
A REVIEW ON THE DISTRICT PRIMARY PROJECT FOR THE REFORMS IN THE CULTURE AND THE CLASSROOM

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Abstract

One of the fundamental aspects of educational reform is the reform in teaching and learning. In the multi-donor funded District Primary Education Project in Karnataka, India, this research investigates the effect of the reform process on teacher thought and classroom practice. A variety of topics dealing with teaching and learning are explored using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to explain the degree to which improvements are taking place in the classroom. The study analyzes the influence of four cultural constructs in India that frame teaching and learning: holism as a shared worldview that promotes openness to regulation; the hierarchical structure as a regulatory social framework; knowledge as collectively discovered and attested; and the 'sense of duty' that defines the teacher's position (and student). The conclusion of the study is that the basic characteristics of conventional practice, namely rote and repetition, have not changed, although there are observable improvements in the classroom in the usage of instructional aids and activities during instruction. The openness and resistance of both teachers to change are portrayed as rooted in teaching and learning's cultural construction.

Keywords: *Conventional, District primary education project, Educational reforms, Hierarchical.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Many nations are embarking on large-scale changes in teaching and learning as the standard of education expressed in classrooms becomes more critical in affecting student success. Much has been written about the complexities of large-scale education reform, especially in the

teaching and learning sectors in the developing world and in the Anglo-European context. Teacher thought studies, largely based in the West, are starting to take seriously the effects of worldviews and structures that underlie the educational practice of teachers for change. In the developing world and in non-western societies, however, the dynamics of educational change are scarce. In addition, the effect of change on conventional ways in which educators conceptualize and execute educational activities is not commonly discussed. In addition, teacher thought research is restricted to capturing the cultural pattern of worldviews and frameworks of teachers. In Karnataka, South India, this qualitative study of the thought and behavior of primary school teachers, immersed in a systematic reform programme, shows the difficulty of educational reform in a cultural sense that is not Western[1]. Through a comprehensive program of pedagogical reform, the District Primary Education Program (DPEP), which encompasses almost half of the districts in India, aims to integrally change teaching practices in primary school classrooms. DPEP's in-service teacher training programs strive to incorporate a more involved student-centered pedagogy rather than conventional pedagogy that maintains rote learning and memorization. The mental receptivity of teachers to reform is visible in their thoughts, and the degree to which they are able to incorporate the new teaching methodologies in the classroom is taken into account. The reception and resistance of teachers to the new pedagogy conveys the way in which culture both makes and obstructs change in the thought and teaching of teachers.

This study is motivated by a field of research sometimes referred to as 'teacher thought research' based on teachers' thinking and action. Teacher thought research regards the conscious and explicit creation of classroom behavior by teachers and the tacit or implied structures underlying their classroom thinking and action as essential to pedagogical change[2][3]. This is in contrast to previous research and reform attempts focused on a 'ideal' rationality model, which believed that teachers must be open to and explicitly apply empirical scientific knowledge of pedagogy to their teaching[4]. The lack of acceptance and appropriation of universal' best teaching practices 'by teachers pointed to powerful indigenous myths and worldviews resistant to change that underlie the thinking and action of teachers[4]. In the Anglo-European world, teacher thought research is predominantly located and rarely deals with how teachers from different cultures, especially developing countries, organize their classroom behavior and the associated structures and worldviews that underlie these actions. Under these settings, the nuances of how teachers alter and strengthen teaching are seldom discussed.

Pedagogy, which involves the way teachers think and behave, varies around the world. The study of teacher thought literature by Clarke (1995) describes differences between teachers located in various parts of the world. There are differences in the way teachers relate to their students; in the expectations that teachers have for student learning; in the way teachers approach the curriculum and the textbook; in the way they convey information to students and in the way teachers communicate verbally with their students. The study of schools and classrooms by Alexander (2000) from five countries (USA, UK, Russia, India and France) is focused on primary data collected at the level of school and classroom. India had little in common with classrooms in the USA and the UK, but it was closer to the truth of Russian

classrooms. In general, the information conveyed in the classroom was procedural and realistic, and most classroom activities were characterized by revision generating 'ritual understanding'. The above studies indicate that teacher thought and behavior, whether implicit or explicit, is funded and constructed by the culture that surrounds teachers, in addition to a number of factors related to the economic, political and demographic context that fuels this disparity.

If this is taken further, teachers use their lived and lifelong experience in a particular group and culture to build their thought and behavior in the classroom in addition to their professional skills typically gained through pre-service preparation. Models kept by teachers are established not only in their professional training, but also in a particular culture by being a child, student and parent. A instructor becomes both the recipient and the consumer of a culturally established pedagogy model in this socialisation process. Teachers thus become both beneficiaries of culturally identified pedagogical activities and sustainers. Interestingly, even in the Western context, while teacher thought highlights the role played by the subjective ideas, metaphors and personal philosophies of teachers, the study of teacher thinking is not thoroughly discussed in terms of its integration into the norms and values, in short, the 'community' of a specific society. Teacher thinking uses several categories which form the basis of a cultural analysis of the thinking and action of teachers (Clarke, 2001). For instance, the work of Elbaz (1990) highlights the implicit nature of the thinking of teachers, and the work of Tabachnick and Zeichner (1986) highlights coherence and continuity evident in the thoughts and behavior of teachers[5]. The impact of the larger structure of sense or symbolic structures (Lisovskaya & Karpov, 1999) of teacher thinking and behavior is left, despite the use of categories such as taken-for-grantedness, coherence, and inconsistency in study[6][7]. Teacher thought analysis, while understanding teacher thinking's cultural construction, which gives rise to variations in what happens in classrooms, seldom provides comprehensive studies of how culture constructs the thinking and action of teachers. Limited consideration has been paid to the place of teacher thought and instruction in a broader sense structure and the consequences of this embeddedness for education reform.

Four cultural structures reflecting the larger structure of sense underlie pedagogical activities in India's schools, according to Clarke (2001). From anthropological and psychological research done in India, the four constructs are extrapolated. The effect of these structures on the attempts of teachers to reform instruction is considered in this research. A common holistic worldview that supports the acceptance of regulation is the first build[8]. In holism, since people are not autonomous but connected together in an interdependent structure, the individual is guided by context and social relationships. The laws of interdependence, which are context-specific and particularistic, regulate individuals. Most significantly, members of organic cultures take an active interest in the affairs of each other and feel secure regulating and being controlled for this analysis[9]. Secondly, the notion of openness to control is intertwined with the conception of

Enlightenment as obligation. There is a general faith in the natural order in the Indian sense, or Karma, which is a moral order. The Karma theory is based on the notion that each person assigned to a caste is bound by the specific caste with its given set of duties or vanashrama

dharma. Cultures based on duty enshrine any blueprint for how people should live. It's normal to the degree that it's an objective responsibility... an obligation that tells us what we need to do or not have to do, regardless of what we feel like doing. And an objective thing is the duty.' A third cultural system determining the thought and teaching of teachers is a social context characterized by hierarchical and qualitative hierarchy[10]. The structural hierarchy is focused on the structure of the caste and the organizational structure of families, and the qualitative hierarchy is based on the characteristics of the person who occupies a higher role. In terms of the establishment of authority in the classroom organization, all of these forms of hierarchy refer to the teacher-structural hierarchy and qualitative hierarchy in terms of the teacher being more competent than the student. In the classroom, the relationships of students with their teachers reveal, at least superficially, the respect, admiration and even reverence expected of a novice for an expert. In both the hierarchical and the qualitative hierarchy, the relationship of the specialist to the beginner is caring, responsible and empathetic. Information as collectively collected, attested and transferred is a fourth cultural construct important here[11]. The decisions and choices taken by a person are often constructed by the community's choices rather than by individual experience and interpretation. An person who develops his or her knowledge becomes less important in this process.

The District Primary Education Programme

In order to achieve Universal Elementary Education in India, the District Primary Education Program (Government of India, 1995) was developed in the early 1990s. It is now being introduced in 18 states in India in about 226 districts. According to Alexander (2001), 'DPEP is one of the most ambitious educational reform initiatives in the world; it is the biggest in terms of foreign funding.' Districts are selected on the basis of the district's low levels of female literacy and the program targets more than half of India's children. Special attention in the project is given to girls and children from the Scheduled Caste or Dalit and Schedule Tribe communities. DPEP (Pandey, 2000) focuses on enhancing access, retention, efficiency, decentralized planning and the building of institutional capability. More than half of the cost of the project across the states is designated to improve quality, focusing on textbook analysis and teacher preparation. This is the first large-scale attempt to change teaching and learning in classrooms in India since the implementation of Gandhi's idea of basic education in the mid-1900s. In 11 of its 26 districts, Karnataka, a southern Indian state and one of the 15 states participating in the initiative, is implementing the DPEP. The population of Karnataka is about 45 million and the literacy rate is 63%. The literacy rates for males and females are 73% and 52%, respectively. This study was conducted in Kolar, one of Karnataka's DPEP districts. Kolar has 11 taluks or sub-districts and a 70 percent literacy rate for men and 46 percent for women. Employee teachers go through rigorous training periods at the sub-district or block level for a few weeks at locations called Block Resource Centres (BRCs). Onsite educational assistance is given once or twice a month over the course of the year by a coordinator who visits the classroom. The coordinator is expected to track teaching in the classroom and help teachers focus on what has been learned. Sessions are also held at Cluster Resource Centres

once a month at the cluster level (CRCs). In the classroom, teacher training aims to transform pedagogy, consisting of children watching, listening, copying, reading aloud or memorizing textbook content. All these classroom practices were based on a hierarchical relationship characterized by fear and deference between teacher and students.

II. CONCLUSION

The research seeks to unravel the impact of a large-scale reform of education, especially with regard to teaching and learning in a developing country, namely India. In the District Education Project, a case study by Kolar showed that the training provided to teachers in the district had an effect on teachers. Teachers are now using a wide range of instructional aids and activities during teaching, a phenomenon seldom apparent in classrooms before the start of this project. However, the impact of the teacher training aspect has not been effective in transforming the basic nature of Indian classroom teaching and learning. Education tends to be teacher-centered, with teachers asking questions and students answering diligently. The minimal effect of the change is also seen in the predominance of repetition and the infrequent inclusion during instruction of student experience. The value of shifting mindsets in the 'change method' is advocated by Fullan (1993). This research concurs with this argument by portraying the way the mental constructs of teachers and trainers lay down parameters for improvement. Similarly, in teacher thought studies, the significance of the fundamental philosophies and ideas of teachers and trainers in the change phase is expressed. However, as this research demonstrates, 'mindsets' and 'mental structures' and 'underlying constructs' are collectively built themselves and develop from culture. Understanding the cultural construction of teaching and learning could encourage the production of modules for teacher training aimed at improving specific and essential areas. This research, on the one hand, depicts the cultural aspects of teachers who are accessible and sensitive to the process of change. This research, on the other hand, poses rooted cultural dimensions that are resistant to the process of transition and antagonistic. Those planning teacher training modules need to understand how teacher thought and teaching's cultural aspects contribute to the intended training objectives and to revise training appropriately so that teachers can fully interact with the intended change.

III. REFERENCES

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