

CLASSROOM CULTURE: THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

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Abstract:

In 1930s sociologists began to think about school culture and its importance. It was in 1970s that educationists linked it with student's achievement. Ron Edmonds the father of "effective schools" movement regarded safe and orderly climate conducive to learning. Deal and Peterson went beyond the safe climate to understanding the school culture. The school culture reflects the vision and mission of the school which in turn reflects the practices in the society. The study stresses on the importance of societal culture being translated in the school via the students in the classroom. Therefore it is necessary that every teacher perceives the congruence of societal culture, school culture and the classroom culture. The study focuses upon the perceptions of student teachers in B.Ed. colleges receiving inputs and training on their teaching skills as well as their responsibilities towards society. The results show that the congruence is average which itself poses a question that what teachers need to do which could lead to high congruence.

Key words: *Classroom culture, Societal culture, Theoretical congruence, Responsibility congruence, Reflective teaching.*

Introduction:

Classroom culture means the ways of doing and understanding activities and concepts in the classroom environment. The school determines the classroom culture, the teacher may vary the culture according to her perceptions, experience and expectations. The teacher sets a tone for the class which she believes would lead to better understanding of the curriculum and would enhance the student's achievement. The teacher brings this into practice by posing some rules in the class and reinforcing the kind of behavior expected according to the culture determined by

her. The present study therefor focusses on the teacher's perception of the classroom culture.

IGI Global disseminator of Knowledge defines Classroom culture as - Critical features of **classroom** life that characterize its educational "personality" and reflect both tacit and explicit educational values, beliefs and processes concerning the meaning of learning, teaching, knowledge, technology, student and teacher roles, power and responsibilities. Classroom culture becomes an important factor that predicts a child's behavior.

Education is nothing but modification of the child's behavior. Every child in the education system will eventually become a citizen of the society. Each classroom has a mini culture and this culture is formed from the beliefs of the teacher. It is therefore very important for the teacher to realize this fact. Her commitment to teaching is not within the four walls of the classroom but to the society at large. There is definitely congruence between what is taught in the classroom and what is happening in society. The curriculum adapts itself to suit the needs of the society. This is clearly seen in the emerging fields which are now vocation based and interdisciplinary in nature. If this is true that subjects must adapt to the needs of the society then it is true that whatever is taught is accordingly going to change the society and bring in progress.

Thus teachers must engage students intensely in the academic as well as social spheres in order to understand that what happens in the classroom is likely to reflect in the society, so feeling of respect for others, developing trust and courage to face all challenges and sustaining relationships and taking all students along must be practiced in the classroom. All this would help in enhancing the classroom culture and also projecting the efficiency of the teacher. Teachers must be sensitive about the fact that is the child feels 'I don't belong here' then he will also feel that he does not belong to the society he is living in. In the past, history has turned itself to education for changing societal beliefs, superstitions and helping in making large changes. All education thus must venture into transformation and social progress.

Rationale for the study:

According to Fullan (2007) school culture can be defined as the guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates. Deal and Peterson(1998)...research strongly buttresses the central role of culture to school success. Most studies promote that school culture fosters improvement, collaborative decision making, professional development and learning. The society today has deteriorated in terms of its values and this is experienced by all of us. The recent killings of people in internal strife and man made calamities are posing many doubts in the minds of people. Diversity today is not appreciated. The administrative lapses also have caused much anguish in the lives of the people. Corruption has taken the lead in all spheres. People are looking for easy access of achievement through short cut means which lead to injustice and malpractices. All this has led to a polluted society. Man has already harmed the environment due to his greed for more and more progress but also greater damage has been done to human relationships. All this has brought in a greater responsibility in the sector of education and thus the final responsibility falls on the shoulder of the teacher. Thus classroom cultures are seen merging with societal cultures in such a way that toxic societal culture can infuse toxicity in the classroom culture and vice versa. In this situation the teacher must understand the social fabric and incorporate its features in her content. The study is thus intended to understand the perception of student teachers in understanding the congruence between the classroom culture and societal culture.

Review of related literature :

A study was conducted in BRAC schools in Dhaka on understanding the classroom culture of Non Formal Primary Education (NFPE) and Chandina Learning Improvement Project (CLIP). The two aspects of classroom culture that were studied are classroom organization and classroom practices. Participatory observation was used to collect data for the study. It was found that CLIP followed small group methods and developed group leaders also to transact curriculum whereas NFPE was based on large group activities. CLIP schools had lot of teacher pupil interaction which built relationships.

Societal culture and teachers' responses to curriculum reform: experiences from China, the study focused on influence of societal culture on teacher's responses to national curriculum reform of upper secondary education in mainland China. The results generated three themes highly relevant to teachers' responses to curriculum reform in Chinese culture, namely teachers' obedience, teachers' facework and teachers' collaboration. It was suggested that a culturally sensitive approach to change leadership may have been more fruitful for facilitating the aims of curriculum reform in mainland China.

Cultural Differences in Online learning: International student perceptions, an exploratory study aimed at understanding the emerging cross-cultural issues in transnational online MBA courses. The case study approach investigated the perceptions of international students regarding the impact of cultural differences on their learning experiences in an online MBA program. The study revealed that online instructors need to design courses in such a way as to remove potential cultural barriers, including language, communication tool use, plagiarism, time zone differences and a lack of multicultural content, which may affect international students' learning performances. The study indicates that a culturally inclusive learning environment needs to consider diversity in course design in order to ensure full participation by international students.

The review assumes that teachers consider the congruence between classroom culture and societal culture. Most studies in this area were also seen in the area of classroom learning environment rather than classroom culture. This proposes that more studies are required to understand the extent to which the student teachers understand the congruence as perceived by them in order to dispense their responsibilities towards the society.

Statement of the Problem : Study of the perceptions of student teachers with reference to the congruence between classroom culture and societal culture.

Objectives of the study:

- 1.To determine the range of overall congruence of classroom culture and societal culture as perceived by student teachers.

2. To study the components of congruence of classroom culture and societal culture as perceived by the student teachers-

- Theoretical congruence
- Responsibility congruence

3. To study the relationship between Theoretical congruence and Responsibility congruence as perceived by student teachers.(Inferential analysis)

Hypotheses of the study

1. There is no significant relationship between the perception of Theoretical congruence and Responsibility congruence of the perception of classroom culture and societal culture.

Research Design:

Methodology of the study: The study has used the ‘Survey method’ to understand the perception of student teachers with reference to the congruence of classroom culture and societal culture.

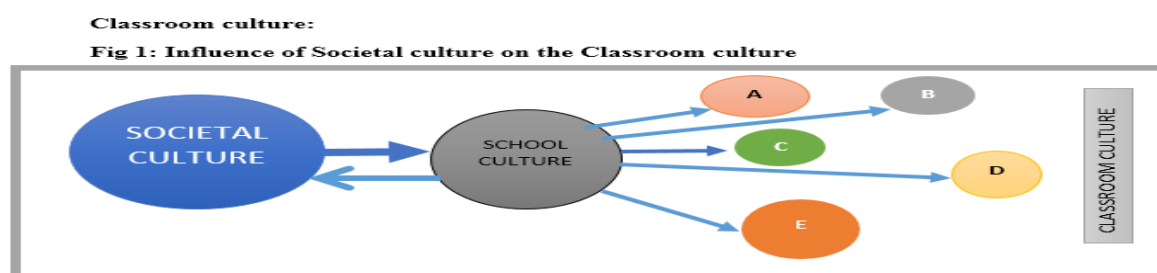
Sampling: The sample used for the study was 49 student teachers of a B.Ed. college. The sampling was convenient sampling method.

Tool used for the study: The tool was created by the researcher with 27 questions in it. The questions were positively and negatively worded. The questions were divided into ‘Theoretical congruence’ and ‘Responsibility congruence’ of classroom culture and societal culture.

Variables of the study

Perceptions of student teachers: Perception is defined as giving meaning to the environment (societal culture and classroom culture) around them.

Congruence of classroom culture and societal culture : This is explained with the help of the following diagram.



In Fig.1 the alphabets indicate different classrooms. The figure indicates that the society imposes its culture in the school. The school in turn reflects what is happening in the society. The above model also highlights that each classroom could have a different culture depending upon the perception of the teachers assigned to the classroom. The circles shown in the diagram show different types of classrooms and the sizes of the circles show that the classrooms could vary in sizes. On this premise the current study is based on whether the student teachers perceive the classroom culture same as the school culture which is termed as congruence of school culture and classroom culture.

Analysis of Data:

1. To determine the range of overall congruence of classroom culture and societal culture as perceived by student teachers.

Table 1:Range determination of the Overall congruence of Pre service teachers

Range for categorization	Mean	Interpretation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 86-108 High congruence, • 65-85 Average congruence • Below 65 Low congruence. 	85	Average overall congruence

It was found that the overall congruence of the student teachers of the classroom culture and societal culture was found to be average level.

2. To study the components of congruence of classroom culture and societal culture as perceived by the student teachers-
 - Theoretical congruence
 - Responsibility congruence

Table 2:Range determination of the Theoretical congruence of Pre service teachers

Range for categorization	Mean	Interpretation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35-44 High theoretical congruence, • 26-34 Average theoretical congruence 	35	High Theoretical congruence

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Below 34 would be low theoretical congruence 		
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The Mean calculated was 35 which shows high theoretical congruence.

Table 3: Range determination of the Responsibility congruence of Pre service teachers

Range for categorization	Mean	Interpretation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 51-64 is High Responsibility congruence, 38-50 Average responsibility congruence Below 38 is Low responsibility congruence. 	51	High Responsibility congruence

3.To study the relationship between Theoretical congruence and Responsibility congruence as perceived by student teachers.(Inferential analysis)

Table 4 :Spearman Rank coefficient for the relationship between theoretical congruence and relationship congruence.

Sample size	df	Value of the Spearman Rank coefficient	Inference
49	47	0.98	p<0.01

The Spearman Rank correlation calculated was $r=0.98$ (Significant at 0.01) which shows that there is a significant relationship between the theoretical congruence and the relationship congruence of classroom culture and societal culture. Teachers with high theoretical congruence could have high relationship congruence. The overall magnitude of the correlation shows very high relationship, the relationship is present in a substantial amount. The direction is positive which means that an increase in the theoretical congruence would most likely lead to an increase in the relationship congruence.

Findings and Conclusions of the study:

The teachers show an average overall congruence in their perceptions of classroom culture and societal culture. It is seen that when the components of congruence are studied in terms of theoretical congruence and responsibility congruence then it was found that teachers have high congruence.

Suggestions:

The classroom culture actually resembles the societal culture in totality. This study aims to impose this relationship. Moreover there is a difference in understanding the theoretical aspects and exercising responsibility towards the society. The suggestions here are therefore classified to strengthen the theoretical congruence and the relationship congruence.

Teachers can engage in 'Reflective Teaching' which will help them understand the concept and application of concepts in society. Reflective teaching is a way of teaching where teachers think about their content, how to teach and ways of teaching, how can practices be improved for better teaching. Reflection could achieve a great deal, to understand the classroom culture as well as to relate the classroom culture with the societal culture and achieve theoretical congruence. Students could then be given experiences for anti bias conceptualization of concepts, being non judgmental in nature and also could be provided rules for behavior management. All these experiences if related to changes in society then the teacher will be engaging in relationship congruence.

Students must be prepared for an inclusive society and must be able to work in diversity. Diversity must be treated as an asset rather than a curse. Teachers must therefore tackle this issue of 'Diversity' through their curriculum transaction and address it in the classroom. A society can progress with a lot of encouragement and care, for diversity such values must be promoted in the classroom where children learn to care, share and learn from the differences in each other.

Peer mentoring must be adopted and the teacher must take up the role of a facilitator. Society needs co operation and innovation, thus the classroom culture must be made

vibrant so that innovation can take place. Much can be done if attitudes are changed, and compassion and conscience are developed. A good society needs people working in an atmosphere of freedom. Freedom must be experienced in the true sense. In order to achieve this we must have rational and collaborative decision making in class.

Dialogue based teaching could be an effective method to understand societal culture. Dialogues can help in conflict resolution and also help in developing active listening skills. The perception of congruence between classroom culture and societal culture can lead teachers to promote bias free dialogues.

Social etiquettes can be practiced in the classroom. Teachers can provide a list of societal etiquettes to be practiced in the classroom like politeness, courtesy, objectivity. This would then be transferred to the society.

The congruence between classroom culture and societal culture must be ingrained in the minds of pre service teachers during the B.Ed. course so that with the theoretical congruence they could also achieve responsibility congruence and also achieve high overall congruence of societal culture and classroom culture.

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