CONFLUX

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 1, JUNE 2017

A PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AS AN INDICATOR OF QUALITY EDUCATION

Dr. Smriti R. Phukan[1]

Abstract

The environment of the school as well as of the class impacts upon the learning of a child. The impact may be positive as well as negative. The stimulating, co-operative and safe environment helps students in their learning. On the other hand a dull, autocratic environment works as a hindrance in students' learning. So it can be considered as a major factor/indicator of quality education. It is the means through which we can able to evaluate the quality of an educational institution. This particular article deals with the various types of learning environment and its impact on the students' learning.

Keywords: Learning environment, Quality, Psycho-social environment, Inclusive environment.

INTRODUCTION

It might be difficult to define quality of education in a single sentence. Every thinker, philosopher, educationalist including a layman had different concept regarding quality. One may say academic achievement of students' can be considered as quality of education and for other high qualified teachers in the educational institutions was the key component of quality education. So, the term is very complex and multifaceted in nature. The word quality generally synonymously used with inclusiveness, effectiveness, relevance etc..

After considering all the aspect UNICEF (2000) provided some dimensions on the basis of which one can able to understand clearly the concept of quality education. Quality education includes:

- ➤ Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities;
- ➤ Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities;
- ➤ Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace;
- ➤ Processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities;
- ➤ Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.

The above definition was very comprehensive in nature including all the components of an education system i.e. learner, teacher, environment, curriculum, approaches of teaching and outcome. The present paper specifically deals with the environment dimension means learning environment in a school or in a classroom. It also tried to discuss the various types of environment and its impact on the students' learning/achievement.

ENVIRONMENT

It was generally observed that a student spend a huge amount of time in the school. Jackson's (1968) Life in the Classroom estimates that this is as high as approximately 7,000 hours by the end of primary school, whereas the title of Rutter et al.'s (1979) book Fifteen Thousand Hours suggested that this figure

---

[1] Assistant Professor, Dibrugarh University. Assam, Dibrugarh.

rises to 15,000 hours by the completion of secondary school. So, these studies revealed that a student spend a huge amount of time within the school. The curricular or co-curricular activities, academic and non-academic discussion that generally took place between the students and teachers and among the students had a great impact on students learning, achievement and their behaviour.

The classroom environment includes much more than the teacher's instructional practices. The quality of life in the classroom is of great importance to students and affects how and what they learn (Watkins, 2005). Teachers create a quality classroom environment by creating an atmosphere in which diversity is respected and individual differences are appreciated (Bondy, et, al. 2007) treating social and emotional learning as a valuable and teachable subject (Zins, 2004) fostering positive relationships (Fraser & Walberg 2005) using systematic classroom management strategies and consistent, non-coercive approaches to discipline (Marzano, 2003).

In general, environment of the school refers to the atmosphere that prevails in a particular school or in a classroom. It is such a character of a class or a school on the basis of which one can able to interpret the different aspects of the school like co-operation, personal relations, competition, academic activities, goals, discipline etc.. These factors along with others as a whole create the climate of the school or the class. As the intensity of these factors differs from situation to situation, so the climate of the school or the classroom also changes accordingly to the situation.

Learning can occur anywhere, but the positive learning outcomes generally sought by education systems happen in quality learning environments (UNICEF 2000). Generally Learning environments are made up of physical and psychosocial elements.

a. Physical Elements:

School Facilities

Physical facilities also determine the quality of the education system. Physical facilities refer to the clean drinking water, electricity facility, adequate building, library, laboratory, toilets etc.. These elements as whole created a sound environment in the school. Various studies revealed that due to the lack of adequate toilet facilities many girls to not want to come to the school regularly. Most of the school in India especially in the rural areas there was dearth of sanitary toilets for girls as well as for boys. It impact upon the enrolment as well as in the attendance of a girl child. The school lacking of the above mentioned facilities the parents reluctant to send their children to the school. Specially, in terms of girl child parents are very conscious regarding their safety and security. They also took into account the distance of the school from the home and the availability of adequate facilities before admitting their girl child into the school.

Darth of those above mentioned facilities in rural areas or some parts of urban areas revealed that educational opportunities are not equality distributed. Some sections of the society deprived from basic facilities and they remained under developed. Invisibility of basic educational facilities leads to inequality and imbalance in education. Inequality and imbalance in the distribution of educational facilities negatively impact on the quality of education. So to improve the quality of education we had to consider and ensured that the physical facilities were equally distributed.

Class Size

While discussing about the quality of education we have to consider the class size of the school. Through the various schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2000), Right to Education (2010), Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (2009) etc. the govt. had tried to provide adequate infrastructure facilities

along with the appointment of new qualified teachers. But due to increase of population the classrooms were became overloaded and it was very difficult for the teachers to manage 70-80 students in a particular class. In some particular areas there is only one teacher for the entire school. Such kind of situation adversely impact upon the efficiency and effectiveness of the teachers. Moreover they did not able to provide individual attention to each student. An opposite situation also prevailed in certain areas. In some schools there were 3/4 teachers only for 2/3 students. It means there was a huge difference in teacher pupil ratio. On the other hand Right to Education Act (2010), Rastriya Madhymik Shiksha Abhiyan had already determined the teacher pupil ratio as 1:30 and 1:35 respectively. But these recommendations were very long away to be implemented properly.

b. Psycho-social Elements:

Safe and encouraging environment for girls in the school:

Gender biasness as well as gender discrimination became characteristics in the Indian society. Most of the girls deprived from the educational opportunities due to the negative attitude of the family as well as of the society. Moreover the superstitious beliefs, customs, traditions, early marriage became hindrance in the educational development of a girl child. At present due to various initiatives of the govt. as well as non govt. organization we observed a little bit of improvement in the girls' education. But the development was not very satisfactory. There was a significant difference between male and female literacy rate. According to 2011 census the literacy rate of male was 82.14 and female 65.46. It clearly indicated the gender inequality in the educational development.

In this regard the school should try to provide safe and peaceful environment for girls so that they did not feel hesitation to come to the school regularly. In this regard, along with the physical facilities like electricity, toilets the school should try to provide encouraging and stimulating environment to them. The human resources in the school at first should change the attitude towards them. The gender role that prevailed in the society also impact upon the functioning of the school. For example the certain activities in the class like cleaning of the class generally done by the girls. Boys generally did not involve in such activities. Moreover boys played outdoor games and girls played indoor games. In some school girls generally did not participate in the co-curricular activities. These examples clearly indicated the gender discrimination in the school. To improve the quality of education we had to leave such kind of attitudes towards girls.

Moreover in some cases extreme physical assultation including rapes were done on the girls at the school. In such circumstances the girls were unable to say anything to the teachers as well as to their parents. They did not know what to say and whom to say. They lived in mental trauma. Unable to adjust with such circumstances they had to leave the school. Every school should establish a safe and encouraging environment to the students so that they can participate in the school activities freely and spontaneously.

Teacher Behaviour:

The teachers' behaviour and the relationship with the students determined the effectiveness of the environment of the class in particular and the school in general. The behaviour of the students determined to a large extend by the behaviour of the teacher. Students generally imitated the teacher behaviour. The environment of the school as well as the class was determined by the relationship that existed between student and teacher & among the students. The cordial, co-operative, supportive relationship between the teacher and students enhanced the quality of the environment. Hence a teacher should always try to improve the relationship with the students. With the changing context the role of the teacher also changed. A teacher

should also change accordingly changing context to adjust with it. Now a days they were considered as facilitator, instruction designer, school manager, prompter etc.

Discipline and rule clarity

Discipline and clarity of the rules were key issues in the quality improvement of education. These elements directly impact upon the management of the classroom as well the school. The stakeholders of the school should be very clear and as well as democratic in terms of rule and reulation. Order, constructive discipline and reinforcement of positive behaviour communicate a seriousness of purpose to students (Craig, Kraft & du Plessis, 1998). The quality of the education to a great extend depended upon the proper maintenance of the discipline and implementation of the rules. The school should also take proper measures and policies to handle delinquent, drug abused, alcoholic and deprived children.

Inclusive environments:

Inclusive environment determined the quality of the school as well as the classroom. In the particular school as well as in the classroom we observed different types of diversity. It might be in terms of gender, location, ethnicity, culture, language, socio-economic conditions etc.. An inclusive environment is responsive to the various needs and diversities of the students. All educational programmes and activities should be so organized organized that it can fulfill the needs of the diverse group. In that particular environment students' freely express their views, fully participate in classroom activities and feel safe. The environment of the class must be organized in such a way that each and every child must get the opportunity to develop irrespective of the gender, cast, class, religion etc.. Moreover inclusive education also included the children who were physically and mentally challenged. The environment of the school including the physical environment must be responsive towards them. Inclusion of those children in the school was the first step towards their development. It was the means through which we can able to bring equality in the society which is one of the major aims of education. Considering the importance of it, each and every education policy emphasized on the inclusiveness to bring equality in education.

School learning environments also operate through a "hidden curriculum," the unspoken messages students receive from structures of authority and the values implicit in the operations of school. When these messages include high expectations for achievement and school level policies, practices, expectations, norms and rewards favour academic achievement for all students, the hidden curriculum contributes to quality learning environments.

CONCLUSION

The environment of the class as well as of the school not only depends on the physical facilities of the school but also depends upon the psychological and social environment. The positive learning environment significantly increases students' enrolment, attendance, achievement specially the students belonging to the weaker class and deprived section of the society. The learning environment of the school moulds students' behaviour. If a teacher able to develop a positive classroom climate than his half of the work already been done. So, one has to be emphasized to develop a positive environment in the school as well in the classroom.

REFERENCES

Bondy, E., Ross, D. D., Gallingane, C., & Hambacher, E. (2007). Creating environments of success and resilience culturally responsive classroom management and more. Urban Education, 42(4), 326-348.

CJoE 24

Craig, H., Kraft, R., and du Plessis, J. (1998). Teacher development: Making an impact. Washington, D.C.: Academy for Educational Development, ABEL Clearinghouse for Basic Education

Fraser, B. J., & Walberg, H. J. (2005). Research on teacher–student relationships and learning environments: Context, retrospect and prospect. International Journal of Educational Research, 43(1), 103-109.

Jackson, P.W. (1968). Life in Classroom, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York.

Marzano, R.J. (2003).What works in schools: Translating research into action. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Murphy, J., Weil, M., Hallinger, P., & Mitman, A. (1985, September). School effectiveness: A conceptual framework. In The Educational Forum (Vol. 49, No. 3, pp. 361-374). Taylor & Francis Group

Rutter, M., Maughan, B. Mortimore, P., Ouston, J. and Smith, A. (1979) Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and their Effect on Children, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. In Fraser, B.J. (Ed.), Classroom Environment. London & New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Watkins, C. (2005). Classrooms as Learning Communities: What's in it for schools. London: Routledge Falmer.

Zins, J. E. (Ed.). (2004). Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?. Teachers College Press.

Document Citation

Measuring What Matters: Citizenship Education. A People for Education Project.

UNICEF (2000). Defining Quality in Education. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/education/files/QualityEducation.PDF on 1/7/2017