



RESEARCH PAPER

'Primary School Teachers' teaching Practices and their relevancy with Student Learning Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to explore Primary school teachers' existing teaching practices and their relevance to the learning outcome of the lesson. The study was exploratory and a qualitative method was used. The population of the study was all one hundred and twenty primary school teachers of Markaz Jalal Pur Jattan Gujrat. Twelve teachers were taken as the sample of the study using purposive sampling technique. Classroom observation field notes and interviews were used for data collection. Each teacher was observed twice in their model lesson. It was concluded that four common and seven other practices teaching practices were found. It was also concluded that these teaching practices were not highly aligned with the learning outcomes of the lessons. It was recommended that training should be arranged for teachers to learn new teaching practices and single national curriculum.

KEYWORDS School, Teachers, Teaching practice, students, learning outcomes

Introduction

Govt. of Pakistan has launched Single National Curriculum (SNC) in 2020. Govt. took it seriously to implement the curriculum in true letter and spirit. All the public and private schools were directed to align the teaching process and assessment according to the SNC (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2020). Public schools are always the focus of govt. for implementation of its plans and policies. Training on SNC was conducted online using Microsoft teams. All the Primary School Teachers (PSTs) of public and private schools got this training. The objectives of the training were to facilitate the teachers with new learning activities and align them with SNC. A good teacher always tries to achieve the objectives of the class and in this struggle, he uses appropriate teaching methods and strategies. This research tried to find the teaching practices of the PSTs and their alignment with the student's learning outcomes (SLO). Teaching practices means all the activities related to behaviors of teachers with students, strategies of teaching and assessment practices implemented in classrooms by the teachers. Teaching practice aligned with student learning outcomes involves designing and implementing instructional strategies that aim to achieve specific learning outcomes for students. These outcomes can be academic or non-academic such as developing critical thinking skills, effective communication and socio-emotional learning.

The first step in aligning teaching practice with student learning outcomes is to establish clear and measurable learning goals. This involves identifying what students should be able to know, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate or create by the end of a lesson, or unit. Learning goals should be specific, observable, and achievable within a given timeframe.

Once learning goals are established, teachers can select appropriate teaching strategies, activities, and assessments to help students for the achievement of those goals.

This involves choosing instructional methods that are aligned with the learning goals and that engage students in active learning.

Effective teaching practice also involves providing students with actionable feedback on their learning progress and adjusting instructions accordingly. Teachers can use a variety of assessment tools to evaluate student learning outcomes. It may help teachers to identify areas where students are doing effort and need to adjust for better support in their learning.

Overall, teaching practice aligned with student learning outcomes prioritizes the needs and goals of students and aims to provide them with knowledge, skills, and abilities. They need to be successful academically and beyond.

Teaching is a systematic and ongoing process, it is necessary to plan the lesson before starting the class so that every component of lesson and all the individuals participating in the learning i.e. teachers, students, textbook, and classroom environment could play their role in successful learning (Reiser & Dick, 1996). Planning is a key component for effective teaching, lesson planning enables the teachers to arrange such activities which can help the students to acquire specified skills, knowledge and attitudes as desired in curriculum.

Literature Review

Understanding and enhancing the entire educational process requires an understanding of the ideas, behaviors, and attitudes of teachers. Teaching practices are most important aspect (Pajares, 1992). Classroom teaching practices are a group of instructional techniques and teaching strategies used by a teacher in the classroom. According to Cotton (1995), there are a lot of different classroom activities. It comprises all the tasks a teacher completes to improve student learning in relation to the desired curriculum, classroom management, and formative assessment of students. According to Handal and Herrington (2003) on pedagogical matters, teachers hold legitimate opinions which provides base for their acts and routines. Understanding the nature and significance of these ideas is crucial to comprehending the decisions and choices these teachers will make in their lessons. It is a well-known truth that teachers' pedagogical ideas influence how they teach, particularly when those beliefs are expressed in the instructional strategies they use to select the lessons and activities, make decisions, and assess student progress. Additionally, according to Cronin-Jones (1991), there are other kinds of teachers' beliefs that have a significant impact on both the practices inside the class and the process of implementing the curriculum before and during the class. Lesson planning prior to teaching is the most essential activity for effective teaching (Martel, 2009). Planning for teaching in the written form is one of the most important skills teachers should have, the success of the lesson is in fact achieving the learning outcomes of students and it depends on this planning, but if a teacher teaches without planning, there is no surety to be on target in arranging relevant activities to teaching and assessment (Reiser & Mory, 1991).

Teachers employ four different types of curricula in the planning of their lessons, according to. The learning objective the teacher hopes the pupils will accomplish as a result of the lesson is known as the intended curriculum. Regardless of what was intended, the curriculum that is actually delivered is called the enacted curriculum. The curriculum being evaluated indicates how well students and assessors communicated what they had learnt. The pupils' actual learning outcomes are determined by the learnt curriculum, which may or may not be in line with the intended, implemented, or evaluated curriculum. A teacher can establish the planned curriculum and come up with strategies to make sure that the implemented, assessed, and learned curricula are harmonious with one another through careful lesson planning (Porter, 2006). He and Hartley (2010) recommended teachers to begin developing lesson plans in which they should specify links and embed content. It takes

practice and experience to develop the abilities, attitudes, and procedures that support student learning and achievement. Education professionals employ a set of methods that include knowing what to teach, when to teach it, and how to teach it. Effective instruction requires the development of various skills like planning of lessons, putting instructional strategies into practice, continuous assessment, data-decision-making in accordance with available data, and management of classroom. These activities highlight the significance of educational pedagogy and the overarching theme of competent educators (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Material and Methods

Population

The population of the study consists of all one hundred and twenty male primary school teachers who are teaching in public sector primary schools of Markaz Jalal Pur Jattan Gujrat.

Sample

Twelve male Primary School Teachers (PSTs) having experience more than five years were selected using the purposive sample technique.

Data Collection:

Data was collected through field notes during non-participative classroom observation and semi-structured interviews.

This study employed qualitative method. It was an exploratory study. Documents and literature related to teaching practices and single national curriculum were reviewed before starting data collection. Two instruments field notes and semi-structured interview guide were developed by the researcher after brief literature review of the teaching practices and single national curriculum Pakistan 2020. Major themes out of the field notes and teachers explanation in interview were identified by the researcher. These themes were coded and then interpreted.

The study was delimited to model lessons of these teachers because consent was taken from teachers for classroom observation and it was requested to deliver a model lesson for observation. The purpose of request for model lesson was to give opportunity to teacher for their best performance in classroom in the sense of teaching practices. This opportunity helped the teacher to utilize their best pedagogical practices. The research was conducted through a qualitative approach. This was exploratory research and two sources were used for the purpose of data collection including field notes during classroom observation and semi-structured interviews after the classroom observation. Documents related to teaching practices were also reviewed. Primary school teachers (PSTs) selected from public sector primary schools as sample of the study. Major purpose of the research was to identify teaching practices which are in vogue at public sector primary schools so far Markaz Jalal Pur Jattan. The classroom observations and semi-structured interviews were taken by the PSTs of Markaz Jalal Pur Jattan. The purposive sampling technique was used by the researcher for selecting the primary school teachers as a sample to conduct the study, who were teaching in public sector schools having an experience of teaching more than five years of Markaz Jalal Pur Jattan. The reason for selecting primary school teachers was to gain appropriate and deep understanding of teaching practices which are being implemented by the primary school teachers in the public sector primary schools of Markaz Jalal Pur Jattan. The sample consists of nine teachers from three public sector primary schools of Markaz Jalal Pur Jattan.

The sampled primary school teachers were observed and interviewed. The study was administered to only one Markaz among eighty one Marakaz of District Education Authority Gujrat.

The teaching practices were observed in three schools of Markaz Jalal PurJattan. The classroom observations and semi-structured interviews were conducted having the prior consent of primary school teachers of public sector primary schools of Markaz Jalal PurJattan.

Procedure

This qualitative research was carried out in the proper spirit of research. The researcher met the participants included in the sample of the study to take time for the observation and interview when they are available and feel comfortable. These teachers asked about the process, the researcher clarified the objectives of the research and the ethical considerations. It was told that your identity will be kept confidential, your information won't be accessible to anyone. The researcher personally visited the schools according to the schedule already prepared after consultation with the teachers. The classrooms were observed using notebook and after every observation the interview was conducted. The purpose of interview was to clarify the practices which researcher noted during the class. The interview helped the researcher to deeply understand exactly what the teacher was trying to do and clarifying the ambiguities. The interview also helped the researcher to minimize the misunderstandings of the data collector about the happenings of the class.

Twenty four observations were taken from twelve teachers in different subjects and classes grade I to V. The next step was to transcribe data that had been gathered using field notes and interviews. Following that, teachers were given codes to safeguard the participants' privacy, code I to XII were assigned to all the participants. A code "A" was assigned for first observation and "B" for second observation of same teacher. During the observation the researcher sat at the end of the class where he can easily watch the whole class and observe the classroom. It was requested to the students and teacher to ignore my presence and work in your routine. The researcher carefully watched and documented each step of the instructional process while creating field notes.

The research was conducted with a certain spirit to identify the teaching practices of primary school teachers aligned with student learning outcomes. The participants of the study were approached at their place of posting to make it more convenient for them in a natural setting. Participating primary school teachers were informed. They were acknowledged for the purpose classroom observations teaching practices aligned with student learning outcomes.

The researcher scheduled the visits to observe the teaching practices aligned with student learning outcomes of primary school teachers who were serving in public sector primary schools to the purpose of research.

The researcher visited the schools and observed the teaching practices aligned with student learning outcomes in the classroom. Since it was an in-depth study therefore, to identify the alignment of student learning outcomes with the teaching practices. The researcher conducted a semi-structured interview after observations of teaching practices in the classroom to understand the concepts and their own perceptions regarding teaching practices in the classroom. During Classroom observation note were taken for convenience to overcome ambiguity. Semi-structured interviews were conducted fairly with respect to clarification to avoid the misunderstandings. The classroom observations were taken to identify the teaching practices aligned with student learning outcomes from second week of January 2023 to second week of February 2023. Twenty seven observations were made

during this course of time about teaching practices aligned with student learning outcomes of nine primary school teachers from three public sector primary schools of Markaz Jalal Purjattan.

Every participant was observed for three times for note taking and evaluating the alignment of student learning outcomes with teaching practices. The procedure of collecting data was covered in one month and all the sampled primary school teachers were observed once in ten days for three times each. All the participating primary school teachers were observed for one period of an half hour approximately during each visit and they were observed for three time and interviewed during the third visit. Collected data in the form of qualitative data was arranged and code were assigned to the participating sampled primary school teachers for the purpose of privacy.

The researcher visited the scheduled schools and made observations as a non-participative observer having a seat at the back end of the classroom.

The researcher observed the teaching practices and note down the teaching process minutely and field notes were prepared regarding action (gestures) and behavior of teachers in the classroom. Field notes were organized for the purpose of data analysis.

Ethical aspects were considered for this research. Time and consent were taken from the sampled primary school teachers of the research. Confirmation of confidentiality of the information was ensured by not using this piece of information for any purpose other than present study by keeping it undisclosed.

Results and Discussion

In this qualitative study the teachers were observed to assess their teaching practices and their effort to align the practices with the students' learning outcomes of the lesson. It was found they were using variety to teaching practices some practices were found common. It was found that most of the teachers were using old teaching techniques and could not understand the SLO of their lesson. A few teachers were trying to understand the SLO in true sense as mentioned in the SNC and achieve the objective through different practices. Most of the teachers considered that students must learn the lesson by heart and memorizing the content is very necessary. Some teachers try to arrange such activities which can help the students to meet the objectives such activities were noted during mathematics class in more intensity and quality. The thematic analysis of data resulted into four most common practices and further these practices were described in form of actions of the teacher, these practices are the teacher's explanation of content is clear and correct, the teacher monitors most students during independent or group work, the teacher provides specific comments to help students clarify misunderstanding and understand successes, the teacher responds to students' needs. The researcher also found some practices which were not common but practiced by some teachers in some classes. These were seven in number and explained as first the teacher explicitly articulates the objectives of the lesson and relates classroom activities to the objectives, second the teacher makes connections that relates to students' daily lives or other content knowledge, third the teacher models by enacting, thinking aloud or showing a final product expected of the students, fourth the teacher uses questions, prompts or other strategies to determine students' level of understanding, fifth the teacher asks thinking questions, sixth teacher translated the content into local language, seventh teacher provide short answers of some questions on board or on textbook.

It was found that explaining the objectives of the aligning the classroom activities was highly relevant to the learning outcomes of the lesson, through this activity teacher told or wrote the SLO of the lesson. Teachers modeling and enacting was also related to the learning objectives but in some cases the teacher modeled content was further provided to

students for memorization. Daily examples were also associated with the objectives. The study also revealed that most of the teachers were unaware about the students learning outcomes as described in SNC 2020. Most of the teachers were using the topic of the story or chapter they were teaching. They were using general ideas or topics as the introduction of the lesson. Narrating the specific statement of the SLOs in the same way as described in the SNC document was rare. One teacher was describing the SLO in his mathematics class exactly according to the SNC. He explained that the SLOs are mentioned at the start of each chapter. I took the SLO from this list and further develop the lesson according to the objective. Some teachers were reinterviewed to clarify their knowledge about the SNC and alignment of the teaching with the learning outcomes it was found that teachers were unaware about the list of SLOs or curriculum document. They described that in the training of SNC they focused on the new content added in the textbook, they learned this content. In the language classed like Urdu and English they use to translate the story or paragraph and explain in simple local language to the students for their understanding. Most of the teachers were not aware about the Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domain. They could not decide whether the SLO is based on knowledge, comprehension or application or higher order thinking. Teachers were preparing the students by memorizing the teacher made answers. Although teachers were using variety of teaching practices but it was found that on the whole these practices were not aligned with the learning outcomes of their lessons. Teachers were unable to express their way of teaching for the objectives higher than the knowledge level. They were dealing all the other level like the initial level that is memorizing.

This qualitative study identified eleven teaching practices as practiced by the primary school teachers in their lessons and their relevancy to the learning outcomes. There were eleven teaching practices

i) the teacher's explanation of content is clear and correct, ii) the teacher monitors most students during independent or group work, iii) the teacher provides specific comments to help students clarify misunderstandings and understand successes, iv) the teacher responds to students' needs, v) the teacher explicitly articulates the objectives of the lesson and relates classroom activities to the objectives, vi) the teacher makes connections that relate to students' daily lives or other content knowledge, vii) the teacher models by enacting, thinking aloud or showing a final product expected of the students, viii) the teacher uses questions, prompts, or other strategies to determine students' level of understanding, ix) the teacher asks thinking questions, x) the teacher translates the content into the local language, xi) the teacher provides short answers to some questions on board or on the textbook, practiced in the classroom.

The study explored that these teaching practices could not enable the teacher to meet the required skills as described in SNC. The researcher could not find any study in Pakistan which was aimed to explore the teaching practices of primary school teachers and their efforts to align with the learning outcomes of the lesson. The results of the study can be described in many possible ways. Poor teacher training is one of the main causes of applying appropriate teaching methods in the class. Lack of professional development and refresher courses is also another cause of poor teaching practices and poor knowledge about the curriculum. If the teachers are able to find the learning outcome properly and understand it according to the taxonomy of objectives, they can arrange more suitable activities in their classes.

Conclusion

It is concluded that a total of eleven teaching practices were explored through classroom observation.

Most of the classroom practices were not closely aligned with the learning outcomes of the lessons in which they were applied but some teachers were successfully applying these practices to achieve the learning outcome of the class.

Recommendations

It is recommended that in-service teacher training courses should be started for primary teachers to enable them to learn and apply modern teaching practices.

A comprehensive training on SNC should be conducted for primary school teachers for its appropriate understanding and application in the classroom.

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