

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON CERTAIN CLASSROOM RELATED VARIABLES OF UPPER PRIMARY MATHEMATICS EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Mathematics is a subject of beauty and accuracy. Mathematics knowledge is so important for a student; he can learn other subjects only if he has a good base in mathematics. Even though Mathematics has a lot to do with our daily life, some struggle to learn mathematics. For mathematics teachers, it is usual to teach such students who paralyze both teaching and learning. We cannot say that all students fear this subject, but for sure some students have negative attitude, fear and hatred. This paper deals with the perceptions of Upper Primary teachers in the mathematics Education. Semi Structured interview was the tool used to gather data from 40 Upper Primary teachers. More than 60% of the teachers opined that the syllabus is flooded with content and they don't get enough time to thorough the content to the pupil. Failure in learning the basic concepts of mathematics in the lower classes leads to a permanent withdrawal to that subject. The researcher excerpts a recent study to supplement this research paper. A study conducted in Kozhikode district shows that Class X students are poor in mathematics (Kumar, 2016). Teachers should be very careful that, higher levels of learning may become inaccessible if the pupil skips relatively simpler preliminary stages since he may be lacking in requisite previous knowledge.

KEYWORDS: *Mathematics Achievement, Teachers' perspective and Mathematics syllabus*

INTRODUCTION

Mathematics is the cradle of all inventions and scientific speculations. Mathematics learning begins right from the early childhood. Basic mathematics begins from kinder garden classes. Basic mathematics begins from numbers and shapes. Then it advances to basic operations, geometry, measurement, time, patterns, number system, Algebra and later on it leads to abstract mathematics. Quiver of Mathematics contains power of spatial thinking, mind calculation, reasoning, numerical ability, abstract thinking, logical reasoning, problem solving ability etc can be enhanced through mathematics learning. The Primary grades are often considered the most important years of a child's school career. Content knowledge should be imparted so systematically and without ambiguity, since it paves the foundation for their higher learning. Obviously, a thorough learning experience at primary level will help a student in his higher classes. There will be varied reasons for a child to fear Mathematics. Once a student starts hating this subject, it will be very difficult for him to learn it. Higher levels of learning may become inaccessible if the pupil skips relatively simpler preliminary stages since he may be lacking in requisite previous knowledge.

A teacher's role is not just facing a classroom and lecturing. Although Teaching is a profession, an effective teacher understands the plurality of tasks that is entrusted on him/her starting from ensuring a smooth running of the school to impart quality education especially in the primary classes. What a student lacks in the primary classes will hold him back perennially. Elementary

school teachers play a cardinal role in the one students' life, since they acts as the sole source to provide them with learning experience. What students learn in their formative years can shape how they are in the future.

Upper Primary education has greater influence in students' learning experience. A teacher has a significant role to play in students' upper primary education.

Significance of the study

Mathematics is said to be a toughest subject by many of the children. Many studies have studied the ubiquity of learning difficulties in mathematics (Dowker, 2004). In an article Bynner and Parsons(1997), states that a large proportion of adults lacks numerical skills which was conducted by a Basic Skill Agency. Mathematics should be portrayed to children as being practical and relevant in their everyday lives. It should be integrated with other areas of the curriculum, such as social, environmental and scientific education, music and physical education. Whenever possible it should be linked to the children's environment and their own life experiences. Mathematics learning suffice and prepare children to deal effectively in their day to day transactions and their correlations with other academic subjects. So the students should understand the relevance of mathematics in their own lives.

So it is very important for the teachers that they should teach mathematics using different learning strategies to make the students learn. Whatever they learn in the early period of life lay the basis of the whole life. So it is important to inculcate more mathematical values at the earliest. This study is an attempt to find the perceptions of Upper Primary Teachers about the mathematics education.

METHODOLOGY

The present study follows a qualitative research design. Sample of the study consists of 40 upper primary school teachers who teach Mathematics at upper primary level in Kozhikode and Malappuram districts of Kerala. Purposive sampling is used as the sampling technique. Data were collected using semi structured interview consisted of two open ended questions. Responses to the questions were analyzed qualitatively to reach the findings of the study. The perceptions about mathematics education of Mathematics teachers were examined in this study.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In the interview there were questions regarding the syllabus/content, number of periods for mathematics and about the sufficiency of allotted period.

Mathematics Content in Upper Primary

Presently, the mathematics textbook consists of too much of content. Since the content is heavy the teachers are unable to cover the portions within the stipulated time .Teachers take great effort to complete the portions towards the end of each schedule. 90% of the teachers that is out of the 40 teachers 36 opined that the mathematics textbook is flooded with the content. Definitions are not defined in the textbooks as earlier existed textbooks. They also surmise that they were not able complete the syllabus thoroughly.

Time Limit

At present an average of 5 periods a week is allotted for mathematics. Since mathematics content is heavy teachers prefer to have more periods to cover the entire portion. Only 7.5% of teachers get 6 periods per week to teach mathematics. 82.5% of teachers gets 5 periods of maximum per week. 10% of teachers gets only 4 periods for mathematics instruction.

Feasibility of Time Limit

Majority of the teachers are in a view that they are in a shortage of time to cover the entire

syllabus with every problem and activities in the text book. 85% of the teachers believe that the limited periods allotted for mathematics class are not sufficient for mathematics instruction. They also said that many class days are missing in between due to various reasons like school related exhibitions, youth festivals, other holidays and strikes. They are not satisfied with the feasibility of the time. Only 15% are satisfied with the given time allocation. Generally, teachers say that they don't get enough time to work out varied problems of different dimensions.

DISCUSSION

From the study, researcher has detailed about the problems and constraints of upper primary teachers who instruct Mathematics. From the interview with teachers, it was found that most of the teachers suggest the simplification of the content. Limited number of periods for Mathematics class and heavy content are the main problems they face. Teachers suggest to simplify the content and to increase the number of periods. Teachers want the students to thorough each unit so that mathematics won't become a barrier in higher classes.

Researcher also wishes to mention two recent studies at this juncture as an extension to the present study. The researcher excerpts a recent study to supplement this research paper.

- A study conducted in Kozhikode district shows that Class X students are poor in mathematics (Kumar, 2016).
- Another study on students of Kozhikode districts who passed the SSLC 2016-2017 reveals that only 6% got A⁺ and only 5% got A in Mathematics. Majority (25%) of the students scored 'C' grade which falls in 40-49 out of 100 (Radhakrishnan, 2017).

Teachers should be very careful that, higher levels of learning may become inaccessible if the pupil skips relatively simpler preliminary stages since he may be lacking in requisite previous knowledge. So, proper intervention should be done at the primary level to increase the achievement level. All concepts should be made clear and thorough in the primary classes itself since higher concepts are based on the basic concepts. If it is not clear the students will withdraw from mathematics learning and they will certainly decline in their achievement level.

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