



INFORMING BARRIERS TO CLASSROOM PRACTICES WITH AN ASSESSMENT TOOL: STUDY ON PRIVATE SCHOOLS SERVING CHILDREN FROM INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

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Classroom practices form an array of integrated teaching and learning strategies conducive to the real world. Lesser is known about the classroom practices experiences among the students belonging to the informal settlements in private schools of India. The paper presents a brief insight into barriers to classroom practices with a self-prepared assessment tool, namely Classroom Practice Position (CPP). It can aid teachers in prioritising practices for balancing participation in the classroom. The measure will help to determine the placement of classroom routine activities. The paper highlights the data from the perspectives of 58 students in Rourkela (a city in the State of Odisha, India) through a sequential exploratory method and data analysis with SPSS v.20. The CPP tool indicates that peer support from the well-performing students helps in mitigating stereotypes, in completion of classwork, identity and familiarity with teachers.

KEYWORDS: Classroom Practices, Barriers, Private, Schools, Children, Informal settlements

BACKGROUND

The classroom is a system where teachers and students create a knowledge platform. Exchange of knowledge in the classroom aids in school achievements and classroom practices is a key to educational progress. The routine practices in classrooms are predictable and widespread, but the challenging part is to

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make these practices equally effective for all (Connell 1994; Knapp, Shields, & Turnbull 1995; Hayes et al., 2009). Students as integral users of the school, perceive their classrooms differently (Cook, 2001). The ratings or experiences by students for their respective classrooms are of more significance as they spend most of the time observing classroom actions (Hidlebaugh, 1973). Classroom practices are never free from internal and external influence, and it differs with schools and class instruction periods (Emmer and Gerwels, 2006) and they are critical when addressing it within a diversifying background. Dynamic classroom practices embeds a multicultural environment, which generates scope for students to interchange qualities and learn better (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007). Sadly, researchers rarely report children's experiences in school even if they can reflect facts (Perry & Weinstein, 1998).

Not all students remain fortunate to get equal importance in the classroom, e.g. disadvantaged students. They often lack access to necessary resources lack attention from teachers; for instance, students receiving negative attention from their teachers tend to exhibit more disturbing behaviour than those receiving positive attention (Reinke & Herman, 2016). These children seek somebody to take care of their needs in education, understand their situation and assist them. It emphasises their willingness, expectations for participation, need for inclusion, and acceptance among peers (Moore & McArthur 2011; Petersson, 2012). Given the context, children from weaker sections can walk into the resourceful schools under the Right to Education Act 2009 in India i.e., 25% of seats are available to the children belonging to disadvantaged groups as specified under Section 2 Clause (d) in all private schools. Sadly, the persisting discriminatory classroom practices (Batra, 2011) dent the educational benefits and undermine classroom realities.

The preceding context depicts instances in which students encounter barriers that begin subtly in their classroom and discourage their learning. The rationale for initiating this study is that most studies on classroom practices have a rare emphasis on questions like –does a student from informal settlement studying in a private school encounter experiences that deters classroom participation. This paper presents a brief insight into barriers to classroom practices with a self-prepared tool namely Classroom Practice Position (CPP) that can aid teachers in prioritising practices by serving students with an equal chance. This measure will help teachers to determine the placement of classroom routine activities by mitigating exclusion.

REVIEW ON CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE AND PRACTICES: STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVES

The classroom as a complex and unpredictable unit of the school (Lin,

Schwartz, & Hatano, 2005) holds a strong partnership between teachers and students. Though students are clear about their classroom features, they often conceal their classroom experiences. In some cases, the participation of students depends on the number of friends they have, which boosts their confidence. Students feel good about their classroom when they know teachers and other students (Phelan, Locke, & Cao, 1992). The most engaging teachers in classroom practices prioritise student-centric classrooms (Gurl, 2018). The practices in the classroom gradually decrease among the teachers with the increasing school levels (Borgmeier, Loman, & Hara, 2016). Sadly, in some cases, no proper monitoring exists and teacher-directed discussion dominates the classroom (Yew Tee et al., 2018). Moreover, some teachers' direct racialism use 'silencing' to exclude students from contributing to the classroom or belittle students for solving any question and label them as incapable of having any educational progress. It may psychologically impact children by degrading their safe space of learning to a classroom indoctrinating racial views (Weiner, 2016). Earlier studies found that even though enrolment is higher in cities, dropout and disparities exists (Chugh, 2020). Moreover, growing informal settlements, mainly in the developing ones (United Nations, 2015), have educational concerns including, India.

Lesser is known about the classroom practices experiences among the students belonging to the informal settlement (e.g. slums) in private schools of India. However, the below highlights of literature forms the critical substance of this paper. The students from slums bearing the effects of educational disadvantage fail to finish their primary level (Banerji, 2000). Surprisingly, the availability of schools at a short distance in slums became a ground for questioning why students still have lesser education (Tsujita, 2013), while other students withdraw due to discrimination (Banerjee, 2014; Vijayanti & Subramanian, 2015). Other studies claim that children from slums perform better in private schools because they have strict rules (Krishna, Sriram, & Prakash 2014) but, teachers failing to extend their support to weak students lead to irregularity (Kumar & Sukla, 2016). Few claims were on teachers, who have low expectations of students belonging to slums, for which they tend to treat them differently. Students also feel that their teachers pick on them and take disciplinary action for no-fault; hence, creating challenges towards the school's requirements. Such complexities tend to be the early signs of detachment (Khasnabis & Chatterjee, 2007; Singh, 2015). Although private school enrolment is higher in urban areas among informal settlements, there is still a disparity between children from well-off families accessing private schools and children from low-income families going government schools.

Moreover, students from informal settings lack a supportive environment,

which further aggravates their barriers towards understanding any particular subject and affects their social interaction (Tsimplici et al., 2020; Bennell, 2022; Rannaware, et al., 2022). However, nothing special has yet been done for the children from slums in education; results in this study will stand significant.

RESEARCH OUTLINE

This paper expresses a micro-level study in Rourkela (a smart city located in Sundargarh district of Odisha, India). The district has a satisfactory literacy rate, i.e. male and female literacy is 82 and 64 respectively including the urban area (U-DISE, 2016-17). However, operating this literacy data as a halo effect has hidden the malfunctions in education system.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The study asks the following questions: What are the barriers that deter students from high-need sections enrolled in private schools to limit participation in classroom practices? What is the tool to measure these barriers to enhance classroom practices? The paper informs a brief insight on barriers to classroom practices with a self-prepared assessment tool. For this, the author defines classroom practices as 'cooperative execution of activities by teachers and students, whether in-classroom structured or unstructured encompassing the students'-learning and teachers'-teaching processes'. Hence, the author defines the issues to practices in the classroom as 'how it is taught' by keeping in thought the curriculum, educational practices, learning experiences and similar backgrounds of the study area.

SAMPLE

The study purposively selects the students from slum households in municipality area, and snowballing method found the students enrolled in private schools under the RTE reservation act. Fifty-eight students (27 boys and 31 girls) from three private elementary schools aged 11-13 years represent the target respondents.

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURE

The author took verbal consent from the parents before collecting data. The smaller sample size is to spend a productive interview time. This study employs exploratory sequential mixed method design i.e. qualitative data in the first phase and analysing the results quantitatively in the second phase (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The first question deals with qualitative analysis and the second question includes quantitative exploration in the result section.

Children respond to the interview in their comfort areas (home or place adjoining the respondent's house e.g. park).

The interview process has three distinct stages:

- The first stage of interview began with two basic unstructured questions centred on class activities and class participation e.g., what were the top five activities inside the classroom in the last three months? What was your participation rate in that activity?
- The second stage involves 25 unstructured questions based on the previous two questions in first stage. All the top activities in the classroom and participation rate aids in framing sub-set of questions for this stage e.g., do your friends invite/request you for joining them in extra-curricular activities? The primary responses were collated into a single document. It was uploaded to an Excel file and organised into color-coded cells to provide helpful visualisations for categorising the most commonly used terms. The excel sheet was manually searched once again, further converting terms into in-vivo coding (i.e. created labels from the words conveyed by respondents) and then themes (Adu, 2019) (See Table 1). The themes were transferred (together with the frequency of codes) into SPSS V.20 for data quantification.
- After using the themes from the second stage, the author initiates the third stage of interview by obtaining the views from respondents on these final themes to identify the perceived value on three dimensions of classroom practices, i.e. the feeling of exclusion, possibilities of inclusion, and ranking of possible enablers (helpful for coping).

Table 1
Specimen of Coding.

Survey Question	Summary of Responses	Summary of Categories	Themes with Frequency
Do your friends invite/request you for joining them in extra-curricular activities?	<p>R1- My friends do not even ask me to join the activities because they assume I cannot afford resources to participate in extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>R2- They ask me in uncertainty because they feel I am not capable.</p> <p>R3- My friend requests me to participate in extra-curricular activities.</p>	Social stereotypes, ignorance, assumption, classroom performance or types of activities, Social competence.	Extra-curricular activities - 88

Source: Author

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The most scored eight themes (i.e., selected for its significant chi-square p-values $\leq .005$) were divided into two groups, i.e., four classroom activities (oral reading, written assignments, project work, and extra-curricular activities), and four classroom environments (seating arrangement, doubt clearing session, peer support in classroom, and unwillingness to participate). The eight themes on which students' expressed their most perceptions had an evident means and standard deviation. Of the total 58 student respondents, most children experienced the feeling of being excluded during classroom discussions and doubt clearing sessions, i.e., 21%. Similarly, the high possibility of inclusion is equal between oral reading and classroom discussion (See Table 2). The qualitative explanations on ranking orders explains the first research question i.e. the barriers that limit participation in classroom practices and they are as follows:

- **Classroom Discussions and Doubt Clearing Session** - Students in private schools outperform their government school peers. The smaller student-classroom ratio in private schools informs us of more committed teachers, discipline, attention on students, and so on. However, the current findings indicated that teachers paid attention to well-performing children. They often ask or rely on the well-performing students to explain their doubts to their peers. Unfortunately, students with shy or hesitant nature fail to benefit. They lag, especially the weak ones, resulting in their poor performance in the classroom and remaining passive in discussions.
- **Extra-Curricular Activities** - Extra-curricular activities strive to promote opportunities by identifying the hidden qualities and skills. Inclusive participation can break down social stereotypes by accommodating healthy competition. Teachers and school heads are the gearing enablers who can ensure equal participation among all in the school premises. However, the exclusion is present in extra-curricular activities, but students also ranked it as the second-highest area where inclusion can be possible. Primary responses indicated that teachers only pick those students who have already proven capabilities or are competitive enough to represent and win. Unlike debate, essay, extempore, and poem writing competition, respondents received chances for in-school activities like craft and dance. Most of them are never asked for competitions independently by the teachers, except the encouragement comes from their peers. Hence, a lack of appreciation and encouragement weakens their inclusion.

- **Peer Support in the Classroom** - Peer support can help these children feel a sense of belongingness among students. The supporting attention can encourage them to expand their activities to promote social competence. It is also perceived that collaborative learning could assist them in understanding classroom instructions. A good company of friends can aid in exploring their capabilities and tailor their weaknesses into strengths.
- **Seating Arrangements** - In most private schools, this arrangement is fixed or on a rotation basis. In both cases, the bench partners influenced the classroom practices. Five respondents stated that their teachers and peers often perceived that children from slums use foul language, particularly boys. Moreover, untidy clothes and unclean appearances differentiate them among peers, for which low chances occur for them to sit with their desired classmates. At times, undesirable etiquettes have compelled the teachers to make the student sit alone. Hence, such cases demotivated peer support and escalated isolation in the classroom.
- **Oral Reading** - Poor pronunciation, low confidence, fear of interruption for mistakes, stage fright and fear of the audience, and criticism also deterred from participating in reciting activities. Few respondents managed well to read aloud to perform in internal assessment or as a practice in class routine. Still, many believed more space for inclusion in this activity, e.g. teachers appreciating reading, motivated few respondents to revise that subject at home.
- **Written Assignments** - There prevailed a high exclusion in written assignment activity. Respondents perceived that their performances influence the decision of teachers while grading assignments. They find no attention from teachers to rectify their mistakes. Moreover, bullying by best performers, comparison, and peer criticism prevents improvement.
- **Project Work** - With the low rank, this activity carries an equal amount of inclusion and exclusion. Respondents perceive that though they have an excellent possibility of inclusion, they can still manage project activities because it does not foster competition. Most project activities include content from within the curriculum, which does not bother them much.
- **Unwillingness to Participate** - Similarly, the continuous feeling of exclusion made a handful of respondents represent a lack of willingness with no specific reasons.

Hence, the classroom environment is a crucial component for classroom practices (See Table 2).

Table 2

Rates of the Perceived Value of Eight Themes and Three Dimensions of Classroom Practices.

Categories	Name of themes	Students Feel Excluded%	Possibility for High Inclusion%	Rank of Themes	Possible Enablers	Mean of Themes	S.D of Themes
Classroom Activities	Oral reading	4 (7%)	10 (17%)	5	Teachers	3.05	0.5
	Written assignments	9 (15%)	8 (14%)	6	Teachers, parents, and peers	3.79	0.9
	Project work	8 (14%)	8 (14%)	7	Teachers and peers	2.23	0.7
	Extra-curricular activities	10 (17%)	7 (12%)	2	Teachers	2.03	1.6
Classroom Environment	Classroom discussion/ doubt clearing session	12 (21%)	10 (17%)	1	Teachers	3.44	0.7
	Seating arrangements	9 (16%)	9 (16%)	4	Teachers and peers	2.10	1.06
	Peer support in classroom	4 (7%)	5 (9%)	3	Teachers	3.32	0.5
	Unwillingness to participate	2 (3%)	1 (1%)	8	Teachers, peers and parents	1.76	0.4
Total		58	58	-	-	-	-

Source: Author

A high positive correlation between oral reading and written assignments was found to control classroom learning, i.e. understanding the subject matter and converting it to output through the homework. Similarly, a high correlation of oral reading with the seating arrangement and peer support in the classroom indicated that children sitting alone in class or feeling excluded might impede their reading; thus, peer support and classroom bench partners have a vital role. It can induce eagerness towards learning and completing homework, classroom assignments and so on. The inclusive classroom discussion can boost the success of the written assignment. The writing practice will develop if the teacher discusses the class topic by involving every performer. Moreover, completing written assignments in a better way will not only help the respondents to fetch class assessment marks but also strengthen their zeal to perform better. They can have their identity, e.g., chances of becoming visible among students and having an opportunity of participation. Few children from slums have bright student friends, with whose help classwork is managed. They get advice from their bench partner that supports them to demonstrate the skills. This support even led them to gain an identity in the class, familiarity with teachers and satisfactory priority to participate in extracurricular activities. However, the self-unwillingness to participate negatively correlates with the classroom discussion, peer support and project

work. When the children from slums have a feeling of alienation, bullying and a sense of being neglected (among their peers and teachers), then they fail to cope-up (See Table 3).

After analysing the correlation and quantifying the results, the monitoring chart was prepared to aid teachers in checking the right amount of support a student needs for classroom practices. The following phrases provide the answer to the second question i.e. establishing a tool to measure these barriers to enhance classroom practices. The chart is organised by considering the highly correlated figures (i.e. level of significance 0.01) is marked ✓ tick against each category. Similarly, the correlated figures (i.e. level of significance 0.05) is marked ✓. The reason for distinguishing it is to bring indispensable practices to the forefront. Such distinction will aid in understanding the need of managing the components and give them priority in the classroom. Finally, the ranks are assigned to each theme i.e. the number of ticks under each article; for example, oral reading has four tick marks (even if you count from a row or column-wise), so the rank is four. However, to bring out the priority level and check on the missing themes in classroom practices, the fraction framework is used. For example, oral reading has rank four, so the significant level of 0.05 (marked as ✓) is taken as rank one and is divided into the ranks of themes i.e. $4/1=4$. Hence, oral reading comes to 4 under the classroom practice position (CPP). This position indicates that the teacher is paying more attention to oral reading in the classroom in comparison to other classroom practices such as written assignments [CPP=1.5], project work [CPP=0.7], and peer support [CPP=0.8]. Hence, teachers must pay attention to other measured themes and mitigate unwillingness among children to enable inclusive activities and peaceful learning in the classroom (See Table 4). Ignorance towards these barriers may certainly reinforce dislike towards class subjects, lack of interest in learning, exclusion, absenteeism, and so on.

Table 3
Correlations Between Eight Themes Under the Scale.

	Oral reading	Written assignments	Classroom discussion	Project work	Extracurricular activities	Seating arrangement	Peer support	Self-unwillingness to participate
Oral reading	1							
Written assignments	.824**	1						
Classroom discussion	.792**	.867**	1					
Project work	.675**	.380	.915**	1				
Extracurricular activities	.527	.520**	.386	.019	1			
Seating arrangement	.776**	.698*	.631**	.562*	.543*	1		
Peer support	.827**	.777	.646*	.914**	.782**	-.844*	1	
Self-unwillingness to participate	.242	.253	-.692*	-.509*	.357	.250	-.606*	1

Source: Author
 **0.01 significance & *0.05 significance level.

Table 4
 Tool to Monitor Classroom Practices (Classroom Practice Position - CPP).

	Oral reading	Written assignments	Classroom discussion	Project work	Extracurricular activities	Seating arrangement	Peer support	Self-unwillingness to participate
Oral reading	-	✓	✓	☑	-	✓	✓	-
Written assignments	✓	-	✓	-	✓	☑	☑	-
Classroom discussion	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	☑	☑
Project work	☑	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	☑
Extracurricular activities	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	-
Seating arrangement	✓	☑	✓	☑	☑	-	☑	-
Peer support	✓	☑	☑	✓	✓	☑	-	☑
Self-unwillingness	-	-	☑	☑	-	-	☑	-
RANK	4	3	4	2	2	4	3	0
Negative correlation	-	-	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	0
Classroom Practice Position (CPP)	4	1.5	2	0.7	2	2	0.8	0

Source: Author

DISCUSSION

On examining the classroom practices, most of the students from informal settlements enrolled in private schools remain passive learners. Only a few have adopted their way of coping with academic endeavours through a well-performing friend circle, supportive parents, and elder siblings in the same school. This study suggests the teachers' to ensure their attention towards micro-practices in classrooms. For example, a display of willingness to involve the poor performing students in classroom discussion, extracurricular activities and allied practices will curtail the gaps and promote social acceptance and enhance inclusivity (Mulholland, & O'Connor, 2016; Woodcock et al., 2022). It can further strengthen their rights by making these children confident about their chance in participating irrespective of their complex background. The classroom practices in our research suggest that local needs largely determines the strategy that can produce impetus among the young minds to prosper from micro to macro settings. This study can help other similar research topic to gauge the effectiveness for bringing reforms in classroom practices.

CONCLUSIONS

This article navigated through the broader backdrop of classroom practices on inclusion and narrowed it down to the practical implication at the classroom level. It stressed the significance of inclusion of children into their class routines for holistic benefits and as a means to cultivate meaningful and peaceful classroom learning. In the absence of systematic modification in classroom practices, inclusion will remain critical. This paper reflected barriers that stand prominent and limits classroom participation. According to the findings, it is suggested that if teachers can understand the classroom practices in favour of deprived children, then it can promote peaceful learning and inclusion. It can help teachers accommodate diverse students from various socio-economic sections to have value in the educational system. It can help practitioners and educators to develop an equitable environment for disadvantaged students. Furthermore, it will stimulate the line of research to investigate various types of classroom practices in other similar contexts. Hence, this paper suggests tailoring classroom practices from a lower level to help meet the needs of the deprived ones.

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