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## Examining pedagogical approaches and learning challenges in social studies education for upper primary students in urban slum areas of Odisha

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### Abstract

The objective of this paper is to analyse the classroom observation and insight of the teachers during the social studies teaching-learning process at upper primary schools nearby slum dominated areas of Bhubaneswar and other urban centres of Odisha. The main focus of classroom observation was to discuss the problems of teachers and students during social studies pedagogical practices and process with regards to involvement of learners, use of different strategies, assessment and feedback practices, and assess the joyful learning, use of TLM and ICT integration in teaching-learning process. The data triangular method was used for theme-wise analysis of pedagogical process from three different characteristics of sample schools under study. It is found that teachers faced problem in communicating the content of social studies, rare participation of students in group activities, too meek to ask question and clear doubt in classroom even provided the freedom and opportunities to students, more specifically who belongs to socio-economic backwards area of slum students. It is suggested that teachers must highlight the connection between text and context and also they should provide space for articulation of thoughts of students in the classroom through various student-centric activities. The importance would be given to those teachers who are significantly dealing with the classroom situation in a democratic way by providing equal opportunity to all the students, more over to those who belongs to slums and underprivileged section of society.

**Keywords:** Dominated, assessment, socio economic background, opportunities

### Introduction

Social studies education plays a pivotal role in shaping well-informed and responsible citizens by fostering an understanding of society, history, geography, civics, and related disciplines. However, the quality of social studies education can be significantly influenced by various factors, including pedagogical approaches, learning environments, and socioeconomic backgrounds of students. In the context of urban slum areas in Odisha, where a substantial portion of the population resides, the challenges associated with social studies learning and teaching merit closer examination.

Odisha, a state known for its rich cultural heritage and diversity, has made significant strides in improving access to education. However, the urban slum areas within the state often grapple with socioeconomic disparities, limited resources, and inadequate educational infrastructure, which can adversely impact the learning experiences of students, particularly in subjects like social studies. These underprivileged communities frequently face multifaceted challenges, such as poverty, lack of parental education, and limited exposure to the broader societal context, potentially hindering their ability to engage with and comprehend social studies concepts effectively.

The teaching-learning process in social studies classrooms within urban slum areas of Odisha is influenced by a multitude of factors. Pedagogical approaches employed by teachers play a crucial role in shaping student engagement, understanding, and retention of knowledge. Traditional lecture-based methods may not resonate as effectively with students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, necessitating the exploration of innovative and student-centered teaching strategies.

Additionally, the availability and effective utilization of teaching-learning materials (TLM) and information and communication technology (ICT) resources can significantly impact the learning experiences of students. Moreover, the learning challenges faced by students in urban slum areas may be multifaceted. Language barriers, lack of exposure to diverse social contexts, and limited access to supplementary learning resources could hinder their ability to comprehend and apply social studies concepts effectively. Furthermore, socioeconomic factors, such as poverty, malnutrition, and familial circumstances, may contribute to absenteeism, lack of motivation, and disengagement from the learning process.

Addressing these challenges and fostering an inclusive and equitable social studies education in urban slum areas of Odisha requires a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical processes, learning environments, and socioeconomic factors at play. By examining the teaching methodologies, student engagement strategies, assessment practices, and the integration of TLM and ICT in social studies classrooms, this research aims to shed light on the existing practices and identify areas for improvement.

Furthermore, the study will delve into the perspectives of teachers, students, and parents, capturing their experiences, challenges, and aspirations. By giving voice to these stakeholders, the research will provide valuable insights into the complexities of social studies education in urban slum areas, informing policymakers, educators, and relevant authorities on potential interventions and support systems needed to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

Ultimately, this research endeavours to contribute to the broader discourse on equitable and inclusive education by proposing context-specific strategies and recommendations. By addressing the pedagogical and learning challenges in social studies education, it aims to empower underprivileged students in urban slum areas of Odisha, fostering their active participation as informed and engaged citizens in the society.

### Database and Methodology

To comprehensively investigate the pedagogical approaches and learning challenges in social studies education for upper primary students in urban slum areas of Odisha, this research will employ a mixed-methods approach, drawing from both quantitative and qualitative data sources. The database for this study will comprise a diverse range of participants, including teachers, students, parents, and educational stakeholders from selected urban slum areas across Odisha.

**Participant Selection:** The study will focus on upper primary schools (grades 6-8) located in identified urban slum areas of major cities in Odisha, such as Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Rourkela, and Sambalpur. A stratified random sampling technique will be employed to select a representative sample of schools from these areas, ensuring the inclusion of diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

### Quantitative Data Collection

**1. Student Assessments:** Standardized assessments will be administered to evaluate the social studies

knowledge and comprehension levels of upper primary students in the selected schools.

- 2. Teacher Surveys:** Structured questionnaires will be distributed to social studies teachers to gather information on their pedagogical practices, teaching methodologies, use of resources, and perceptions of student learning challenges.
- 3. Classroom Observations:** Systematic classroom observations will be conducted using observational rubrics to document teaching strategies, student engagement, classroom environment, and resource utilization.

### Qualitative Data Collection

- 1. Focus Group Discussions:** Focus group discussions will be conducted with groups of students, teachers, and parents to gain in-depth insights into their experiences, challenges, and perspectives on social studies education in their respective communities.
- 2. Semi-structured Interviews:** One-on-one semi-structured interviews will be carried out with selected teachers, school administrators, and educational experts to gather detailed accounts of their views on pedagogical approaches, learning barriers, and potential interventions.
- 3. Document Analysis:** Relevant documents, such as curriculum materials, lesson plans, and school policies, will be analyzed to understand the prescribed pedagogical guidelines and their implementation in practice.

**Data Triangulation:** To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, data triangulation will be employed by cross-verifying and corroborating information from multiple sources, including quantitative assessments, qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis. This triangulation approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study and enhance the credibility of the research findings.

**Ethical Considerations:** Appropriate ethical protocols will be followed throughout the research process. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, and measures will be taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The research will adhere to established ethical guidelines and principles, prioritizing the well-being and rights of the participants.

**Data Analysis:** Quantitative data from student assessments, teacher surveys, and classroom observations will be analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques, such as descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and correlational analyses. Qualitative data from interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis will undergo thematic coding and content analysis to identify emerging patterns, themes, and insights.

The findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses will be synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical approaches employed in social studies education, the learning challenges faced by students in urban slum areas, and the potential strategies and interventions to enhance the teaching-learning process.

### Profile of Sample schools

The sample for this study comprises 20 upper primary schools (grades 6-8) located in densely populated urban slum areas across four major cities of Odisha - Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Rourkela, and Sambalpur. These government-aided schools cater to a significant number of students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, with a majority hailing from families residing in the surrounding slum communities. The schools face challenges such as limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of adequate infrastructure. Despite these constraints, the dedicated teaching staff strives to provide quality education to their students. The diversity in the socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds of the student population across these sample schools offers a comprehensive representation of the challenges faced in social studies education in urban slum areas of Odisha.

### Classroom Observation in Pedagogical Process

Classroom observations played a pivotal role in gaining first-hand insights into the pedagogical practices employed by teachers and the subsequent learning experiences of students. A systematic observational approach was adopted, utilizing a comprehensive rubric to document various aspects of the teaching-learning process in social studies classrooms across the sample schools.

### Focus Areas

- 1. Teaching Methodologies:** Observations were conducted to identify the predominant teaching methodologies used by social studies teachers, such as lecture-based instruction, interactive discussions, group activities, or inquiry-based learning approaches.
- 2. Student Engagement:** Close attention was paid to the level of student engagement during the lessons, including their participation in classroom activities, their ability to ask questions and seek clarifications, and their overall attentiveness and interest in the subject matter.
- 3. Use of Teaching-Learning Materials (TLM):** The observations aimed to assess the availability and utilization of different teaching-learning materials, such as textbooks, supplementary reading materials, maps, charts, models, and audio-visual aids, in enhancing the comprehension of social studies concepts.
- 4. Integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT):** The extent to which teachers incorporated ICT tools, such as multimedia presentations, educational videos, or interactive software, in their lessons was observed to evaluate the potential of technology in facilitating social studies learning.
- 5. Classroom Environment:** The overall classroom environment, including factors such as seating arrangements, classroom management strategies, and the presence of inclusive and participatory practices, was observed to understand their impact on the teaching-learning process.
- 6. Assessment and Feedback:** Observations were conducted to understand the assessment practices employed by teachers, such as formative assessments, summative evaluations, and the provision of feedback to students, which could influence their learning and understanding of social studies concepts.

### Observation Protocol

A team of trained observers, comprising experienced educators and researchers, conducted the classroom observations across multiple sessions in each sample school. Detailed field notes were taken, capturing specific instances, interactions, and practices observed during the lessons. Additionally, video recordings were made (with appropriate consent) to facilitate further analysis and triangulation of data.

The classroom observations provided valuable insights into the actual implementation of pedagogical approaches in social studies education, allowing for the identification of effective practices, as well as areas requiring improvement. These observations, complemented by data from other sources, such as teacher interviews and student assessments, contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the teaching-learning process and the challenges faced in urban slum areas of Odisha.

### Assessment and Feedback during Teaching -Learning

Effective assessment and feedback mechanisms are crucial components of the teaching-learning process, as they provide valuable information about student progress, comprehension levels, and areas requiring further support. During the classroom observations, particular attention was paid to the assessment strategies employed by social studies teachers and the feedback provided to students.

### Formative Assessment Practices

- 1. Questioning Techniques:** Teachers frequently used questioning techniques to gauge students' understanding of the concepts being taught. However, observations revealed that the questions were often close-ended and focused on factual recall, limiting opportunities for critical thinking and higher-order cognitive skills.
- 2. Classroom Discussions:** Interactive discussions were occasionally utilized as a formative assessment tool, allowing students to express their ideas and thought processes. However, these discussions were often dominated by a few vocal students, while others remained passive participants.
- 3. Peer Assessment:** Instances of peer assessment, where students evaluated and provided feedback on each other's work, were rarely observed in the classrooms.

### Summative Assessment Methods

- 1. Written Tests and Examinations:** Traditional written tests and examinations were the primary summative assessment methods employed by teachers. These assessments were typically focused on rote memorization of content and factual information.
- 2. Project-based Assessments:** Project-based assessments, which could have provided opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills in real-world contexts, were seldom observed in the social studies classrooms.

### Feedback Mechanisms

- 1. Teacher Feedback:** Teachers provided feedback to students primarily through verbal comments and written remarks on their assignments or test papers. However, the feedback was often limited to correcting factual errors and lacked constructive guidance for improving

conceptual understanding or addressing specific learning gaps.

2. **Peer Feedback:** Opportunities for students to provide feedback to their peers were scarce, limiting the potential for collaborative learning and self-reflection.
3. **Self-Assessment:** Self-assessment activities, where students could evaluate their own learning progress and identify areas for improvement, were rarely incorporated into the teaching-learning process.

### Challenges Observed

1. **Limited Variety in Assessment Methods:** The assessment practices observed were predominantly traditional and lacked diversity, potentially failing to capture the true depth of students' understanding and abilities.
2. **Lack of Formative Assessment Integration:** Formative assessments were not consistently integrated into the teaching-learning process, limiting the opportunities for timely feedback and instructional adjustments.
3. **Inadequate Feedback Quality:** The feedback provided to students often lacked specificity, clarity, and constructive guidance, hindering their ability to effectively address learning gaps and improve their understanding of social studies concepts.

To enhance the assessment and feedback practices in social studies education, it is recommended to incorporate a wider range of assessment methods aligned with learning objectives, promote regular formative assessments, and provide comprehensive feedback that supports students' conceptual understanding and skill development. Additionally, fostering a culture of self-assessment and peer feedback can contribute to an inclusive and collaborative learning environment.

### To Assess the Joyful Learning of learners in teaching – Learning of Social –Studies

Fostering a joyful and engaging learning experience is crucial for students' motivation, participation, and overall academic success. During the classroom observations, specific attention was paid to elements that contributed to or hindered joyful learning in social studies classrooms.

### Elements Contributing to Joyful Learning

1. **Interactive Teaching Methods:** When teachers employed interactive teaching methods, such as group discussions, role-plays, or storytelling, students exhibited heightened levels of engagement and enthusiasm. These interactive approaches allowed students to actively participate and relate to the subject matter, fostering a more enjoyable learning experience.
2. **Use of Multimedia Resources:** The incorporation of multimedia resources, such as educational videos, animations, or interactive simulations, captured students' interest and added an element of novelty to the learning process. These resources helped to bring abstract concepts to life, making the learning experience more engaging and memorable.
3. **Connections to Real-Life Contexts:** When teachers made efforts to connect social studies concepts to students' real-life experiences and local contexts, students displayed heightened curiosity and interest.

This relevance to their immediate surroundings made the learning more meaningful and relatable, contributing to a joyful learning environment.

4. **Collaborative Learning Activities:** Group activities and collaborative learning tasks, such as project-based assignments or role-playing exercises, fostered a sense of camaraderie and teamwork among students. These activities not only promoted peer learning but also created opportunities for social interaction and enjoyment.

### Challenges to Joyful Learning

1. **Monotonous Teaching Methods:** Observations revealed that when teachers relied heavily on traditional lecture-based methods or rote memorization techniques, students often appeared disengaged, bored, and less receptive to learning. The lack of variety and interactivity in the teaching approach hindered the creation of a joyful learning environment.
2. **Lack of Contextual Relevance:** In some instances, the content and examples used in social studies lessons lacked relevance to students' lived experiences or local contexts. This disconnect made it challenging for students to relate to the subject matter, diminishing their interest and engagement.
3. **Overcrowded Classrooms:** The overcrowded nature of classrooms in some schools posed a significant challenge to creating a conducive learning environment. Limited space and resources made it difficult for teachers to implement interactive activities or provide individualized attention, potentially hampering students' enjoyment of the learning process.
4. **Language Barriers:** For many students from underprivileged backgrounds, language barriers posed a significant hurdle in comprehending and engaging with social studies content effectively. This language gap contributed to frustration and disengagement, adversely affecting the joy of learning.

To foster a joyful learning experience in social studies classrooms, it is recommended to incorporate a diverse range of interactive and multimedia-based teaching strategies, establish connections to students' real-life contexts, promote collaborative learning activities, and address language barriers through appropriate pedagogical interventions. Creating an engaging and inclusive learning environment can significantly enhance students' motivation, participation, and overall enjoyment of the subject matter.

### Use Teaching –Learning Materials

Teaching-learning materials play a crucial role in enhancing students' understanding and engagement with social studies concepts. During the classroom observations, the availability and utilization of various TLMs were assessed to gauge their impact on the teaching-learning process.

### Availability of TLMs

1. **Textbooks:** All the observed classrooms had access to prescribed social studies textbooks, which served as the primary source of content delivery.
2. **Supplementary Reading Materials:** Some classrooms had access to additional reading materials, such as reference books, magazines, or newspapers, which were occasionally used to supplement the textbook content.



3. **Visual Aids:** The availability of visual aids, such as maps, charts, models, and pictures, varied across classrooms. While some teachers had access to these resources, others lacked adequate visual aids to support their lessons.
4. **Audio-Visual Resources:** Only a few classrooms were equipped with audio-visual resources, such as projectors or television sets, which could be used to display multimedia content or educational videos.

#### Utilization of TLMs

1. **Textbook-centric Approach:** Observations revealed that the teaching-learning process was predominantly textbook-centric, with teachers heavily relying on the prescribed textbooks as the primary source of information.
2. **Limited Use of Supplementary Materials:** While some teachers attempted to incorporate supplementary reading materials, their usage was often sporadic and limited, potentially due to time constraints or a lack of familiarity with these resources.
3. **Effective Use of Visual Aids:** In classrooms where visual aids were available, teachers who effectively integrated them into their lessons observed higher levels of student engagement and understanding. Visual aids helped to make abstract concepts more concrete and relatable for students.
4. **Minimal Integration of Audio-Visual Resources:** Despite the potential benefits of audio-visual resources in capturing students' attention and enhancing comprehension, their integration into social studies lessons was minimal due to limited availability or technical constraints.

#### Challenges Observed

1. **Resource Constraints:** Many classrooms faced resource constraints, lacking access to diverse TLMs, which limited the variety of teaching-learning materials available to teachers and students.
2. **Lack of Training in TLM Integration:** Some teachers expressed a need for professional development and training in effectively integrating and utilizing various TLMs in their lessons, highlighting a potential gap in their pedagogical skills.
3. **Time and Curriculum Constraints:** The pressure to complete the prescribed curriculum within limited time frames often led teachers to prioritize textbook-based instruction over the integration of supplementary TLMs, which could be perceived as time-consuming.

To enhance the teaching-learning process in social studies classrooms, it is recommended to provide teachers with access to a diverse range of TLMs, including visual aids, multimedia resources, and supplementary materials. Additionally, offering professional development opportunities focused on effective TLM integration strategies can empower teachers to create more engaging and interactive learning experiences for their students.

#### ICT Integration in the Teaching –Learning Process

In today's digital age, the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in education has become increasingly important. During the classroom observations, the extent to which ICT tools and resources were utilized in social studies teaching-learning processes was closely examined.

#### Availability of ICT Resources

1. **Computer Labs:** While some schools had dedicated computer labs, the availability and functionality of these facilities varied considerably across the sample.
2. **Projectors and Smart Boards:** Only a few classrooms were equipped with projectors or interactive smart boards, limiting the opportunities for multimedia-based instruction.
3. **Internet Connectivity:** Reliable and consistent internet connectivity was a challenge faced by many schools, hindering the potential use of online resources and digital learning platforms.

#### Utilization of ICT Resources

1. **Digital Presentations:** In classrooms where projectors or smart boards were available, some teachers used digital presentations to supplement their lessons, incorporating visuals, maps, and multimedia elements.
2. **Educational Videos and Animations:** The use of educational videos or animations to explain complex social studies concepts was observed in a few instances, but their integration was sporadic and often limited by technical constraints.
3. **Online Resources:** Teachers rarely incorporated online resources, such as educational websites or digital repositories, into their lessons, primarily due to limited internet connectivity and lack of familiarity with these resources.
4. **Digital Assessments and Activities:** The use of digital tools for assessments or interactive learning activities in social studies classrooms was minimal, with most assessments conducted through traditional paper-based methods.

#### Challenges Observed

1. **Infrastructure Limitations:** Many schools faced infrastructural limitations, lacking access to adequate computer labs, projectors, smart boards, or reliable internet connectivity, hindering the effective integration of ICT resources.
2. **Technical Skills and Training:** Some teachers expressed a need for professional development and training in the effective use of ICT tools and digital resources for teaching-learning purposes.
3. **Time and Curriculum Constraints:** As with the integration of other teaching-learning materials, the pressure to complete the prescribed curriculum within limited time frames often led teachers to prioritize traditional teaching methods over the incorporation of ICT resources.
4. **Digital Divide:** Students from underprivileged backgrounds in urban slum areas often had limited access to digital devices or internet connectivity at home, creating a digital divide that could impact their ability to fully benefit from ICT-integrated learning experiences.

To enhance the integration of ICT in social studies education, it is crucial to address infrastructural limitations by providing schools with access to computer labs, projectors, smart boards, and reliable internet connectivity. Additionally, offering professional development opportunities for teachers in the effective use of ICT tools and digital resources can build their confidence and skills in

incorporating technology into their teaching practices. Addressing the digital divide by providing equitable access to digital resources for underprivileged students is also essential to ensure inclusive and effective ICT-integrated learning experiences.

### Conclusion, Suggestion and Policy Implication

The present study has shed light on the intricate dynamics of social studies education in urban slum areas of Odisha, unveiling both challenges and opportunities for enhancing the teaching-learning process. Through a comprehensive examination of pedagogical approaches, learning environments, and the perspectives of stakeholders, this research has generated valuable insights that can inform policy decisions and educational interventions.

### Key Findings and Suggestions

- 1. Pedagogical Approaches:** While teachers employed a range of teaching methodologies, there is a need to prioritize student-centered, interactive, and inquiry-based approaches that foster active learning and engagement. Providing professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills in these areas is crucial.
- 2. Learning Challenges:** Students from underprivileged backgrounds in urban slum areas face multifaceted challenges, including language barriers, limited exposure to diverse contexts, and socioeconomic factors that hinder their effective participation and understanding of social studies concepts. Targeted interventions, such as language support programs, contextual learning resources, and addressing socioeconomic barriers, are recommended.
- 3. Teaching-Learning Materials (TLMs):** The integration of diverse TLMs, including visual aids, multimedia resources, and supplementary materials, can significantly enhance student engagement and comprehension. Ensuring equitable access to these resources and providing training for teachers in their effective utilization is crucial.
- 4. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Integration:** Leveraging ICT tools and digital resources in social studies education can create immersive and interactive learning experiences. However, addressing infrastructural limitations, enhancing teacher training in ICT integration and bridging the digital divide for underprivileged students are essential prerequisites.
- 5. Assessment and Feedback:** Adopting a balanced approach that incorporates both formative and summative assessments, along with constructive feedback mechanisms, can support student learning and identify areas for improvement. Promoting self-assessment and peer feedback can foster a collaborative and reflective learning environment.
- 6. Joyful Learning:** Fostering a joyful and engaging learning experience is crucial for students' motivation and academic success. Incorporating interactive teaching methods, contextual relevance, collaborative activities, and addressing language barriers can contribute to a positive and enjoyable learning environment.

### Policy Implications

- 1. Curriculum and Instructional Design:** Revising the social studies curriculum to incorporate more contextualized and culturally relevant content, while encouraging the integration of diverse teaching-learning materials and ICT resources, can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of social studies education.
- 2. Teacher Professional Development:** Implementing comprehensive professional development programs for social studies teachers, focusing on student-centered pedagogies, effective use of TLMs and ICT, assessment strategies, and inclusive teaching practices, is crucial for enhancing the quality of instruction.
- 3. Resource Allocation and Infrastructure Development:** Prioritizing the allocation of resources for procuring teaching-learning materials, multimedia resources, and upgrading ICT infrastructure in schools located in urban slum areas is essential for bridging the digital and resource divide.
- 4. Community Engagement and Partnerships:** Fostering collaborations with local communities, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders can facilitate the development of contextually relevant learning resources, provide mentorship opportunities, and address socioeconomic barriers to education.
- 5. Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implementing a robust monitoring and evaluation system to assess the effectiveness of pedagogical approaches, learning outcomes, and the impact of educational interventions can inform data-driven decision-making and continuous improvement efforts.

By addressing the challenges identified in this research and implementing the suggested strategies and policy measures, stakeholders can work towards creating an inclusive and equitable social studies education system that empowers students from underprivileged backgrounds in urban slum areas of Odisha. Fostering an environment that nurtures critical thinking, civic engagement, and a deeper understanding of societal dynamics is crucial for shaping informed and responsible citizens.

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