

Classroom Practices in Rural Elementary Schools: A Case Study of an Elementary School in Odisha

Sankar Prasad Mohanty

Lecturer, Department of Education, Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, Odisha, India

Email: spmcuttack@gmail.com

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Abstract

It is observed that teaching by the teachers does not bear any impact on the students. The constructive approach becomes a dream. Hence, the achievement of the students lags behind in comparison to the private schools. Here, the investigators have conducted a case study of an elementary school of Odisha to assess the classroom practices of an elementary school. Majority of the teachers reported that they introducing the lesson, particularly with reference to the use of various techniques such as telling a story, asking questions related to the previous knowledge of the pupils and showing pictures, diagrams and models, even by engaging the students in different activities rather than stating topics directly introduce the lesson. The teachers also explain the topic with the help of showing different pictures, models, and diagrams to the learners and cited appropriate example and used dictionary. While discussing with the students, they said that their only cited examples in order to explain the topic and they did not show any pictures, models, and diagrams to them. The same was also observed by the observed by the investigator. The paper will present details of the study.

Keywords: Classroom practices, rural elementary school, case study

Backdrop

The Government of India has taken certain initiatives for achieving universalization of elementary education such as the scheme of SSA, 2001 (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), NCF 2005 and RTE 2009. Both the Framework and Act specifically emphasizes teachers to take care of children and also to realize their needs and diversity within their social, cultural and political contexts. As the elementary education is the most crucial stage of education spanning the first eight years of schooling which lays the foundation for the personality, attitudes, social confidence, habits, arousing interest for learning and communicating with the pupils. Here, the teacher requires engaging and boosting the learners to participate actively in an inclusive classroom and discuss the problems of the pupils. They should not only focus on transacting the curriculum for the examination oriented point of view but they should also ensure the

progress of the children from every aspect. As elementary education paves the path for higher studies which is a starting point of a child's career. The formation of a bright future rests on this level of education and for this the teachers provides a concrete platform for success. As a consequence the teacher should upgrade their knowledge to acquaint with the recent developments. It is possible only due to the in-service training programme which is highly pertinent for the enhancement of the teachers within their professional period, for producing qualitative products to the field of teaching profession and also to improve the standards of the students.

The main focus of teaching is to bring about desirable changes in the behavior of learners. It is brought about by the teacher using teaching learning strategies to achieve his objectives. But traditionally we have been using teaching methods for content

presentation. The concept of teaching has been shifted to learning. A great teacher like a great doctor is one who adds creativity and inspiration to the basic repertoire. Teaching learning can take place inside as well as the outside classroom. Classroom system includes three aspects: Input, process, Output as presented in following table:

A programme is said to be successful if its outcomes are maximized amongst the students in terms of development of necessary skills, values and attitudes. Quality lies in its processes. Good quality inputs coupled with weak processes may not lead to desired outcomes. It is general perception that the conditions of urban elementary schools are in a miserable condition as compared to urban elementary school. Hence the investigator is keen to study the classroom processes of a rural elementary school.

Grades 3-5 teachers representing urban, suburban, and rural schools. The objectives of the study is teachers indicated the extent to which they used various factors to grade students, the types of assessments used, the cognitive level of assessments, and the grades awarded. The major findings of the study are teachers appeared to conceptualize 6 major factors when they graded students; they placed the greatest weight on academic performance and academic-enabling behaviors, such as effort and improvement, and much less emphasis on homework, comparisons with other students, grade distributions of other teachers, and borderline cases. The teachers used 3 types of assessments-constructed-response, objective, and teacher-made major examinations; they differentiated between recall and higher level cognitive skills.

Input	Process	Output
<p><i>Provisions such as, infrastructure facilities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical environment, • Location, buildings, • Classroom, students (their age minimum entry qualification and their aptitude and attitude); • Teacher; • School type, • School activities, curriculum, • Content, • Duration of courses, • Instructional materials finance • Non-teaching staffs 	<p><i>Process refers to what goes on in a system. It includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching learning process • Strategies, • Methods, • Media for teaching. • Teacher activity • Discipline, • Student-Teacher interaction, • Student-student Interaction, • Evaluation procedure etc. 	<p><i>Output is product of a system. Output consists of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People whose performance has improved in some desired way. • The output is improved through increasing the efficiency of educational process. • It is measured that attainment of infrastructural objectives, academic achievement, attitudinal changes etc.

Clarke (2003) studied about Culture and Classroom Reform: The Case of the District Primary Education Project, India Reform in teaching and learning forms one of the basic dimensions of educational reform. The major objectives are to explore the impact of the reform process on teacher thinking and classroom practice in the multi-donor supported District Primary Education Project in Karnataka, India. Using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, a variety of aspects dealing with teaching and learning are examined in order to understand the extent to which changes are taking place in the classroom. The findings of the study is that while there are observable changes in the classroom in the use of instructional Aids and activities during instruction, the essential characteristics of traditional practice, namely rote and repetition has not changed. Both teachers’ openness and resistance to reform are portrayed as embedded in the cultural construction of teaching and learning. **Workman, Myran & Millan (2002)** conducted a study about the Elementary Teachers’ Classroom Assessment and Grading Practices. The authors investigated the assessment and grading practices of over 900

Finn and Pannozzo (2004) studied about the authors examined the conditions that promote or discourage engagement in the classroom among kindergarten students. Engagement included learning behaviors (on-task behavior) and pro- and antisocial behavior. Measures of engagement were the teachers’ overall ratings of classroom behavior and their ratings of individual students on academic and social engagement measures. Ratings of class behavior were related significantly to class scheduling (students in full-day kindergartens rated the poorest) and to class size (students in small classes rated as better behaved than those in large classes). No behavior rating was significantly related to the presence of a teacher aide: this finding adds to a plethora of negative results regarding classroom aides. Results are discussed in terms of the disjuncture between teachers’ ratings of individual students, which yielded relatively little interclass variation, and global ratings of entire classes. **López (2007)** studied about Classroom Diversification: A Strategic View of Educational Productivity. The objective of the study is educational productivity based on a paradigm of classroom diversification that defines a

strategic view of the education production process. The major findings are the paradigm's underlying premise is that classroom student performance, and the instructional interactions that produce such outcomes, depend on economies derived from the learning relationships that exist across and among students in a classroom and on the technological fit between students' learning needs and a teacher's capacity. Conceptual classroom diversification framework; measures of classroom student diversity and teacher capacity are presented, followed by a discussion of the implications of the proposed classroom diversification paradigm for educational research, policy, and practice.

Finally, the researcher purposed a research agenda to assess the classroom processes in an elementary school with the following objectives:

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the case study were as follows:

1. To make an in-depth study to analyse the classroom practices in a rural elementary school.
2. To study the perception of students about teachers' behaviour and classroom interactions.

Research Questions

The research questions formulated on the basis of the above objectives were as follows:

1. What kinds of practices take place in the classroom process in a rural elementary school in terms of the following dimensions?
 - i) Core teaching skills e.g., questioning, use of blackboard etc
 - ii) Use of TLMs
 - iii) Students' Participation
 - iv) Teachers' Response and Treatment/ Pupil-teacher interaction
 - v) Students' Attentiveness
 - vi) Activities during Lesson / Scope for Interaction among pupils
 - vii) Student Evaluation and Textbook usage
2. What do the elementary school children perceive about practices take place in the classroom process in terms of the following dimensions?
 - i) Core teaching skills e.g., questioning, use of blackboard etc

- ii) Use of TLMs
- iii) Students' Participation
- iv) Teachers' Response and Treatment/ Pupil-teacher interaction
- v) Students' Attentiveness
- vi) Activities during Lesson / Scope for Interaction among pupils
- vii) Student Evaluation and Textbook usage

Methodology of the study

The study was a case study under descriptive research and qualitative in nature.

The Case

One elementary school of Puri district of Odisha was taken as the unit of the study i.e. the case. The school was selected by following purposive sampling technique.

The Key Informants within the Case

One elementary school was taken as the unit of the study to get the relevant information pertaining classroom practices and the key informants were as follows:

- All the teachers of the unit of the study.
- Nine number of classroom observations(03 each from class VI, VII and VIII)
- 55 students of class VI, VII and VIII in groups of 8 to 10 (Six FGDs)
- Incidental sampling technique was followed in selection of these key informants

Tools and Techniques

Following tools were developed and used by the investigators for the collection of data from the key informants of the institute under study.

- i) *Interview Schedule for the Teachers:* This schedule was prepared to obtain the perception of the teachers about the about the effectiveness of in-service training programme in terms of following dimensions such as teaching skills, methods of transaction, use of TLM, pupil teacher interaction, interaction among peers and students evaluation.
- ii) *Classroom Observation Schedule:* This schedule was prepared to obtain the information about the classroom environment and the transaction of the lesson by the teachers in the classroom.

- iii) *Focus Group Discussion*: Focus Group Discussion was held with the students along a guideline in a group of 8 to 10 students to obtain their perception about the quality of education in the school and changes occur in the teacher behaviour as well as method of transaction particularly with reference to teaching skills, methods of transaction, use of TLM, pupil-teacher interaction, interaction among peers and students evaluation.

Techniques of Data Analysis

After the collection of data from the key informants with the help of above mentioned tools, the investigator has transcript the data into written text. As the study was a case study and the data collected with the help of above mentioned tools were analyzed using qualitative data analysis technique through thick description. In order to cross-check and validate the data collected through different sources of triangulation procedure was followed.

The Case Profile

The case was an elementary school namely, Sasan Dama-Maharajpur School, located at Sasan Dama-Maharajpur of Puri District, Odisha (the name of the school has been kept confidential). The school was situated within 15 kilometers distance from Puri town. Total number of students at class VI, VII and VIII was approximately 190. The school was situated in one acre of land. The school is having a strong boundary wall. There is a beautiful small garden existed in the campus. The playground situated in the school campus is not too spacious for the children. The staff of the school consisted of 08 members (including the Headmaster). There are total 08 rooms existed in the school out of which seven are used as classrooms, one store room, one office-cum-staff room and one is Headmaster's office. The school opens at 10 o'clock in the morning and close at 4.00 pm. The school work begins with mass prayer. There are total seven periods of 40 minutes each.

Major Findings of the Study

- i) Majority of the teachers reported that they introducing the lesson, particularly with reference to the use of various techniques such as telling a story, asking questions related to the previous knowledge of the pupils and showing pictures, diagrams and models, even by engaging the students in different activities rather than stating topics directly introduce the lesson.
- ii) The same was also observed, by the investigator during classroom teaching observation, the teacher began the lesson with the help of storytelling, testing the previous knowledge of the pupils and showing pictures.
- iii) Majority of the teachers mentioned that they explained the topic with the help of showing different pictures, models,

and diagrams to the learners and cited appropriate example and used dictionary. While discussing with the students, they said that their only cited examples in order to explain the topic and they did not show any pictures, models, and diagrams to them. The same was also observed by the observed by the investigator. Consequently, the teacher did not show any kind of pictures, models and diagrams to the pupils.

- iv) In the interview, majority of the teachers have remarked that they draw the attention of the students by changing his body movements, taking pause at short intervals, interacting with students and also modifying their voice while teaching in the class. But, the students said that their teacher only used gestures and postures, they did not move in the class and their teachers sometimes scold them as well as beat the students when they become inattentive in the class. The same was also observed by the investigator. Hence, the teacher did not move in the class, they also scold the pupils and beat them when they became inattentive in the class. They did not modifying their speech pattern.
- v) The teachers have commented in the interview that they asked questions frequently to the students which were topic related, about the current happenings and relating to their course of study. While conducting FGD with the students, they reported that their teacher only asked questions related with the topic, general knowledge of the students and they did not asked questions related to the course of studies. The same was also observed by the investigator. Hence, the teacher did not asked questions relating to their courses of study and they did not asked about current happenings. They only focused on topic related questions.
- vi) In the interview, the teachers have remarked that they gave feedback to the students who answered the question correctly in the form of appreciation by saying good, right, correct, excellent, etc. and gave fruitful suggestions to the pupils. But, the students of the case-I said that their teachers provided feedback to them after answering the question such as good, very well and so on. They did not give any reward to the student when they answer the question correctly. The same was also observed by the investigator. Consequently, the teacher only appreciated the pupils by saying good, well done, but they did not give any reward to the pupils those who answer correctly and they also punished the students when they gave incorrect answer.
- vii) While conducting the interview with the teacher, the majority of the teacher of the case have expressed that they have transacted the lesson through discussion and demonstration, play way method, activity based method and they also conducted practical work. While discussing

with the students they replied that the teacher only followed lecture method in the class. The teacher did not organize any peer learning classes for the students and also did not conduct project work for the students. The same was also observed by the investigator. Hence the teacher only used lecture method, discussion method and demonstration method. They did not arrange peer learning classes, project work and panel discussion.

- viii) In the interview the teacher use teaching learning materials such as reference book, text books, guide book and used charts, diagram, maps, globe to facilitate learning. But the students revealed that the teachers only used conventional aids such as showing diagrams, pictures of great personalities, monuments. The teacher did not use audio-visual aids, such as, computer, television broadcasting educational programme, radio, etc. in the class.
- ix) While discussing with the students they replied that the teachers did not use appropriate teaching aids due to the lack of adequate teaching learning aids available in the class. The teacher did not use audio-visual aids. The same was also observed by the investigator. Hence, the teacher did not provide Xerox materials and downloaded materials. They only gave pictures, diagrams, maps and so on. There is dearth of computer facilities, internet facilities, television and radio in the school.
- x) The teachers have mentioned in their interview that they have provided cooperation to the students regarding any matter such as in clarifying their doubts and diagnose the problem aroused in their subject matter. While discussing with the students they replied that the teachers cooperated with them in solving the doubts of the learners in the remedial classes by supplying notes to the students and by practicing the activities of the topic. The same was also observed by the investigator. Hence, the teacher provided cooperation among the students by supplying note to the students and clarifying their doubts.
- xi) While interviewing with the teacher, the teacher reported that the pupils sometimes cooperate with the pupils, not always. The students actively participate in the class during the question answer session. While discussing with the students, they revealed that they actively participated in the class at the time of asking questions to the teachers, participating in the essay, debate competition and those who were shy students, they felt nervous to ask questions. The same was also observed by the investigator. Hence, the pupils actively participated in the class while asking question in the class, the pupils rarely discussed their problems among them.

- xii) The teachers have mentioned in their interview that they have practiced continuous and comprehensive evaluation to test the pupils' achievement in the curricular subjects as well as curricular activities and giving home assignments, class work and oral and written test to the pupils. The students also agreed that the teachers evaluated the teaching learning process continuously through unit test, monthly test, half yearly test and annual test. They said that the teacher did not administer the weekly and surprise test in the class. The same was also observed by the investigator. Hence the teacher administered unit test, monthly test, half yearly test and annual test in order to assess the students' progress. They also gave home work, class work and oral test. The teacher also assessed the student after the completion of the topic by asking questions.

Outcomes of FGDs had with Students of the Case

While making discussion with the students on various aspects related to the impact of in-service training programme received by the teacher, the following points comes into front with respect to the following dimensions such as teaching skills, method of transaction, use of TLM, pupil teacher interaction, interaction among peers and students evaluation.

- i) While discussing with the students, they replied that the teacher introduced the lesson by telling a story, asking questions related to their topic, by showing pictures and models. Sometimes the teacher only wrote the name of the topic on the blackboard at the time of introducing the lesson.
- ii) The students replied that their teacher used gestures and postures while delivering the lesson in order to draw the attention of the students. They moved in the class to see whether the pupils were studying or not rather they stand at a particular place and explained the topic. The students revealed that their teachers sometimes scold them as well as beat the students when they became inattentive in the class. They said that the teachers took pause at the time of deliberation of the topic.
- iii) While conducting FGD with the students, they reported that their teacher only asked questions related with the topic, general knowledge of the students. The teacher clarified their doubts regarding their other subject matter. The teacher asked multiple choice types of questions and problem related questions to the students and asked questions about the prior knowledge of the students.
- iv) Most of the pupils said yes that their teacher provided hints to answer the question to the pupils when they were unable to solve the problem.
- v) Most of the students of the case said yes that their teachers

- provided any kind of feedback to them after answering the question such as good, very well and give fruitful suggestions to the pupils and clarified their doubts and attempted to solve the problems. The pupils revealed that the teachers did not give any kind of rewards to the students when they answered correctly. They even replied that the teachers scold the students when they give incorrect answer and make them kneel down and also beat them with a stick.
- vi) At the time of discussion with the students they revealed that the teachers delivered the lesson in the classroom through asking questions related to the previous knowledge of the pupils about the topic, lecture method. While teaching, the teacher only taught the students, they did not take any pause. The most of the learners said that teacher did not discuss the topic with them. The teacher did not organize any peer learning classes for the students. The teachers motivated the students for self study. The teacher did not conduct any project work for the students.
 - vii) Most of the students of the case, agreed that the teachers did not use appropriate teaching aids due to the lack of adequate teaching learning aids available in the class. The teachers only used conventional aids such as showing diagrams, pictures of great personalities, monuments. The teacher did not use audio-visual aids, such as, computer, television broadcasting educational programme, radio, etc. in the class. The teacher did not use dictionary to explain the topic.
 - viii) Most of the students of the case said yes that the teachers cooperated with them in solving the doubts of the learners in the remedial classes by helping them and by practicing the activities of the topic.
 - ix) Most of the students of the case said yes that the teachers helped them to solve the problems that aroused in their topic and by revising activities of the topic. The teacher also asked the students to find out the solution among them and if they failed to answer it, then the teachers will help them to solve it.
 - x) The students of the case agreed that they actively participated in the class at the time of asking questions to the teachers, participating in the essay, debate competition. But those who were shy students, they felt nervous to ask questions or clear their doubts.
 - xi) The students of the case agreed that the teachers evaluated the teaching learning process continuously through unit test, monthly test, half yearly test and annual test. As per the pupils the teacher did not administer the weekly and surprise test in the class. The teachers asked questions after the completion of the lesson.

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