's participation plays an important role to make the teaching and learning process interesting, lively and effective in the classroom. This component of classroom observation deals with how social studies teachers were involving learners in teaching-learning process. It was observed that learner's participation in teaching learning process was not found in private school while up to great extent in BMC school and to some extent in KV. This implies that teachers of private school may not have adopted activity-based method to involve learners in the classroom process. It requires a fine tune of pedagogical skills and competencies

to develop the teacher's capacity by increasing knowledge and positive attitude towards different cultural background of children. Beside, this a reflective dialogue between the teacher and students would lead to lifelong learning (Awasthi, 2018). It was observed that students of both private and BMC School were to do work in small groups and encouraged by the teachers to solve different problems and assignments, but the same was not seen in KV. The students assigned work to do in small groups during class could have more benefits viz increase participation in their own learning, makes use of it in daily life, developing in-depth knowledge and skill of students.

The children got opportunities to speak during teaching-learning processess were noticed in both KV and BMC School, but not in private schools. This situation was observed in private schools because of untrained teachers and unaware about new pedagogical processes. It is important to note that a classroom is alive with debate when children feel free to express their view to learn with enjoyment. Talking with students and helping them to compile their views, opinion, thoughts and information in the process of teaching and learning. It was also observed that teachers tried to know the process of solving a question before children in both KV and BMC school, but not in a private school. Teachers should expect to promote inquiry by asking open-ended questions that provoke student

to develop thinking and conceptual clarity (Vijaysimha, 2019). The children of BMC School were given opportunities up to some extent to ask questions and frame their own query during class, not in both KV and private schools. This shows that teachers in KV and private schools were not very student friendly. There may be a possibility of more student-teacher ratios in KV, but not much awareness about new pedagogical approaches in private schools. The modern pedagogical approach has its own importance as emphasis of query and participation, but lacking it will act as barriers to learn of children from different cultural diverse groups and meaningful participation during class. Therefore, the reflective practice should be given more importance to mitigate the challenges of teaching and explore their profession as facilitators and responsibilities in emerging learning environment to perform in an excellent way. Teachers should have some less talked about issues of teaching, but opportunity of improvement through self-up gradation and wilful involvement in teaching-learning is very much important in the present system of education (Singh et al, 2016).

Use of Varieties of Teaching-learning Strategies

Earlier, teaching strategy was limited to chalk and talk method of teaching, but, in the modern days it has changed drastically due to emergence of modern strategies of teaching like

constructivist approach and activity based teaching etc. Constructivism is an underlying resurgence of theory and methods in social science research (Hedge, 2006). It provides opportunities to discover or apply ideas themselves and teaches them to be aware of their own strategies in learning (Devi, 2019). The activity-based approach is a child-centric approach and more effective than the traditional approach or teacher-centric approach (Rath and Kar, 2017; Ojha, 2018). The former approach increases interest among the students and gains basic ideas to know how to manage teaching-learning materials and learn from peers during group work. This improves the critical thinking skill. The inquiry approach is more effective than memorising facts. There is a need for a holistic approach for the education of disadvantaged children based on an analysis of contextual realities of children, their family and the community (Desai, 1989). For improvement of learning among slum and lower socio-economic background of children, the peer groups learning would be considered as one of the important strategies at upper primary level (Dubey, 2019).

In this study, it was observed that up to some extent, teachers of BMC schools used thought provoking questions, but not in KV and private school. This implies that thinking skill of students could not conceive in such schools. In case of conceptual parameter, up to some extent, teacher

made efforts for conceptual grip of children on subject matter in KV, but not that in both private and BMC School during class. It was observed that there was less conceptual clarity in the topics. Interestingly, it was also evident that up to some extent, teachers of sample schools had discussion on the topic with activity while introducing it, but they are unable to perform in creating interest on it before proceeding to teach. Students may develop interest to study that particular subject matter.

It can also be revealed that up to some extent the students of both private and BMC schools were given opportunities to exercise beyond textbook, but not in KV. It should be noted that while the teacher teaching social studies must go beyond textbook and bookish rote learning as well as link the topic with real life of children and their community. The teacher of KV summarised the content taught during the class, but not in both the private and BMC School. Summarisation plays an important role in teaching-learning process at elementary school level. Because, summarising the views of students and teacher integrates central ideas in meaningful way. Motivating students to summarise the subject-matter as taught in class for improvement of their memory would be an important strategy of learning. It could be highlighted that teachers of private school up to some extent asked students to come prepared for the next day's

topic, but not in KV and private school. It can be established that using innovative teaching methods ignites a passion for learning among the students. However, a very dismal and gloomy picture of innovative teaching strategies used by teachers was also noticed. It is evident that none of the teachers across the sample schools used innovative teaching strategies.

Assessment and Feedback during Teaching-learning

Assessment is one of the important components of teaching-learning process. It helps the students to focus on ability to evaluate by themselves and able to make judgments to take corrective measures to improve their performance. Self-assessment practices have many opportunities offered to students to develop their skills in best possible way. Assessment and feedback is therefore, itself a step at the end of lesson in the class. Assessment is indispensable for every one of us because it becomes a significant determinant of what, when and how we learn things. Feedback has a significant effect on student learning and described as the most powerful single moderator that enhances achievement (Hattie, 1999). Feedback is an essential element in assuring our student's growth progress. Proper feedback should enable and inspire students to feel good about where they are and get them excited about where they can go.

It was observed from the classroom that up to some extent the children of the private school helped in realising their mistakes through discussion in the class and vice versa in both KV and BMC School. It was very important on the part of the teacher to discuss mistakes of students and make them clarify. The observation also cleared that none of the sample schools' children got chance to check the work of each other. The teacher of BMC School up to some extent had done continuous assessment during class, but not in either KV or private school. This shows that teachers in private school were not aware of, but simply, engaged children for utilisation of their time. It is also evident that teachers did not assess previous knowledge of children before beginning any new topic in any of the sample schools. However, if we see the importance of checking prior knowledge pedagogically, it has a lot of benefits, as it is likely to increase student's ability to recall their prior knowledge and connect with new information for clear understanding. Every student comes to class with their own belief and skill, but simply teachers should create learning environment by presenting them with the problems of new information and connect with prior knowledge and experiences that influence their thinking.

To Assess the Joyful Learning of Learners in Teaching-learning of Social Studies

Joy is defined as an emotion evoked by well-being. To be joyful means experiencing delight or happiness caused by something pleasing or gratifying. Consequently, the term joyful learning in the context of education refers to the positive intellectual and emotional state of the learner(s). This experience can be achieved when an individual or group is deriving pleasure and a sense of satisfaction in a learning process. Characteristics of joyful learning include highly engaged in the experience while having a sense of wonder and curiosity (Encyclopaedia of Science Learning, 2012). Studies show that when teachers provide joyful learning environments and experiences for students, it improves engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes.

It was observed that the activities conducted up to some extent at KV and BMC School, while not in private school. The reason behind non-organisation of activity in the class was stated by a teacher that as there is scarcity of classroom space. It has also observed same things as limited space in the classroom of private school. The maximum illustrations were to some extent used during teaching in both KV and BMC School, but gloomy picture in private school. However, in all the sample schools, up to some extent students have shown enthusiasm to study social studies. It

was noticed that the teachers of both KV and BMC School had to make discussions on the introduction of lesson, but did not in private school. Up to some extent in all three schools, teachers were confident at the time of teaching. However, the teachers of both private and BMC School was able to connect their teaching with the real life situation and motivate students to think and give local examples while discussion on the topic, but it fails in KV. In all sample schools, teachers did not use variety of instructional methods in the classrooms. It poses a challenge in front of teachers to use varieties of instructional methods in their classes. A dynamic and efficient teacher can use variety of instructional methods in class and make teaching interesting and effective. Up to some extent, students were compatible with the communication of social studies teachers in all sample school. The entry behaviour of all SSTs and students compatible with their communication was up to some extent satisfactory in all sample schools. SSTs of sample schools did not use psychological principles and also was not able to link logically between known and unknown terms, facts and concepts.

Use of Teaching-learning Materials

Teaching-learning materials (TLM) in a classroom process are pivotal for successful learning achievement of students. It means the instruction of lesson depends on selection of

appropriate TLM. "Teaching Aids" is a generic term used to describe the resources used by teacher while delivering instruction. It can support student-learning. It is always not possible on the part of teachers to use standardised learning materials. Sometimes they should use local materials for effective teaching-learning process. It was noticed that the teachers of both KV and BMC School used TLMs to teach social studies while teachers of private school followed the traditional methods of chalk and talk. It has also been observed that none of the teachers in sample schools used local materials in the teaching-learning process.

ICT Integration in the Teaching-learning Process

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) integrated education through innovations and transformation of society has totally changed the way of people thinking, work culture and living pattern (Grabe, 2007). The schools and other educational institutions are supposed to prepare students to live in a "knowledge society" need to consider ICT integration in their curriculum (Ghavifekr, Afshari and Amla Salleh, 2012). In conjunction of preparing students of current digital era, teachers are seen as the key players in using ICT in their daily classrooms. This is due to the capability of ICT in providing dynamic and proactive teaching-learning

environment (Arnseth and Hatlevik, 2012). Looking at the importance of ICT integrated education in 21st century teaching-learning; it has been observed that the teachers of KV and BMC Schools used ICT up to some extent in the teaching-learning process, but not in private school. The ICT facility was not there in private school due to paucity of space and financial support to use ICT in the classrooms.

CONCLUSION, SUGGESTION AND POLICY IMPLICATION

The classroom observation on pedagogical practices and process of different sample schools has critically analysed and discussed as it is found that the problems of teaching and learning in social studies happened more or less in all sample schools. The teachers faced problem in communicating the social studies content to students of slum and socio-economic backwards area. Besides, they were also too meek to participate during discussion, group activities and did not even question or ask opportunities or freedom provided by concerned SSTs. This implies that the classroom was dry and does not creates any interest in learning. Sometimes, the teachers fail to clear the doubt of slum students by saying that they do not have any interest and want to study. Many students most of the time do not complete their home work; lack of conceptual understanding, careless

attitude towards class work, losing books and notebooks, etc.

Therefore, it can be suggested that teachers should know and identify the problems of students those who are not interested in class and try to solve using the different strategies of teaching like arrangement of extra class for weaker sections of the students. Social studies topics should be introduced creatively through a short story, newspaper article, learner's experiences, showing a video to generate curiosity and interest on the topic or concept. More TLM for conducting group work and activities by giving new opportunities to participate and ICT enabled education would be used as well and should be implemented during classroom to improve the pedagogical process and quality of school education. Teachers should study the mind of the students psychologically during classroom process. The teacher must highlight the connection between text and context in the classroom. Various child-centric activities like discussions on current topics, brain storming on controversial issues, debate on conflicting opinions, mapping of important concepts, chart preparation, role play, and poster preparation can be conducted inside the classroom. The teacher

should provide space for articulation of thoughts of the students in the classroom. The art integrated learning (AIL) should be implemented by showing more pictures to the students. A friendly environment should be provided in the classroom. In-service training should be made mandatory for all teachers to orient them with latest curriculum and pedagogical approaches. A short summary of the previous lesson would be a good exercise to help learners refresh the concept that what was taught earlier and to connect with the topic better.

The significance in the context of school education or teacher education system concludes that the importance will be given to those teachers who democratically deals with the classroom situation by providing equal opportunity to all students, more to those who belongs to slums and deprived section of society. Without improvement of the learning ability of such children there would not be possibility of inclusive growth and sustainable development of the country. So it could improve the quality of education and standard of living of the urban slum and deprived people in future.

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