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Quality of classroom instruction in elementary schools of Varanasi's slum areas: an analytical study

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India is a democratic, socialistic republic country and committed to provide quality elementary education to all children including deprived children in age group of 6 to 14 in the society. The slum children come from most deprived and down trodden sections of the population in urban areas. As such the country has a special responsibility for their education and welfare. In order to ensure quality elementary education in access of deprived children, quality of classroom instruction in elementary schools in slum areas should be satisfactory. This research paper examines and analyzes the quality of classroom instruction in elementary schools situated in slum areas of Varanasi city. Descriptive survey method was used in the study. The study was conducted on classrooms of randomly selected sample of 67 elementary schools (32 governments and 35 private) in urban slum areas of Varanasi city. Data was analyzed using percentage method. Quality of classroom instruction was found poor in government as well as private elementary schools. Furthermore, teachers' behaviour during instruction was not found conductive in accelerating the learning among students.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the key to national prosperity and welfare. It furnishes the individual with basic knowledge and technical skills essential for work, productivity and economic survival. Education enhances personal growth, economic advancement, and social effectiveness which are vital for success in a competitive society. It is generally said that children are the future of the nation. Nelson Mandela, a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and the former president of South Africa, while addressing to the world's children, stated that:

"My dear young people: I see the light in your eyes, the energy of your bodies and the hope that is in your spirit. I know it is you, not I , who will make the future, it is you, not I, who will fix our wrongs and carry forward all that is right with the world" (UNICEF, 2001).

If children are our future, they are the agent of change as well as custodian of continuity (Myers, 1992) and therefore, Government should be committed to provide quality elementary education to all children including deprived children in society. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations emphasizes the need for providing quality education to the children in the following words:

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"Every child should have the best possible start in life; every child should receive a good quality basic education; and every child should have the opportunity to develop his or her full potential and contribute to society in meaningful ways" (UNICEF, 2001). To ensure quality elementary education in access of deprived children community, the Government of India has launched Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Operation Blackboard Scheme, the Alternative, Innovative and Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS/AIE), the National Program for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL), Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), the Mid-day meal Scheme etc. These initiatives have had considerable impact on children's access to elementary education but the issue of quality of classroom instruction in elementary schools for deprived children is still a major concern. A good deal of research has been conducted on effectiveness of various schools' components and on relationship between school's factors and pupil performance. Donovan, Bransford and Pellegrino, (1999) also noted that it is important that both the school and classroom environments should be learner-centered. Teachers need to be aware of students' cultural and learning differences and how these differences affect their ability to perform in the classroom. In addition, they suggested that, "attention must be given to what is taught (information, subject matter), why it is taught (understanding), and what competence or mastery looks like". Very few studies have been conducted in India on quality of classroom instruction in elementary schools in slum areas. Thus the present study has been conducted.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study was conducted to achieve the following objectives: To develop tool for examining quality of classroom instruction in elementary schools .To examine the quality of classroom instruction in elementary schools of Varanasi slum areas.To analyze teacher's behavior during classroom instruction in accelerating learning among students in elementary schools of Varanasi slum areas.

METHODOLOGY

In context of main purpose of the study i.e. to examine the quality of classroom instruction and teacher's behavior during instruction in elementary schools of Varanasi slum areas, descriptive survey method was used.

SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

Multistage stratified random sampling technique was used for selection of sample of classrooms for the study. The sample consisted of 67 classrooms (32 from government elementary schools and 35 from private elementary schools), of standard-V for observation of classroom instruction.

TOOLS USED IN THE STUDY

Classroom Instruction Form was developed for observing quality of classroom instruction. In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the Classroom Instruction Form, pilot study has been conducted and content validity was examined.

DATA ANALYSIS

Percentage method has been used in analyzing the data in view of objectives of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 1. Quality of Classroom Instruction in Government, Private and Total Sampled Elementary Schools

S. No.	Quality of Classroom Instruction	Govt. School (In Percentage)	Private School (In Percentage)	Total School (In Percentage)
1	Mono-grade teaching by school teacher	23.33	89.47	56.4
2	Text book available to students	83.33	100	91.67
3	Supplementary teaching-learning materials	0	13.16	6.58
4	Play/activity method used in teaching	10	10.53	10.27
5	Question asked by teacher during instruction	23.33	42.11	32.72
6	Question asked by students during instruction	20	28.95	24.48
7	Students' participation in teaching learning process	36.67	44.74	40.71
8	Use of blackboard by teacher	50	60.53	55.27
9	Use of teaching –learning material by teacher	10	13.16	11.58
10	Stimulus variation for ensure attention of students	30	18.42	24.21
11	Use of illustration/examples	36.67	60.53	48.6
12	Diagnosis and remedies of student's problems	36.67	55.26	45.97
13	Assessment/evaluation of students during instruction	76.67	81.58	79.13
14	Home work given to students	63.33	86.84	75.09
15	Discipline maintained during instruction	76.67	86.84	81.76

Table -1 reveals the fact that mono-grade teaching is being conducted only in 23.33, 89.47 and 56.4 percent of government, private and total sampled elementary schools respectively. Text-books were available to 83.33 percent, 100 percent, and 91.67 percent of students in government, private and total elementary schools respectively. Supplementary teaching-learning materials were available only in 13.16 percent of classrooms of private schools. Play/activity method was being used only in 10 percent of government, 10.53 percent of private and 10.27 percent of total elementary schools respectively.

Table-1 further shows that the percentage of teachers, asking question to students during classroom instruction, were found 23.33, 42.11, and 32.72 percent of government, private, and total elementary schools respectively. In 20 percent of government, 28.95 percent of private and 24.48 percent of total sampled schools, students were found asking question to teachers during classroom instruction. Students were found participating in teaching-learning process in 36.67 percent of government, 44.74 percent of private and 40.71percent of total observed classrooms. Furthermore, teachers were found using blackboard during instruction in 50 percent of government 60.53 percent of private and 55.27 percent of total schools respectively. Teaching-learning materials were being used by teachers only in 10 percent of government, 13.16 percent of private and 11.58 percent of total schools respectively. To ensure attention of the students, stimulus variation skill was appropriately being used by teacher only in 30 percent of government 18.42 percent of private and 24.21 percent of total elementary schools. Illustration/examples were given to clarify the concept in 36.67 percent of government, 60.53 percent of private and 48.6 percent of total observed classrooms in the sampled elementary schools. In 36.67 percent of government, 55.26 percent of private and 45.97 percent of total observed classrooms in elementary schools located in slum areas of varanasi, diagnosis and remedial techniques were being used by teacher. During classroom instruction 76.67 percent of government, 81.58 percent of private and 79.13 percent of total schools' teachers were found assessing and evaluating students' progress. Teachers were found assigning homework to students in 63.33 percent of government, 86.84 percent of private and 75.09 percent of total observed classrooms respectively. Discipline was found maintained in 76.67, 86.84 and 81.76 percent of observed classrooms from government, private and all sampled elementary schools respectively.

TABLE-2- Percentage of Elementary Schools' Teacher's Frequencies Behaving in order to Accelerate Learning among Students

S. No.	Teacher's Behavior During Classroom Instruction	Frequency of Govt. Schools' Teacher (Percentage)	Frequency of Private Schools' Teacher (Percentage)	Frequency of all sampled Schools' Teacher (Percentage)
1	Motivating students for performing central role and express views	23.33	44.74	34.04
2	Felt pleasure during teaching learning process	23.33	21.05	22.19
3	Sensitive for students interest friendly behavior	73.33	65.79	69.56
4	Stimulating teacher-students interaction	36.67	44.74	40.71
5	Stimulating interaction among Students	0	0	0
6	Preference given to students' interests	10	2.63	6.32
7	Praise students' good habits and their learning sensitive action	6.67	13.16	9.92
8	Using appropriate and clear language during instruction	80	92.11	86.06
9	Associating teaching-learning process with students' attitudes, beliefs and social experiences	0	0	0
10	Attentive to educational backwards and special need children	10	10.53	10.27

The percentages of teacher's frequencies, motivating students for performing central role and for expressing their views were found 23.33, 44.74 and 34.04 from government, private and total observed classrooms respectively. The percentage of

teacher's frequencies, feeling pleasures during instruction were found 23.33, 21.05 and 22.19 of government, private and total observed classrooms respectively. The percentages of observed government, private and all sampled classrooms in which teachers were behaving in a friendly manner and were sensitive to student's interest, were found 73.33, 65.79 and 69.56 respectively. In observed instruction in classrooms 36.67, 44.74 and 40.71 percent of government, private and total teacher were found stimulating teacher-students interaction respectively. There was not a single teacher either from government or private schools, stimulating interaction among students during instruction. In observed classrooms, the percentage of teachers giving preference to students interests were found only 10, 2.63 and 6.32 of government, private and total schools respectively.

Table-2 further reveals that 6.67 percent of government, 13.16 percent of private and 9.92 percent of total observed classrooms' teachers were found praising students' good habits and their sensitive learning actions. The percentages of teachers using appropriate and clear language during instruction were found 80, 92.11 and 86.06 of observed government, private and total classrooms respectively. There was not a single teacher from observed classrooms, associating teaching–learning process with students' attitudes, beliefs and their social experiences. 10 percent of government school teacher, 10.53 percent of private school teacher and 10.27 percent of total schools' teachers from observed classrooms were found attentive towards educationally backward and special need children.

Conclusion

Teachers play a major role in the formation of students' personal identities by stimulating their development as active members of society (Willemse, Lunenberg and Korthagen, 2005). Through the act of education, teachers expect to transmit a broad body of knowledge to learners. Schools with a clear vision of teaching and learning goals can make students and teachers more productive (Silins and Mulford, 2004). It was concluded from the study that in urban slum areas of Varanasi city, quality of classroom instruction was poor. Teachers were not performing their roles effectively during classroom instruction. The condition was quite similar in government and private elementary schools. The quality of classroom instruction differ only up to some extent in government and private schools. Furthermore, teachers' behavior was not found accelerating students' learning effectively in both government and private schools. It can be concluded that quality of classroom instruction in slum areas of Varanasi city is not satisfactory.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study will be helpful- To the policy and plan makers in field of elementary education to organize workshop, seminar, and courses for teachers to skilled those in using appropriate instructional method- To teachers of elementary schools in slum areas to adapt appropriate instructional method and behaviour in order to accelerate learning among students. To the guardians in slum areas to provide information about quality of classroom instruction in elementary schools and pay greater attention in selecting appropriate elementary schools for their wards.

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