

Comparison of Pedagogical Approaches as Perceived by the Teachers of Special and Regular Schools

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Abstract

Pedagogy refers to the dynamic relationship between learning, teaching and culture. The present study was aimed to examine and analyze pedagogical understanding of the teachers about teaching methods. The sample of the study consisted of 200 teachers out of which 100 teachers were serving in special education institutes and 100 in general education institutes of Lahore city. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data on pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers. Questionnaire comprised of 40 items and the reliability was .804. The perceptions of selected teachers were compared with respect to the subjects taught in class 5 which were English, Urdu, Math, Science, social studies and Islamiat. Data was analyzed and mean values for each subject was computed against different preferred methods used by general and special education teachers. Comparison was also made to investigate the pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers about teaching methods. It was concluded that teachers need clearer understanding about appropriateness of each of teaching method for different subjects particularly while teaching in inclusive setup when and where needed. If ignored may create new challenges for the smooth running of inclusive setup.

Keywords: pedagogy, understanding, teaching methods, teachers, inclusion

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Introduction

It is very important for teachers to understand the actual concept of pedagogy and make sure the optimum use of appropriate teaching methods in classroom. Pedagogy is not only the teaching-learning process but also comprised of educational theory, learning styles, assessment, and relationships within and beyond the context of learning. Best and appropriate pedagogical practices reflect the quality teaching that help students to gain conceptual knowledge, provide them with opportunities to learn latest skills on the base of prior knowledge (Farquhar, 2003). It is necessary for the teachers to use suitable teaching methods to teach different subjects to their students. The need is more felt when they have to teach in inclusive education setup.

Study conducted by Alija and Snopce (2015) indicated that teachers can teach mathematics effectively by considering perspective of students about math subject. Students prefer teaching methods which facilitate their learning of mathematics and help them to gain improved grades. Most of the students prefer inquiry based and problem-solving methods than traditional methods to learn and understand different concepts of mathematics.

A study revealed that English is an important subject but in our context most of the students show interest to take lessons in Urdu language rather than English. They prefer to learn English lessons rather than write lessons by themselves. Mostly teachers use lecture method to teach English to their students. Another result revealed that most of the times teachers and students prefer grammar translation method rather than direct method to teach or learn English subject, because grammar translation method is considered to be most applicable and operative teaching method to teach English (Awan & Shafi, 2016). For teaching Urdu as a subject, it is important for teachers to understand that Urdu is not only a language but also a universal mode of communication. Students find it difficult to write Urdu and do many mistakes in writing. Reasons behind include less qualified teachers, large classroom size, less interest in writing, learning environment and assessment system. Some of the teachers are not able to understand the actual meaning and pronunciation of Urdu syntactic structure and deliver lecture in passive way due to which teaching of Urdu subject remain ineffective. Fact is that teachers need to put more efforts and use of suitable subjects to gain conviction in the subject (Amanulla, 2016).

Teaching science in an effective way is an important consideration for science teachers. Effective teaching of scientific concepts is possible by active involvement of learners in teaching-learning process and providing stimulating environment to students (Woolnough, 1994). A study revealed results that there are different preferable teaching methods to teach science in classroom. Hence, science educators should consider the learning needs and attitudes of students while selecting teaching method. Results of the study exposed that constructivist and inquiry approach of teaching facilitate science students with aptitude, understanding, and self-sufficiency primary to develop interest of students in science subject (Juuti, Lavonen and others, 2010).

Social studies are a subject that should be taught using variety of teaching methods. Teachers should use multiple teaching methods and techniques in classroom to teach social studies to their students (Bonwell & Eisen, 1991). Previous studies indicate that most preferable teaching methods for social studies are field trips, cooperative learning, use of technology in classroom, and active learning of content. Students cannot understand or learn social studies effectively by traditional lecture method, or by taking notes passively, and rote memorization of different concepts (Leming, Ellington & Schug, 2006). A previous study supported that students prefer active learning process for subject of social studies (Russell & Waters, 2010).

When we consider teaching methods for the subject of Islamic study, teachers think that there are many teachers or student-centered methods to teach Islamic studies. Widely used method to teach Islamic study is lecture method. Lecture method is an inevitable method for teaching religious studies. Teachers also prefer student centered methods i.e. discussion method, project base learning and student sessions for teaching Islamiat. By using these student-centered methods, students become more involved in lesson. These make learning easier and understandable for them. On the contrary, Islamic studies is an important subject and it is dire need to make this subject more valuable for our generation rather than just to learn Islamic studies to gain marks and good grades which is quite disappointing. There is a need is to improve pedagogical practices in teaching Islamic studies (Ahmadzai, 2015).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers about teaching methods while teaching various subjects at special and regular setup .
2. Find out pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers about teaching English, Urdu, Islamiat, Science, Social Studies and Mathematics.
3. Investigate the difference in pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers about different subjects.

Questions of the Study

Following were the main questions of the study.

1. What is pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers about teaching methods while teaching various subjects at special and regular setup?
2. What is pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers about teaching English, Urdu, Islamiat, Science, Social Studies and Mathematics?
3. What is the difference in pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers about different subjects?

Methodology

Research Design

To investigate the pedagogical understanding of the teachers about teaching methods, descriptive research design was used.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Sample of this study comprised 200 male and female teachers serving in different special and general education institutes of Punjab. 100 general education teachers and 100 special education teachers were selected as the sample of the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample from different general and special education institutions of Lahore.

Instrument

A self-developed questionnaire comprised of 40 items was used to collect the data. The items of the questionnaire were based on relevant literature and validated by the experts of relevant field. In order to assess the reliability of the tool, it was piloted on a sample of 30 teachers from different general and special education institutions from Lahore city. Reliability of questionnaire was checked, and Value of Cronbach Alpha was .804.

Data Collection

The data was collected personally by giving the questionnaires to general and special education teachers. Researcher visited different general and special education institutions, got the consent from administration of institutions, and then collected data from the teachers. In order to get authentic and credible responses, researcher explained the purpose of research to the respondents.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed by SPSS software. Mean was calculated for each of the subject against different teaching methods. To find out the difference of teaching methods used by general and special education teachers to teach different subjects, data were analyzed by calculating maximum and minimum values of each teaching method.

Procedure

The purpose of the study was to identify pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers about teaching methods. With the help of reviewed literature questionnaire was developed by the researchers. Questionnaires were distributed among the respondents. Questionnaire related instructions were clearly provided to the respondents. After data collection, data was tabulated and analyzed to approach findings and conclusions. The recommendations were given based on findings and conclusions.

Results

The results of the study are given as follows:

Table 4.1

Pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers about English subject.

Methods (General Education)	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Mean	Methods (Special education)	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Mean
Lecture	8.00	33.00	15.25	Lecture	4.00	33.00	14.75
Demonstration	3.00	33.00	71.6	Demonstration	1.00	28.00	11.6
Fieldtrip	3.00	43.00	15.6	Fieldtrip	2.00	14.00	5.4
Activity	3.00	35.00	20.4	Activity	15.00	42.00	24.6
Task analysis	3.00	25.00	11.75	Task analysis	4.00	28.00	15.25
Discussion	1.00	25.00	8.5	Discussion	1.00	29.00	8
Question answer	6.00	6.00	6	Question answer	2.00	2.00	2
Inquiry	4.00	12.00	11	Inquiry	5.00	7.00	6
Roleplay	1.00	12.00	5	Roleplay	1.00	36.00	16
Drill	39.00	39.00	39.0	Drill	35.00	40.00	37.50

Table 4.1 showed maximum value (43%) for field trip method which was used by general education teachers for teaching English subject, while maximum value (42%) was found for activity method which was used by special education teachers for teaching English subject.

Table 4.2

Pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers about Urdu subject.

Methods (General education)	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Mean	Methods (Special education)	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Mean
Lecture	1.00	25.00	11	Lecture	24.00	30.00	26
Demonstration	2.00	45.00	20.6	Demonstration	1.00	33.00	13.83
Fieldtrip	3.00	27.00	12.33	Fieldtrip	1.00	6.00	4
Activity	4.00	56.00	21.83	Activity	1.00	23.00	11.83
Task analysis	1.00	25.00	11.5	Task analysis	1.00	28.00	15.25
Discussion	6.00	17.00	10.5	Discussion	7.00	40.00	16.75
Question answer	1.00	16.00	8	Question answer	2.00	49.00	16.5
Inquiry	3.00	3.00	3	Inquiry	1.00	1.00	1
Roleplay	9.00	22.00	17.66	Roleplay	1.00	12.00	6
Drill	11.00	25.00	19.66	Drill	11.00	40.00	22

Table 4.2 showed maximum value (56%) for activity method which was used by general education teachers for teaching different topics of Urdu subject. On the other hand, maximum value (49%) was found for question answer method which was used by special education teachers for teaching different topics of Urdu subject.

Table 4.3

Pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers about Islamiat subject.

Methods (General Education)	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Mean	Methods (Special education)	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Mean
Lecture	18.00	25.00	21.5	Lecture	6.00	29.00	17.5
Demonstration	4.00	40.00	23.4	Demonstration	5.00	30.00	18.2
Fieldtrip	2.00	31.00	14.33	Fieldtrip	1.00	12.00	5.33
Activity	8.00	57.00	24.5	Activity	6.00	46.00	17.5
Task analysis	1.00	24.00	10.5	Task analysis	4.00	26.00	10.5
Discussion	1.00	28.00	9.75	Discussion	1.00	31.00	14.75
Question answer	1.00	25.00	9.5	Question answer	1.00	27.00	11.66
Inquiry	8.00	9.00	8.5	Inquiry	24.00	28.00	26
Roleplay	1.00	25.00	9.25	Roleplay	2.00	23.00	10.66
Drill	1.00	22.00	8	Drill	1.00	37.00	16.66

Table 4.3 showed maximum value (57%) for activity method which was used by general education teachers for teaching different topics of Islamiat subject, whereas maximum value (46%) was found for question answer method which was used by special education teachers for teaching different topics of Islamiat subject.

Table 4.4.

Pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers about science subject.

Methods (General Education)	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Mean	Methods (Special education)	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Mean
Lecture	1.00	34.00	9.5	Lecture	4.00	36.00	17
Demonstration	3.00	52.00	28.8	Demonstration	13.00	47.00	28.42
Fieldtrip	1.00	58.00	20.42	Fieldtrip	4.00	36.00	17.28
Activity	2.00	42.00	19.5	Activity	3.00	31.00	13.5
Task analysis	8.00	18.00	13	Task analysis	5.00	30.00	11.2
Discussion	1.00	17.00	8.16	Discussion	1.00	30.00	8.33
Question answer	2.00	28.00	14.8	Question answer	6.00	36.00	21.6
Inquiry	2.00	22.00	12	Inquiry	1.00	24.00	8.6
Roleplay	1.00	1.00	1	Roleplay	1.00	1.00	1

Table 4.4 showed maximum value (58%) for field trip method which was used by general education teachers for teaching different topics of science subject, whereas, maximum value (47%) for demonstration method used by special education teachers for teaching different topics of science subject.

Table 4.5

Pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers about social studies subject.

Methods (General education)	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Mean	Methods (Special education)	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Mean
Lecture	1.00	31.00	15	Lecture	1.00	19.00	6.16
Demonstration	1.00	51.00	16.8	Demonstration	1.00	36.00	16.66
Fieldtrip	3.00	28.00	15	Fieldtrip	6.00	30.00	16
Activity	8.00	49.00	26	Activity	4.00	38.00	22.5
Task analysis	1.00	12.00	6.25	Task analysis	1.00	24.00	14.6
Discussion	1.00	34.00	17.6	Discussion	1.00	29.00	8.4
Question answer	8.00	12.00	9.33	Question answer	1.00	4.00	2.5
Inquiry	25.00	25.00	25	Inquiry	0	0	0
Roleplay	26.00	26.00	26	Roleplay	29.00	29.00	29

Table 4.5 showed that maximum value (51%) for demonstration method which was used by general education teachers for teaching social studies to their students, while maximum value (38%) for activity method used by special education teachers for teaching social studies to their students.

Table 4.6

Pedagogical understanding of general and special education teachers about mathematics subject.

Methods (General education)	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Mean	Methods (Special education)	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Mean
Lecture	1.00	32.00	11.5	Lecture	2.00	24.00	11.75
Demonstration	4.00	43.00	20.66	Demonstration	2.00	41.00	14.33
Fieldtrip	6.00	23.00	15.11	Fieldtrip	1.00	40.00	17.44
Activity	5.00	31.00	18.55	Activity	1.00	47.00	16.55
Task analysis	1.00	34.00	12.33	Task analysis	1.00	48.00	16
Discussion	1.00	17.00	7.22	Discussion	1.00	28.00	9.22
Question answer	7.00	30.00	11.66	Question answer	1.00	24.00	11.14
Inquiry	7.00	9.00	8	Inquiry	16	19	17.5

Table 4.6 showed maximum value (43%) for demonstration method which was used by general education teachers for teaching mathematics to their students, while maximum value (48%) for task analysis method used by special education teachers for teaching mathematics to their students.

Discussion

The major findings of this study revealed that there is a need for general and special education teachers to understand the

effective use of suitable teaching methods for certain subjects, because pedagogical understanding is an essential part of quality teaching. Findings revealed that general education teachers used demonstration method while special education teachers used activity method for teaching social studies to their students. Researches on teaching methods for social studies revealed that field trip is an effective method to teach many concepts of social studies. Previous studies also indicate that incorporating variety of teaching methods and techniques in classroom is an effective way of covering all concepts taught in social studies (Byford, Lennon and Russell, 2009; Shah, 2016).

It was found in this study that special education teachers used task analysis and general education teachers used demonstration method to teach mathematics. Literature indicates that when math is taught in a creative way, it provides opportunities to students to learn mathematical concepts in creative manner (Kurnik, 2008). Therefore, there is need for teachers to equip themselves with more creative ways of teaching mathematics which may include selection of suitable methods for teaching math and using inquiry and other creative methods.

Present study revealed that teachers use field trip and demonstration method for teaching science subject. Present study also indicated that for teaching Urdu, Islamiat and English field trip and activity base methods were more preferred by teachers. Whereas, literature reveals that for teaching science subjects, inquiry base and constructivist learning approaches are preferable. Additionally, teaching conferences are more effective in selecting such teaching methods and techniques which have an intense effect on conceptual learning of students and help them to deeply understand the taught content. It makes the students more attentive, help them concentrate on content and help them to retain lessons for longer period (Aziz, Ibrahim and others, 2016).

Conclusions

It was concluded that general education teachers involved their students in activity base learning while teaching Urdu than special education teachers. General and special education teachers involved their students in activity base learning while teaching abstract concepts of Islamiat. General education teachers bring their students to the real-life situations i.e. field trip to teach them about different concepts of science as well as the subject of English, while special education teachers demonstrate real and artificial objects in classroom to teach their students about scientific concepts. While, special education teachers prefer activity method to teach English subject to their special students. General education teachers used demonstration method for teaching social studies to their students while special education teachers used activity method for teaching social studies to their students. Special education teachers consider the special needs of their students and breakdown each of the mathematical sum into different steps to make the concept easily understandable for special needs students, while general education teachers mostly use black board to demonstrate the solution of mathematical sums. It is very essential for teachers to teach by utilizing appropriate teaching methods for school subjects particularly when they have to manage an inclusive class of special and regular students. This study had revealed the gap of pedagogical understanding of teachers against each subject in both disciplines (special and regular). This may reflect as big challenge for the inclusion of students with special needs as well as for teachers to teach in inclusive setup.

Recommendations

Following recommendation has been derived based on findings of the study:

1. General and special education directorate should arrange pre-service and In-service teachers' training programs at district

level to well equip the teachers with updated knowledge on regular basis with reference to above mentioned subjects.

2. Orientation courses for new entrants should be arranged in both general and special education. These should include exposure to teaching methods to teach various subjects in general, special as well as mainstreaming/inclusion set up.
3. Head teachers of both fields should create opportunities for professional development of their teachers to facilitate them in pedagogical understanding of subjects and should train them in lieu of future inclusion of special needs in society by bridging the gap between theory and practice specifically to manage in inclusive setup of education.

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