CHAPTER VI
UNDERSTANDING THE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS

In the previous chapters, it was demonstrated that there are internal conflicts between the teachers and disagreements within the school management. Despite the conflicts and disagreements, the structure of the school is maintained in order to serve the function of imparting knowledge/literary skills to the students. This takes place through the teaching-learning process which is an important facet of school culture. It is primarily concerned with learning and achievement of the students. Teaching is a series of interactions between someone in the role of a teacher and someone in the role of a learner, with the explicit goal of changing the learner’s cognitive or affective states (Bidwell cited in Boocoock, 1978). Learning, on the other hand, is a process of construction of knowledge and learners actively construct their own knowledge on the basis of materials/activities presented to them (NCERT, 2005).

The present chapter is not just confined to the classroom discourses but focuses on various aspects that are an inevitable part of the teaching-learning process i.e., the academic atmosphere, examinations, assessment, classroom practices, routine teaching procedures, disturbances in the academic calendar, and so on. Through discussing these facets, the chapter attempts to draw attention to what exactly happens in the process of teaching and learning in general, and inside the classrooms in particular. Apart from this, the chapter also focuses on teachers’ perceptions of students’ academic performances.

Academic atmosphere
In the present context, academic atmosphere refers to the overall atmosphere pertaining to the educational process in which both students and teachers work. In ZPHS, it was observed that the academic atmosphere is more relaxed, teachers are not under any kind of stress. Students are stress-free and without any pressure from the teachers or the parents. Even during exams, it was observed that
they never seemed tensed and faced the exam without any kind of fear.

In NMHS, on the other hand, teachers are always under tremendous pressure and abide by whatever the management says. Students spend most of their time in school and they are forced to study for longer hours. Thus, from 7.30am to 7.30pm, high school students remain in the school under the supervision of their teachers. The way students rank and judge their teachers based on certain criteria was discussed in the previous chapter. Likewise, teachers also label the students in NMHS. Students are divided into two categories by the teachers and the school management:

- ‘Clevers’ who perform well in the exams and secure good marks, and
- ‘Dullers’ (literally, dullards) who constantly perform badly or fail in the exams.

These two categories of students are not segregated, but combined and made to sit in one class with an intention that the doubts of ‘dullers’ can be clarified by the ‘clevers’. For the ‘dullers’, extra classes are held daily from 4pm to 4.30pm where one subject teacher clarifies the doubts and gives homework related to the subject. Students strive to come under the ‘clevers’ category or try to remain in it. It was noted that teaching of the X standard syllabus is started from IX onwards so that students can score well in the exams. By December, IX standard syllabus is completed and from January onwards X standard course work is started so that X students can get ample time to revise before the exams. Teachers reported that this is a common practice in private schools and is followed with the intention that ‘dullers’ can improve and perform better in the exam. In private schools, there are no regulatory bodies to monitor such steps. It was observed that students of X standard are put under tremendous pressure as their results in the board exams is a determining factor for upholding the school’s reputation. They are not given any leisure time and co-curricular activities like games and sports are completely ruled out for
them. Right from the beginning of the academic year, exams are conducted for the students to test their understanding. In ZPHS or in any other government school, no such practice takes place since this is against the government rules. Here, teaching of X standard syllabus is started only from the beginning of the academic year and only when students of IX grade are promoted to grade X.

Like students, teachers in NMHS also work under tremendous stress as their continuation in the school depends on their teaching and students performance. Teachers of X class reported that both students and teachers work under pressure throughout the year and when students bring poor results, teachers are blamed by the management. They pointed out that it is more like a test for the teachers than for the students. Unlike in ZPHS, teachers are constantly supervised by the school correspondent or assistant HM. Every morning and afternoon, one person from the school management comes to monitor whether all the teachers are present in their respective classrooms. However, it was noted that the management never sees how a teacher is teaching inside the class, how the students are responding or the kind of problems that both students and teachers are facing.

It was observed that in both the schools, the main concern of the high school teachers was to complete the syllabus by December or January and start revision from February onwards. Teachers reported that since question papers for quarterly, half yearly and annual examinations come from the government, the required portions have to be completed within the stipulated time. Therefore, teachers were not concerned whether the child was learning or not. Though teachers complete the syllabus, the real problem arises when the medium of instruction is a hindrance in the teaching-learning process, which is discussed below.

**Academic Calendar**

The academic calendar of any school gives the details of the ways in which the school operates in an academic year. Since all the activities
and events taking place in an academic year were observed, the same
is presented below in detail.

There is a lot of difference between the academic calendar of ZPHS
and NMHS. If one meticulously goes through the academic calendar of
government/local body schools, one can notice that the actual
teaching duration is very short in these schools. During the fieldwork,
it was observed that the academic year started on June 12th which is
the first working day and all the regular teachers, vidya volunteers
and non-teaching staff reported on that day without fail. In the first
two weeks of this month, there was no teaching activity for many
reasons. Most of the students did not turn up, textbooks were not
distributed to all the students and teachers were also found to be in a
relaxed mood. Only X standard classes (for students who were
promoted from IX standard) started right from the beginning of the
academic year as the students have to sit the board exams. Although
a tentative timetable was prepared by the HM, it was observed that
except for X class, almost all the other classes were without teachers.
In the last week of June, X supplementary exams were conducted for
those who failed their board exams. This continued till the first week
of July and during this time school functioned from 1pm - 5pm as X
supplementary exams were being held in the morning. Most of the
regular teachers were assigned the duty of invigilation in other
schools, and hence, the school was managed by the V.Vs’. It was
observed that all the classes were clubbed together and made to sit in
the corridors as examinations were conducted in the classrooms.
There was no teaching activity at all. In fact, it was not possible to
teach when all the classes were mixed and made to sit together.

It was only from the second week of July that academic activity
started which is almost one month after the school reopened. There is
a preplanned calendar written in the state syllabus textbooks
regarding the syllabus to be completed in every month, which
teachers take as a yardstick and follow. The school functioned for
three months regularly (till October) and during this time quarterly
exams were conducted in the month of September. Afterwards, ten days holidays were declared in the month of October for Dussera festival. In December, half yearly exams were conducted and two days holidays were given for Christmas followed by another long vacation of ten days in January for Sankranthi festival. After Sankranthi, B.Ed training teachers joined the school for one month for their internship, which is a routine practice every year. Both teachers and students gave a negative opinion on these training teachers. Teachers take this as a disturbance as they feel that neither training teachers nor the students are serious in the class. However, it was observed that teachers get a lot of leisure time during this one month. Regular teachers assign each training teacher a specified portion to be completed in one month. Training teachers have to abide by whatever the regular subject teachers say as ultimately regular teachers have to sign the registers of the training teachers, which is a testimony that these training teachers have completed their internship successfully. It was observed that though training teachers come with teaching aids, students do not listen to them or pay attention as they know that these teachers are in the school only for a short span. The only benefit of this internship period which regular teachers reported is that they give some material thing which is an essential requirement for the school like a wooden closet (almirah), electric bell, mike system and so on. In the same month i.e., January, first pre-final exams of X students were held for ten days.

From February onwards, there were a lot of changes in the academic calendar of government/local body schools. In this month, HPT (Hindi Pandit Training) and TPT (Telugu Pandit Training) final exams were held in the school as ZPHS was one of the centres. Teachers reported that this exam is conducted every year in the school. Thus, for one week, most of the rooms had to be vacated as more than 100 candidates appeared for the exam. As a result, the school students had to sit in the sun or on the verandahs for the whole day and with virtually no teaching activity. The invigilation duty for this exam was assigned to the vidya volunteers while regular teachers were trying to
manage the classes. In the last week of this month, second pre-final of X exam was held for ten days. From mid-March, ‘half day school’ started wherein the school functioned only till 12 pm due to peak summers. Every year, this routine continues till the X board exam commences. Once X board exams start, the school functions for only two hours daily i.e., from 1 pm-3 pm. It was observed that during this time, the school was entirely managed by the volunteers as all regular teachers had X exam invigilation duty in the morning in other schools. In ZPHS, nine classrooms were allotted for writing X exam and everyday after the exam, the rooms were locked so that the roll numbers written on the desks and the seating arrangement were not disturbed. As a result, once again, all the students who come at 1 pm were made to sit either on the verandah or in the sun once again. There was no teaching at all and very few students turned up. Finally, annual examinations were held in the month of April and subsequently 23rd of April was declared as the last working day of the school.

It was observed that whenever the school acts as a centre to conduct any examination or whenever teachers have invigilation duty within or outside the school, the academic activity gets disturbed and no teaching takes place. Regular teachers get invigilation duty during X board exams wherein each teacher is paid Rs 12 per day. They also go for Inter I and II year exams which again disturbs the academic activity. During those times, the entire school is managed by *vidya* volunteers. More importantly, since classrooms are engaged for the exams, students are made to sit in the hot sun and they are the ones who suffer the most. The table below summarizes the various interruptions in an academic year:
TABLE 6.3 INTERRUPTIONS IN AN ACADEMIC YEAR IN ZPHS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Teaching activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X standard supplementary exam</td>
<td>June-July</td>
<td>Two weeks</td>
<td>Nil, regular teachers were assigned invigilation duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Ed Internship</td>
<td>January-February</td>
<td>One month</td>
<td>Classes taken by the training teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPT and TPT final exam</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>Nil, classrooms are to be vacated for the exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X Board Exam</td>
<td>March-April</td>
<td>Two weeks</td>
<td>Nil, classrooms given for the exam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When teachers were asked why the school functions on such days rather than giving a holiday, they reported that the school should work for not less than 220 working days in an academic year. Thus, one cannot declare ten days holidays just because examinations are being conducted. So, even though the schools remain open, no academic activity takes place. Apart from all this, retirement functions in the school, assigning teachers for elections duty and other tasks like census counting also disturb the academic atmosphere. In the academic year 2008-09, the school was open for 226 working days.

All these disturbances are totally lacking in NMHS. Here also, around ten training teachers came for internship, but they were assigned more deskwork rather than taking classes. Invigilation for X board exam was done in the school itself by the school teachers as it was one of the many centres. The dates of quarterly, half yearly and annual examinations in NMHS overlap with that of ZPHS as the former is a recognized private school. Unlike ZPHS, there are not many disturbances in the teaching activities. The academic year commenced from the first week of June, a little earlier than the government schools. However, teachers had to come right from the first day of the month. Unlike ZPHS, teachers here have to write year plans i.e., a detailed plan about the academic activity and the syllabus to be completed in each month. This year plan has to be submitted to the management in the beginning of the academic year. On the reopening day, very few students came, hence there was no teaching...
activity. Students were clubbed together and were made to sit in three to four classrooms. The school’s HM was busy in preparing timetable for the teachers and students. The next day, the timetable was ready and the classes started in full swing without any delay. As is expected from private schools, teachers started informing the students about the first exam to be conducted. From June to March, there is intense academic activity except in January when B.Ed training teachers came for one month internship. During this time, some of the classes were taken by the training teachers.

It was found that X grade students were coming right from the beginning of the month of June. They even came in the month of May for fifteen days from 9.30 am to 12.30 am as they had classes. Thus, for X students, the summer vacations were only for two weeks while in ZPHS the summer vacation was for approximately fifty days even for X grade students. Accordingly, all the teachers who teach X grade students also came during the month of May. Conducting classes in summer vacations does not take place in government schools as it is against the rules. Thus, both teachers and students come only on the reopening day. Apart from the X standard teachers, other teachers who wanted the salary for the month of May also came for canvassing duty and for making other arrangements for admissions like sorting out textbooks for each class, arranging notebooks, and so on. Therefore, the school is never closed and remains open throughout the year.

Unlike ZPHS, the school functions for the full day throughout the year, even in peak summers. However, during X board exams, the school functions from 1pm to 5pm for the students as in the morning the school conducts X examinations. It was observed that only four rooms were allotted for the exam and hence students were not sitting on the corridors or verandahs like in ZPHS, but in the classrooms. However, the ‘half day school’ was meant only for the students whereas teachers were assigned canvassing duty in the morning. So, teachers come at 9am, do their canvassing duty and take classes in
the afternoon. In the annual exam timetable prescribed by the government, one day holiday was given after every exam. Though ZPHS was closed, NMHS functioned even on those days and most of the students and all the teachers were present. Students were asked to study and revise for the next day’s exam and teachers were asked to supervise. It was observed that even on national holidays like Good Friday and Ambedkar Jayanti, the school was open for the teachers as well as the students. The director reasons that if students come to the school, they will study a bit and write something in the exam, if they are at home, they will not study and will not have the zeal to do well in the exam. In the academic year 2008-09, the school functioned for 247 working days.

Thus, it is very evident that there are more working days and the workload of teachers is much greater in NMHS than the ZPHS. In ZPHS, there are many disturbances in an academic year when compared to NMHS which hinders the teaching activity.

**English medium: The bone of contention**

Language serves as an important vehicle through which the information is communicated. Within the context of school, all the activities in the teaching-learning process revolve around language. However, problems begin when the actors (here, teachers and students) of the school do not have competency in the language other than their mother tongue but are forced to teach and learn in that language due to outside demand (especially from the parents). In the present context, English is the language which is the bone of contention. It is pertinent to highlight that teachers and students in both the schools lack competency in English, but still forced to teach and learn in English medium as the society and job market demands fluency in English.

In ZPHS, teachers reported that students face lot of problems in VI standard when all of a sudden they are taught in English medium text books. Up to V standard i.e., till the primary stage, students study in Telugu medium. So, in the first year of upper primary stage, they find
it very difficult to understand (especially in subjects like Science and Social Studies) and the terminologies used in the text are entirely different from what they learned in Telugu medium in primary classes. Moreover, teachers also reported that students are not taught the basic grammar in English in their primary classes. Given this situation, it is an arduous task for the students to cope up with English medium. This is especially true for those children who have opted for CBSE syllabus in VI standard. For instance, it was observed that in Social Studies half yearly question paper there were questions like: ‘What do you understand by the word government?’ ‘List five ways in which you think it affects your daily life’ and ‘Why do you think the government needs to make rules for everyone in the form of laws?’ Students were finding it difficult to understand the question, so writing is undoubtedly an uphill task for them. As a result, most of the students submitted blank papers in the exam. When compared to Science and Social Studies, Mathematics subject is comparatively easier as the numeric system is the same in both mediums. In languages, Hindi and Telugu textbooks remain the same for both mediums, but English textbooks are different and difficult when compared to the English textbook for Telugu medium students.

The problems are not only confined to the students as language efficiency of teachers play a pivotal role when it comes to teaching in English medium in schools. The table below gives the details of the medium in which teachers have completed their education, and which reflects their competency in teaching in that particular medium.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 6.1 LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF THE TEACHERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telugu/Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is very evident from the above table that more than two-thirds of the teachers in ZPHS (67%) and NMHS (76%) had completed their education in Telugu/Hindi medium. Teachers in both the schools reported that since their entire education was in a regional language, they were not competent to teach in English medium. In ZPHS, teachers were facing lot of difficulties in teaching state syllabus in English medium. As they were not trained in English medium, they felt that they were not doing justice to the subject. In such a situation, teaching CBSE in English medium, which requires more proficiency in English, was a difficult task for them.

All the teachers in ZPHS were very sceptical about the ‘SUCCESS School’ project. They reasoned that separate teachers should be appointed for ‘CBSE SUCCESS School’ which was not done. As a result, regular teachers were given the responsibility to teach CBSE English medium classes. Teachers were not competent as they were used to teach the state prescribed syllabus in Telugu medium. They reported that they need to prepare a lot before taking a CBSE class. Moreover, as the CBSE textbooks reached the school after two months of the commencement of the academic year, teachers had to be quick in completing the syllabus. Interview with the MEO revealed that in Balanagar mandal, out of the total twelve government/local body schools, SUCCESS project was introduced in eleven schools in the academic year 2008-09. Out of these eleven, nine schools did not have regular staff for teaching state prescribed syllabus, so having a separate staff for CBSE classes was quite arduous.

Time and again it has been reiterated that change should be introduced after studying the local needs and not through centralised planning (Mead, 1955 for instance). It is pertinent to highlight that when G.O (Government Order) regarding SUCCESS schools was issued, teachers were neither consulted nor any meetings were held with them\(^1\). A two week training programme was conducted in the

\(^1\) Kumar (2009) argues that curriculum designing should be an act of deliberation in which teachers should be included but in India, teachers are
beginning, but without the prescribed textbooks. Teachers reported that they did not have any idea regarding how the textbooks would be. The state government somehow wanted to introduce CBSE English medium syllabus as this was a World Bank funded project. Under this project, each school was allotted one crore rupees to improve the school infrastructure, computer lab, teaching aids etc. However, schools did not receive the funds as these were diverted to other state projects like irrigation. Teachers further argued that even if schools received the funds, 10 to 20 computers would be installed and it would be declared that educational programmes were being shown and taught to the children. According to the teachers, this was not the correct way to raise the standard of government school teaching. One teacher stated:

CBSE syllabus is a very innovative and project based syllabus and government school children cannot compete as they lack fundamentals in every subject. Moreover, as the children were from economically poor background, they cannot afford to buy project related materials.

Unanimously, all the teachers reported that SUCCESS school project should be introduced from grade one onwards with competent English medium teachers. They stated that studying in Telugu medium till the primary and introducing English in upper primary is illogical. They also pointed out that before taking any decision by the government, teachers should be consulted to understand the ground level realities and the feasibility of any new initiative. While having a group discussion with the teachers, one teacher reported that all the government schemes are introduced only for political benefits. This academic year i.e., 2008-09, the ruling party i.e., Congress has introduced the SUCCESS school concept. If some other political party becomes the ruling party, then CBSE syllabus would be changed and the focus might shift to state syllabus and Telugu medium. Thus, the school system in AP is in complete chaos and needs consistency so that students’ future is not at stake.

subordinate functionaries, who are not expected to have a voice but only the skill to teach.
It was observed that in ZPHS, the number of students in English medium sections was very less when compared to Telugu medium students. For example, in class VI, the strength of Telugu medium sections was 140 whereas in English medium classes, there were mere 28 students. This shows that even though English medium has been introduced in government school, Telugu medium classrooms were more crowded than English medium classrooms. In IX grade English medium section, there were only eleven students whereas in the beginning when these children were in grade VI, their strength was around 25 in the class. When asked for the reason, teachers reported that parents have more confidence in Telugu medium as they can teach their children and guide them to some extent if they are literate. They further reported that students can also cope up and have self-confidence when they read Telugu textbooks. For English medium, since parents do not know the language, they have to send the children to private tuitions which is again an extra expenditure for them. Moreover, Telugu medium is always advisable for those parents who constantly migrate as Telugu medium government schools can be found across the state. Keeping all these reasons in mind, good number of parents and students opt for Telugu medium. Only those parents who feel that English medium education will be useful for their child in future enrol their children in English medium classes.

Teachers also reported that Telugu medium students are much better than English medium students in academic performance as from primary onwards they learn in the same language. Thus, they can read, write and understand well in Telugu. In English medium, students struggle for each and every word especially in grade VI as till primary they were in Telugu medium. Teachers also stated that just understanding in the class is not sufficient as students need to read and write in English in examinations which they cannot do. From this point of view, teachers reported that Telugu medium students perform well in the exams than English medium students.
One of the major reasons for parents’ inclination towards private schools is the desire that their children can read, write and speak in English. However, it was found that in NMHS, both teachers and students were not well-versed in English. The school management boasts of running an ‘English Medium School’, but paradoxically the situation here was even worse than ZPHS as the percentage of Telugu medium teachers in this school was more (75.66%) than the government school teachers. Teachers were given strict instructions to teach in English, but teachers tend to negotiate between English and Telugu. Most of the primary teachers lacked fluency in English and teachers in high school lacked competency to teach in English. Thus, teachers were unable to teach, express, and explain the students properly in English. They made many mistakes when they used to interact with students or teach in English. It was noted that the emphasis on English was so much that even language teachers (Hindi and Telugu) were forced to speak in English in the class when they were not teaching the lesson. The pronunciation and accent of teachers in English was appalling.

Students, however, spoke in Telugu among themselves though they were strictly instructed to speak in English. Asharani, an English teacher in NMHS stated that there were some students in X standard to whom they were teaching English alphabets. She argues that students are somehow managing in the school, but when they go out in search of jobs later in life, they stand nowhere. The director states that what students speak is ‘butter English’ i.e., they speak those words which are absent in the dictionary or those sentences which are grammatically incorrect like ‘fastly’, ‘I did not went there’ and the like. It was observed that in the morning assembly, he repeatedly insists the students to speak correct English. He further argues that since the salaries are less in the school, it becomes difficult to get good teachers who have fluency in English.

Parents admit their children to private schools with a desire that their children can speak in English and to fulfil this desire they pay the fees
to the school. The job market outside demands English speaking people and accordingly parents aspire for their children to speak in English. It was observed that NMHS is no better than ZPHS when it comes to English as the medium of instruction. Teachers speak incorrect English, they have Telugu accent which makes their pronunciation wrong, and their sentence framing is grammatically incorrect. In fact, it was noted that Telugu medium students and teachers in ZPHS had an edge over English medium students as they feel free to express, read and write in Telugu which was their mother tongue.

**Textbook analysis**

The state government prescribed textbooks are based on the NCERT guidelines regarding the goals and objectives of the NPE 1986 for achieving national system of education. The earlier curriculum and textbooks were revised and the present textbooks are prepared based on the revised curriculum and syllabus by the government. The SCERT of Andhra Pradesh undertook the responsibility of revising the syllabus from grade I to X in all subjects. The GoAP also ordered that the teaching of Hindi as a second language shall begin from grade VI and extended up to grade X starting from academic year 1990-91. From then onwards, textbooks are neither updated nor revised. Since children are reading the state prescribed books from the beginning, they are quite used to it, though there are many grammatical errors in the English medium textbooks. The books appear very outdated, dull and do not generate interest among the students to read. The state government continues to follow the same syllabi with no change either in the content or in the way it is being presented to the students.

The real problem comes when these children are made to read CBSE syllabus textbooks from grade VI as was done in ‘SUCCESS schools’. The textbooks are based on NCF 2005, with the principle that children’s life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. These books are developed by the NCERT, the apex body responsible for curriculum designing. A look at these textbooks clearly indicates
that the books are very innovative and activity-oriented. A child who has studied in English medium right from the beginning of schooling may not find it that difficult to understand. However, there are inherent difficulties when these textbooks are given to those children who have studied state syllabus textbooks in Telugu medium till V standard. For instance, in Science textbook, there are words like ‘translucent’, ‘deficiency’, ‘rectilinear motion’, ‘sedimentation’, ‘decantation’ etc. which students find very difficult to write. It is pertinent to highlight that when students face problems in writing simple English words and sentences like ‘I am studying in sixth class’, ‘I like my school very much’, then understanding technical words and writing it in exams is an uphill task for them. The situation in Social Studies subject is even worse as there are three textbooks namely, ‘Social and Political Life’, ‘Geography’ and ‘History’, and in each book there are 8-10 chapters. There are words like ‘archaeologists’, ‘deciduous’, ‘celestial bodies’, ‘hunter-gatherers’ and the like, which the students cannot even pronounce, so writing in the exam is completely ruled out. Throughout the textbook there are two comic characters ‘paheli’ and ‘boojho’ which have been used to make the text interactive. When children were asked about these characters, they were unaware of it and unable to tell what for these characters are used. Social teacher argues that for VI grade students, the syllabus is very vast and students from Telugu medium, who have just shifted to English medium, cannot learn this vast syllabus. Such experiments are usually absent in private schools as they follow a uniform syllabus, textbooks and medium of instruction for all the students every year. Thus, students need not shift between the textbooks and languages, and are in an advantageous position when compared to the government school children.

**Computer education**

Under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), it was proposed that imparting computer education in government schools would help in achieving the objectives of UEE, reduction in drop out rates and enhancement in achievement levels. Thus, Computer Aided Learning Programme
CALP (CALP) became an important intervention in SSA. Under this component, there is a provision of Rs 15 lakh per district per year available to the States where CALP is being implemented. In this initiative, training of teachers, creation of infrastructure, and development of e-teaching and learning material were very important. To fulfill these requirements, public-private partnership became very essential not only for the implementation but also for mobilizing additional resources. As a result, a large number of private sector firms are associated with CALP like Azim Premji Foundation, NIIT, Aptech computer education etc.

In ZPHS, the CALP initiative is being implemented by ‘Terrasoft’ private firm. It was introduced in the school in the year 2003 as part of the “1000 schools project”. The Government of AP handed over this project to some software firms and Terrasoft is one among them. The company got four districts for the implementation of this initiative: Chitoor, Nalgonda, Hyderabad, and Ranga Reddy. This project was initially planned for five years and later extended for one more year in 2008. The books are prepared by NIIT for each class in Telugu medium. Students learn paint and clip art in the initial stages and MS-Word, Excel and PowerPoint in IX and X standards\(^2\). There are two instructors in the school, both females, who teach computers to the students from classes VI to X. The senior instructor, aged 36, joined the school right from the implementation of the project. The junior instructor, aged 19, joined in the academic year 2008. Both senior and junior instructors are paid Rs 1900 and Rs 1800 respectively by the implementing agency. Both of them are trained by the private firm and have a diploma in computers.

There are many problems in implementing CALP initiative. In ZPHS, there is a separate computer lab in which there are 11 computers, but only three were working. The lab was in a very dilapidated condition.
with seepage of water from almost everywhere as there is a water tank just above its roof. During the rainy reason, the situation becomes worse and buckets are kept inside the lab for checking rain water. Many computers have stopped working due to improper maintenance of the lab. Instructors argue that with only three working computers it is very difficult to take the class. Thus, whenever there is a computer class, only half of the strength is called to the lab by one instructor and the rest of the class sit in the classroom and are taught theory by another instructor. About five students sit in front of each computer and follow whatever the instructor teaches them. The instructors argue that most of the government funds are misused by the company. Most of the computers are not working and even after repeated complaining no one from the company came to fix the problem. Moreover, there are no back ups for the computers. The co-ordinator turns up only once in a month to give salaries to the instructors and never visits the school thereafter. Moreover, instructors reported that the salaries are also not given on time. It was observed that only after repeated calling the co-ordinator comes and gives salaries to the two instructors.

In NMHS, there is another programme named “NIIT @school” which started in the 2008-2009 academic year. NIIT@School is an initiative of NIIT, which is considered to be among the top fifteen IT companies worldwide. NIIT’s computer education movement was introduced for the first time in 371 government schools in Tamil Nadu in 1999. It has rapidly spread to other states and to private schools as well. The institute supports the schools with the drawing up of schedules, course material, training of teachers and providing all necessary input material for teachers to handle classes.

In NMHS, this programme is for all the classes i.e., from class I to X, and each student is charged Rs 50 for computer education. A computer lab was constructed with 10 computers, but here too only five were working properly. There were two computer teachers, one teaching the primary and the other teaching the upper primary
classes. Both theory and practical classes were taken in the lab itself. NIIT has designed and distributed textbooks for all the students. Every class has three days computer periods in a week. The question papers come from NIIT Chennai and, as a result, the exam dates do not tally with the usual exam schedule. The final exam is conducted in March so that all the certificates are disbursed from Chennai in the month of April. These certificates are then given to the parents on the day of result declaration.

The entire course material is designed by the NIIT. All the classes are divided into four groups: Group A comprises of class I and II and they are taught computer basics, Microsoft Paint, Word Pad and Logic games. Under Group B, classes III, IV and V are included and in this stage Microsoft PowerPoint and Windows XP are introduced. Group C consists of classes VI, VII and VIII and the topics covered in this level are Microsoft Excel, Internet, programming logic and techniques, and QBasic. The last group is the D group which includes classes IX and X and they are taught Microsoft Access and C++. Both the instructors reported that the syllabus is very difficult and school students need not learn this extensive syllabus in school going age. Even the teachers did not know many things in this syllabus. The teacher for primary classes reported that teaching computers is very difficult for small children like those in standard I and II. In these classes, various parts of the computer is taught. Though they can understand and point out various parts, when it comes to writing children face difficulties as for their level computer language is not easy. They cannot write big words like ‘Central Processing Unit’ or even ‘keyboard’. The teacher feels that computer education should be imparted from upper primary classes. The other teacher for higher classes reported that students need not learn C++ and Linux in schools as this is learned only in the professional courses at graduation level.

It was observed that in both the schools, students show a lot of interest in computers when compared to other subjects. With the help
of ‘paint’ option they draw pictures and save their document or make a slide in power point with animations and save it. They also show a lot of enthusiasm in learning new things. They never showed any interest in the theory part. Teachers also reported that showing things on computer and students doing it by themselves are more useful, interesting, and easily understood.

However, it was observed that in both the schools, there are lots of setbacks in computer education. Getting computers into schools is easier than keeping them in working condition. In both ZPHS and NMHS, most of the computers were either poorly maintained or were not functioning. This problem is coupled with the problems of erratic power supplies, lack of back up power and the like. As a result, teachers either end up taking theory classes or only a group of 5 to 8 students have to satisfy themselves with working on a single computer. Whenever there are practical exams, batch wise students are called to enter into the lab. Thus, imparting computer education is easier said than done.

**Classroom teaching discourses**

Students go to school to learn to read, write, compute and master the content of subjects (Mehan, 1980). This is one of the prime goals of schools that take place inside the classrooms. Classrooms are the places where deliberate instruction takes place and where students spend most of their time. The conventional classroom contains one teacher and multiple students and ZPHS and NMHS are no exception to this. In both the schools, students were assigned to a specific seat throughout the year by the teacher, and girls and boys were made to sit in separate rows. However, the seating arrangement has nothing to do with the performance of students. The crux lies in the discourses between students and teachers which, in turn, affect the participation of the students in the class. This section attempts to reflect on this issue by examining what exactly happens inside the classrooms of a government and a private school.
As discussed earlier, in ZPHS, there are two categories of teachers officially: regular teachers and Vidya Volunteers (V.Vs’) or para teachers. The higher classes i.e., IX and X were invariably taken by the regular teachers while VI, VII, and VIII classes were shared by regular teachers and volunteers. While doing classroom observations, it was noted that there is a clear difference in the teaching practices of regular teachers and V.Vs’. Students were more attentive, quieter and disciplined when regular teachers used to take the class. It was noted that most of the V.Vs’ were not found to be very competent in teaching. Though half of them had a teacher training degree, they attained that professional degree with the intention of DSC recruitment in mind. It was observed that some V.Vs’ were enrolled in a B.Ed college, but worked in ZPHS as volunteers and in this way they completed their teacher training course. Moreover, since they were not getting their salaries regularly, they showed less dedication towards teaching in the classroom. They did not have teaching skills and lacked the ability to control the class. The only V.V who was liked by all the students was Yadamma who taught English and Social Studies to classes VII and VIII and studied only up to the intermediate level. Many of her classes were observed to find out why students are so fond of her despite having the lowest academic qualification amongst all the volunteers. One classroom observation is mentioned below.

One day she was teaching a chapter titled “The Colourful People: Mizoram” from the English textbook of class VII. Her method of teaching was not teacher-centred (where teacher is the authoritative person in the classroom), but participatory as she gave primacy to students’ voices. The classroom atmosphere was very quiet, but a bit tense too because if a student was not studying properly or was irregular or inattentive in the class, she becomes very strict and harsh towards the student and gives strict punishments. There was no use of blackboard at all and the teacher was restricted to just one place throughout the class. She read every sentence from the textbook and then explained it in Telugu. Although the class is an English medium class, her medium of instruction was mostly Telugu. However, what
makes her teaching stand apart from other V.Vs’ is that she makes her teaching more interesting to the students by setting examples from outside the textbook. This, in turn, enables the students to understand better and attain more clarity. In between, she used to ask questions to see whether students understood the lesson or not. Students were quite attentive and were answering in chorus. She also used reinforcing words like ‘good’, ‘very good’ many times in her class. Repetition and drawing comparisons from the textbook was very much evident in her teaching method. Students’ initiatives (like responding, asking questions) were encouraged by the teacher. In between her teaching, she used humour to make the learning joyful. At the end of the lesson, she once again revised the whole chapter to ensure that students had grasped the chapter fully. Usually, before leaving the class, she gives one question from the textbook to the students to learn everyday. Next day, she asks the same question to each student in the beginning of the class. If students were not able to give the answer the next day, she used to punish them (like beating with a stick/slapping).

Nevertheless, students always liked her. She has been working in this school for the past four years and students are very much attached to her and respect her a lot. Students reported, “she only becomes harsh if we do not study properly, which is our mistake. But her way of teaching is really good and she is very friendly to us”. There was no discrimination against students by the teacher. She treated everyone equally in the classroom. She never used foul language even while scolding the students. She showed care and concern towards the students and this is reflected in her queries like asking them whether they are eating their midday meals, why a particular student is not coming to the school and so on. She is encouraging, friendly and always interacts with students affectionately.

Another V.V who is liked by the IX and X students is Rani who used to teach Maths to them. Despite being a V.V she was given higher classes as she was very competent and qualified up to the M.Sc in
English medium and also had a B.Ed degree from Osmania University. After Yadamma, she is the one admired by both students as well as the teachers. She was working in ZPHS to gain experience in Telugu medium teaching as she was preparing for DSC and wanted to become a permanent teacher in government schools. The principal allowed her to come only in the first half of the school day, after which she used to leave the school to prepare for the DSC exam. Her teaching and students participation in IX standard English medium class was observed and mentioned below.

She was teaching ‘number line system’ to the students. She started the class with revising the lesson taught in the previous class. She asked questions and answers, which some students were unable to respond. So, she explained it once again in detail on the blackboard. Her writing was neat, legible and her behaviour was very polite. Students were obediently noting down from the blackboard. Then she gave a question from the exercise and the students started doing it. Throughout her class, she did not sit and was moving in between the aisles of the classroom and checking whether the students were doing the question or not. Questions from the students were encouraged and the teacher was clarifying all the doubts with patience. Notably, she never used guide books in her class, which is a common practice among most of the teachers in the school. When all the students finished the question, she explained one more similar question on the blackboard. Then, she called one student to the blackboard and asked him to do a numerical problem given in the exercise. The student did it correctly and she praised him. Everyone in the class clapped with appreciation. Next, she slightly twisted the same question so that students could have better understanding and conceptual clarity. She called another student to do it on the blackboard. He made some mistakes, but instead of scolding, she patiently explained it in an easier way. Subsequently, she gave similar problems to the students, which they were doing without making any noise. Lastly, she gave homework, took attendance and left the class.
The classroom atmosphere in her class was quiet, relaxed and full of enthusiasm. Students never expressed fear for the teacher as she seldom punishes the students. She allows all the students to participate in the class. Students’ initiatives and responses are always welcomed and appreciated. Her recent teacher training is clearly reflected in her teaching techniques which is mostly participatory. Her blackboard skills, reinforcement skills, mobility in the class, and paying individual attention to each and every student make her a very efficient teacher in the school.

It was observed that except these two, rest of the V.Vs’ were not efficient and were not much liked by the students. They were neither competent nor had the ability to control the whole class. It was noted that students never pay attention when these teachers teach the students. Amongst these, a V.V named Madhavi is disliked by all the students. She teaches Telugu to classes VI and VII and joined the school in the academic year 2008-09. It was observed that she is not a very interacting person, does not mingle with other teachers and never sits in the staffroom. Even in her leisure period, she sits in the back rows of the classrooms and does corrections. Her teaching method and students’ participation in class VI which has 64 students is discussed here.

She started her class by telling the students that she would ask questions from a lesson in the Telugu textbook which she had finished two days ago. She gave them five minutes time to read question and answers from the textbook. After five to ten minutes, she started asking questions to the students. Those students who knew the answers started raising their hands with enthusiasm and calling ‘teacher, teacher’ with a hope that they would be asked to answer. But the teacher, in turn, immediately discouraged this initiative and scolded them by telling not to shout and to only raise their hands. She started pointing at individual students to give the answers. She knew the names of some students while she was addressing other students as ‘ammayi’ [girl] or ‘abbayi’ [boy]. There were no reinforcements by
the teacher if students gave correct answers. However, if students were unable to give the right answer, the teacher scolded and shouted at them saying ‘you are coming to the school only for gossiping’ or ‘you better sit at home, studying is not your job’ and so on. She never gave any positive reinforcements to the students. Once question-answer part was completed, she asked each student to read one paragraph aloud from the next lesson which the students obediently did. Once the reading was done, she did not explain the lesson, rather she started with the questions given at the end of each lesson. She told the answers to the questions and students accordingly marked them in their textbooks. She asked them to write these in their notebooks and informed them that she would correct their work in her next class. She remained very serious throughout the class. So, the chance of humour either from the teacher’s side or from the student’s side was out of question. Before leaving, she took the attendance and then left the class. Her teaching method was very teacher-centred and dominating and there was no chance for the students to participate.

It was observed that the classroom atmosphere becomes very tense whenever she enters any class. The teacher is very impolite, never smiles and students are very much afraid of her. Unlike Yadamma and Rani, the teacher-student interaction is not friendly at all. When she was teaching, students never dare to ask questions or raise doubts. Most of the times, she accused and demoralised the students by calling ‘lazy’, ‘useless’, ‘I will beat your head to the wall’, ‘I will break your hands’ and the like. She threatened those who did not study or replied to her questions by saying “mee sangati tarvata cheptanu” (I will see you later). She turned towards the researcher and said:

Shouting at them is waste of our energy as it is almost like shouting at the walls. As we are not supposed to give severe punishments, we give warnings that if they remain undisciplined, T.C will be issued. Even then, students do not listen as they do not have fear for the HM or teachers.
When students were talking among themselves, she got up and started slapping them. Due to her rude behaviour towards the students, she is not liked by anyone in the school.

It is pertinent to highlight that when compared to regular government teachers, V.Vs’ were more punctual, reached the school on time, always used to go to the classes and were prompt in corrections and making progress reports. On the other hand, most of the regular teachers were found to be lethargic and had shirking attitude though they had good teaching skills. Among them, one teacher was Christiana who was a permanent social teacher in the school for IX and X grades. She was also given VI CBSE class as she was a very experienced teacher. Students always used to say that she is very lazy, comes fifteen minutes late and leaves the class five-ten minutes early. Her teaching and participation of students in VI CBSE class is mentioned below.

As discussed earlier, there are three textbooks for Social Studies in grade VI and it was noted that the teacher did not even complete one book by January. As usual, the teacher arrived fifteen minutes late to the class. She sat on the chair and asked the students to take out their notebooks for corrections. The teacher then turned to the researcher and complained that in this class half of the time is wasted in teaching them English. She gave difficult words to the students from the textbook and asked them to write down ten times in their class notes. Students were making mistakes and were unable to write the words correctly despite copying them from the textbook. The teacher then started discouraging the students by calling them ‘useless’, ‘gadida’ (donkey), “Goppa ki English medium teesukunnaru, kani emi radu” (taken English medium to show off, but do not know anything) and so on. As mentioned earlier, all the students in this class have come from Telugu medium. Therefore, the teacher was teaching them where to write capital and small letters when writing a sentence in English. Students were not afraid of her as she never
beats or slaps the children. The teacher again turned to the researcher and said:

They should have started CBSE from primary onwards. The problem is teachers are not consulted before taking decisions. All of a sudden how can we expect Telugu medium children to pronounce words like ‘citadel’, ‘megaliths’, ‘burial’, ‘archaeologists’?

Then the teacher turned to one student and asked the meaning of the word ‘burial’. The student out of hesitation replied “teacher burial ante barri kada teacher” (teacher, burial means buffalo\(^3\)). Everyone started laughing, but no one knew the exact meaning of burial. The teacher stated that she has lost interest in teaching the class, not because of the students, but because of the experiments being done on the children for the sake of funds. She then reasoned that the Kothari Commission gave utmost priority to the mother tongue, but now English has become more fashionable. Amidst all this English and Telugu medium issue, students ultimately suffer as they cannot learn the subject properly. She herself admitted that by the half yearly exams her students had learned virtually nothing in Social Studies. The bell rang and the teacher left the class.

Among regular government teachers, one teacher who is liked by all the students is Sumathi who teaches English to VI CBSE, VIII and IX classes. She speaks very fluently in English and did her schooling in a missionary school. One day she was taking English class in VI standard. The researcher entered and as usual sat in the last row of the classroom. She started the class by asking each student to tell the story (which she was teaching on the previous day) of ‘The crocodile and the monkey’ in English without looking at the textbook. Students tried hard, but could not tell the story correctly in English. Then the teacher, turn by turn, asked each student to read one paragraph aloud. When students were reading, she was patiently correcting the pronunciation of the students and explaining the meaning of difficult words in Telugu. In between, she was asking questions to make the

\(^3\) In Telugu, the word barri (buffalo) is, to some extent, pronounced similarly to the first four letters of English word ‘burial’.
students understand well and to come out with answers by themselves. She was trying to raise the inquisitiveness of the students. She was even making the atmosphere humorous by cracking jokes in between. To make her teaching more interesting, she gave many examples from real life on how friends behave with one another. Throughout the period, she was very polite and there was no need of scolding, discouraging or beating the students to control them as all the students were fully immersed in her teaching. After she finished her lesson, she asked the moral of the story. The students did not know the meaning of the term moral. So, she asked in Telugu, “ee story neeti emiti?” (What is the moral of the story?). The students attempted to reply in English, which the teacher dutifully corrected. She turned to the researcher and said, “This is the age when students can learn quickly. Only thing required is dedication from the teacher”. Her teaching method was student-centred and she gave a lot of room for the students to participate. Her dedication is very much reflected in her teaching because of which students are very fond of her.

On the whole, from many classroom observations, it was found that regular government teachers are more competent than the V.Vs’. However, both these categories of teachers have some things in common. It was observed that almost all the teachers use the conventional ‘chalk and talk’ method and do not take any initiatives to make their teaching practices innovative to the students. None of them use teaching aids to explain the things in easier ways to the students. Most of the teachers (both regular and V.Vs’) use guide books while teaching and encourage the students to read from the guide books. Thus, students, especially from classes VIII, IX and X, depend a lot on guide books. Only Maths and Science teachers were seen using the blackboard, others used to sit on the chair and teach the lessons. Their mobility in the class was very restricted.

It was noted that in ZPHS, most of the time allotted for the first period, which is of fifty minutes duration, is wasted for many reasons. Firstly, since this period is just after the morning assembly, both
students and teachers take time to settle down. Teachers go to their classes after 5 to 10 minutes as they reason that even after the assembly many students keep coming to the school. Secondly, teachers take attendance of the class and as noted in chapter three, in some classes there are more than sixty students, and thus, they take some time to finish it. Thirdly, the attender comes to every class and takes note of the number of children opting for midday meals. The attender also brings a register in which the class teacher has to write the number of boys and girls present on that particular day. All these formalities take another 5-10 minutes of the period. Thus, half of the time of first period is spent in managing the initial disorder of the students and doing the paperwork.

It was also observed that often teachers conduct their classes in open space despite having a classroom. Students sit either on the ground or on the cemented corridors while the teacher sits on a chair maintaining his/her authoritative position. Sometimes, it was observed that classes are held outside the classrooms for the entire day depending on the weather conditions.

In NMHS, on the other hand, there was no open space as the school runs in a three-storey building. Thus, invariably teachers have to take the classes in the classrooms. Only during exams, it was found that some students go outside the classrooms and sit on the corridors which are more spacious with enough sunlight and convenient for writing an exam. Also, if a class is without a teacher and substitution could not have been arranged for that class, students are called to the ground floor where morning assembly is usually conducted and asked to sit there and study. Otherwise, regular classes invariably take place inside the classrooms. Moreover, unlike ZPHS, the first period starts sharply at 9am as there are no formalities except taking attendance. This is finished very quickly as there are less students in every class than in ZPHS. It was observed that the common practice among the teachers and students is that all of them depend on the study material provided by the school in the beginning of every academic
year. The study material is nothing but a kind of guide book for every subject in which there are multiple choice questions, short answer questions and essay type long questions from every chapter. The drawback is that with complete dependency on the study material, the prescribed textbooks became secondary and less important. Another common practice among the students here is that they reply in chorus whenever teacher asks any question. Teachers too, most of the time, ask questions to the whole class instead of asking individual students. Thus, the teacher is under the impression that everyone is replying, but the voices of only those who know the answers are heard whereas other students remain silent.

Bharathi is one among many teachers who follows the same teaching practices. She teaches English to grades V, VI, and VII standard. In order to observe her teaching method and students’ participation, the researcher reached class VII before the teacher arrived and sat in the last row of the class. As this was the first period, as soon as the teacher entered, all the students stood up and started their classroom prayer. As mentioned in chapter three, this is a ritual and is done everyday in the beginning of the first period in every class. She started her class by giving a summary of a chapter from the English textbook. Students listened to her carefully and the atmosphere was very quiet and not tensed at all. The teacher had the ability to manage the class well and at the same time used to beat the students with a cane stick if they were not doing homework or studying properly.

After she finished giving the summary of the lesson, she started reading the chapter aloud from the textbook. She remained serious throughout the class. She was reading each sentence aloud and students were obediently repeating the same. This kind of repetition is very common in the school, especially while teaching languages. After one paragraph was read, teacher asked short questions to all, and accordingly, students repeated in chorus. She was not asking questions to individual students. The same procedure was followed throughout the period and finally teacher finished the lesson. This
was followed by writing ‘hard words’ (difficult words) on the blackboard which students obediently copied in their rough note books. She gave them homework of writing each of these words for five times in their home work copy, which students noted down in their school diary. The teacher then left the class. Next day, some of the students came without doing their home work. Therefore, the teacher started beating each student on both their hands with a cane stick. She was also scolding the students with words like ‘stupid fellow’, ‘idiot’ etc. Students were not looking nervous as they were very much used to the teacher’s thrashing. She then started telling the answers of the questions given at the end of the lesson and students were marking the answers in their textbooks. She told the students “Write these answers in your homework notebooks and show for me tomorrow”. The bell rang and the teacher left the classroom.

There are some teachers in the school who are neither competent in the subject nor is their teaching interesting. It was observed that in these teachers’ classes, students make lot of noise and there is utter chaos in the class. One among these teachers is Shiva Nagulu who teaches Science to IV, V and VI standard. Her teaching in VI standard was observed. The teacher was explaining ‘Parts of a flower’ from the Science textbook. The teacher started with drawing the diagram of a flower on the blackboard. All the students opened their books in front of them, but none of them was focussing on the board. Instead all of them were talking among themselves. The atmosphere was very relaxed and students were not at all afraid of the teacher. In between, teacher turned once or twice and asked the students to remain quiet and focus on the diagram.

After finishing the diagram, she started reading the text from the book and explaining the parts. Since she was not fluent in English, she was switching to Telugu quite often. She was very soft spoken and her voice was not audible at all if one sits in the last bench. She does not have the ability to manage the students in the class. In between, she was asking questions to the students to make them attentive and to
make the atmosphere livelier, but students were yawning and felt quite bored. The teacher started beating, twisting their ears and caning the fingers of those who were not listening to her. She was also scolding the students by calling them ‘stupid boy’, ‘buffalo’, ‘shut your mouth’, ‘I will break your hands’ and the like. She finished explaining the parts of flower, but none of the students understood. Nobody raised any kind of doubts or questions. In fact, they were not listening to what the teacher was saying.

The teacher then asked the students to open their study material, and accordingly, all the students opened it. The teacher started reading aloud the answers given in the study material for the same lesson. As usual, students were mechanically repeating the same without understanding. Later, she asked the students to learn twenty question and answers from the study material which was their homework. Students were unwilling to do as they were having computer exam the next day. However, the teacher did not listen to them, and as a result, all the students were very annoyed. During informal conversations, the teacher admitted that she is very poor in English and most of the time speaks incorrect English which is why she has been given primary classes. She wanted to enrol in a ‘Spoken English’ course so that she can teach the students more confidently.

Teachers in this private school are given standing instructions of teaching only in English. One day a Social teacher in class VII was explaining in Telugu which was observed by the correspondent while he was supervising. The next day, in the morning assembly the director targeted the teacher in front of everyone saying that the teacher is not focussing on teaching in English and told her not to repeat it in future. The teacher later told that most of the time she attempts to teach only in English. However, when she is not able to explain certain things properly in English she does it in Telugu, but only on rare occasions. She then justified her action saying, “after all Telugu is our mother tongue and everyone is attached to their mother tongue. So, it is quite obvious to switch to our mother tongue once in
a while in between teaching”. She states that even students understand better if teachers teach in Telugu as they also face problems in English.

An example of the proficiency level of teachers in English is mentioned here which gives a picture of the kind of teachers recruited by the school management. This classroom observation was done just after the school reopened following the summer vacations. A teacher named Shabana teaches Maths and Computers to V, VI and VII standard and is liked by the students as she never beats them. Students are of the opinion that she teaches well. She has been working in this school for the past two years. Since this was just the beginning of the academic year, she was teaching students about how to maintain the first page i.e., the index page and how to write neatly.

Teacher: All of you take out your class note books.

Students started taking out their notebooks, however some students did not bring their class-work notebooks.

Teacher: Those who did not brought write in rough note books.

The teacher turned to the blackboard and started drawing lines with a chalk.

Teacher: Keep Index, Sl. No, keep line, then Chapters, again keep line and then Page Numbers.

One student was unable to draw the lines neatly. The teacher immediately tore his paper.

Teacher (angrily): So much dirty hand writing yours, write neatly.

Then she turned to the researcher and said: There are many dullers in the class.

Teacher (to the students): First chapter what there?

Students (in chorus): Number System.

The teacher then wrote it under the chapter heading. She then started moving in between the aisles of the classroom to see how the students were writing. She stopped near to one student:

Teacher: Show Bhaskar
Bhaskar obediently showed his note book to the teacher.

Teacher (in an annoying voice): *Don't keep as your wish date, write today’s date.*

The atmosphere in the class was quite relaxed and students’ queries were encouraged. As some students did not bring their ruler and pencil, they were asking one another.

Teacher: *Bring your own things, asking for others time waste.*

In one student’s copy, the lines were not drawn straight. The teacher angrily shouted at the student:

Teacher: *Why cross line? Draw with scale.*

Student: *I am drawing with scale only teacher.*

Teacher: *With scale draw, cross why came then?*

It was observed that throughout the class not even a single sentence was correctly framed by the teacher. It is pertinent to highlight that almost all the teachers’ converse in a similar way and the students have learned the same. Both teachers and students use unnecessary prepositions while talking like, ‘show for me’, ‘give for me’, ‘ask to me’, and the like.

The only competent and capable teacher in the school was Ayesha who teaches maths to classes VIII, IX and X. She joined the school last year and is very energetic and enthusiastic. She is a very jovial, fun-loving young teacher and students are very candid in front of her. Her teaching in IX grade was observed. As soon as she entered the class, she asked about the previous day’s homework. Those who did not do their homework were beaten with a stick on both the hands. The atmosphere became quite tense. She started teaching about “Groups and their Properties”. She started explaining what four properties make a ‘group’. Her blackboard skills were good, writing legible, and voice audible to the whole class. She explained the various types of groups by giving many examples. Students were quietly listening to her and writing notes in their class work notebooks. She was trying to elicit responses from the students and those who gave correct answers received good reinforcement from the
teacher. The teacher never discouraged those who gave wrong answers. Instead she explained the whole thing once again so that they can understand the lesson better. This teacher was an exception in the school as she discouraged group answering from the students. She was pointing at individual students to reply so that she could check whether all the students are able to understand. Then she dictated various definitions, which students started writing in their notebooks. The class was well controlled and pin-drop silence was maintained by the students.

She is a very efficient, highest paid and the most qualified teacher (M.Sc) in the school. She could easily join any good and reputed school with a better salary. When asked for the reason for her continuation in this school she stated that since she is a Muslim, her parents do not allow her to go to distant places to work. As this school is very near to her house, her parents have allowed her to work here. She argues that Muslim women have lot of restrictions and lack the liberty to do what they want.

Thus, from the above discussion it is very apparent that in most of the cases, students’ participation was reduced to merely answering the questions of teachers. The NCF document elucidates that children learn in variety of ways like making and doing things, experimentation, discussion, asking, through experience and expressing oneself in speech, movement or writing. However, it was observed that students were expected to memorise whatever was informed by the teacher and were neither allowed to raise questions nor to clarify their doubts.

**Lack of co-curricular activities**

Co-curricular activities are those activities which are in addition to the classroom instruction and do not result in a grade nor credit. The incorporation of co-curricular activities in the school is as significant as the textbooks and contributes in the overall development of the child. Sports, National Cadet Corps (NCC), yoga, debates and performing arts not only help in physical development, but also aids
in enhancing the creativity, imagination and character formation among the students. The long term benefits include developing leadership qualities, discharging adult roles and responsibilities, learning to accept defeat, and so on.

Despite having such vast potential of co-curricular activities, they get only a passive response in schools. With over-emphasis on exams and marks, these co-curricular activities have taken a backseat. In the studied schools, it was observed that there were no co-curricular activities like sports, yoga, music, art, dance, and the like. It is a well known fact that these activities not only helps in the physical development of the children, but also facilitate in the psycho-social development of the children. However, in the studied schools, performing arts were totally absent. Students had a games period thrice a week, but with no sports equipment in the school. The physical education teacher of the government school stated that until four-five years back, the school had good reputation in sports and students participated in state level competitions. But of late, parents are not interested to send their children to distant places for participation in sports. Moreover, there is neither sufficient sports equipment in the school and nor any encouragement from the DEO.

The school, however, organises NCC which was started in the school in year 2003. The troupe consists of 100 students comprising of boys and girls, fifty taken from class VIII and another fifty chosen from class IX. The required materials like uniforms, belts, shoes are provided by the government. Every year, twenty days residential camp is organised for the students and they are taught about the motto of NCC, different ranks and cadres in army, physical fitness, parade, and the like. After the completion of two years in NCC, students are awarded with an 'A' certificate. The teacher in-charge of NCC says that the main aim is to develop the values of patriotism, human service and discipline among the students.

In NMHS too, students had a period allotted for games thrice a week, but from January onwards they were not allowed to play as the
management feels that since exams are approaching, students should read rather than wasting their time in playing. Once again, government school children have an advantage over the NMHS children as they have the liberty to come out of the classroom during games period and play whatever they feel like (It was observed that children mostly play kabaddi). The correspondent of the private school admits:

Here we harass and grind the students like anything. We don’t have music, dance etc. All these activities will be there in corporate and international schools, not in this type of schools.

One event which was common in both government and private school is that students of class VIII and IX participate in mandal level science fair organised every year in which the participating students display models in the exhibition. This gives them a chance to interact with students from other schools, develop confidence and also in upholding the reputation of the school. Barring this event, there was no other activity organised for the students in the school. It was observed that some students in the school were very good at drawing, but their creative expression was not being nurtured properly in the exams-marks-ranks atmosphere. In both the schools, teachers considered co-curricular activities as peripheral, unimportant and waste of time and assessed a student’s intelligence through standardised testing.

**Evaluation system**

In both ZPHS and NMHS, a student is assessed continuously throughout the academic year through various tests and examinations. Tests, namely Unit Tests (U.Ts’) and Assignment Tests (A.Ts’) are conducted internally four times in a year, and for 25 marks each. The question papers for these tests are prepared by the teachers of the school. In assignment tests, marks are given based on class notes, reading, weekly tests etc and usually teachers give passing marks in the assignment tests. Apart from these, three term exams are held for 100 marks each namely, quarterly, half yearly and annual examinations and question papers for these exams come from the
government. All the examination papers are evaluated by the school teachers. The examination system in both the schools is as follows:

**TABLE 6.2 ASSESSMENT PATTERN IN ZPHS AND NMHS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test/Exam</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st U.T</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st A.T</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd U.T</td>
<td>August</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd A.T</td>
<td>August</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarterly Exam</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ist Term Holidays*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test/Exam</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd U.T</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd A.T</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Half Yearly Exam*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test/Exam</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2nd Term Holidays*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test/Exam</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4th U.T</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th A.T</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Exam</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In quarterly, half yearly, and annual exams, out of 100 marks, 70 marks are assigned for theory paper and 30 marks are allotted for the multiple choice question paper, referred as ‘bit paper’ which is distributed separately after one and half hour of the exam. The weight age for the annual exam is 50% which is the maximum followed by half yearly and quarterly together for 25% and another 25% for all A.Ts’ and U.Ts’.

In ZPHS and NMHS, exam invigilation was done in both half yearly and annual exams. In ZPHS, it was observed that as the classrooms were very overcrowded, there were insufficient desks and some students were made to sit on the floor. In fact, students are so used to sitting on the floor that it has become a part of their daily routine. Even teachers do not hesitate to make students sit on the floor. The interesting fact is that most of the students submit blank papers and start leaving the classroom once the ‘bit paper’ is distributed. They do
not even fill the first page of their answer sheet. When students come for doubts clarification, the concerned subject teacher sometimes discourages students for asking too many doubts and says, “anyhow you are not going to write anything, so don’t ask questions”. Most of the students seem to be unprepared and were without any exam fear or tension. It was observed that during these examinations, neither the exam in-charge nor the HM visited the classes for supervision.

In NMHS, on the other hand, it was found that students read vigorously even on the exam day and do not seem to part with their textbooks. They put their books aside only when the invigilator enters the class. They appeared much tensed and tried to attempt as many questions as they can. However, even here some students in every class just submitted blank papers.

**Conduct control: Rewards, reprimands and punishments**

Discipline and maintaining order is considered to be very important in ZPHS and NMHS, and when these are not met, punishments are given to the students. It was observed that reprimands and punishments are very frequent and became a norm whereas students are seldom rewarded. Punishments are given with a belief that instilling fear and pain will prevent a child from repeating the action again. In both the schools, teachers go to the classrooms with a cane stick in their hands. Students are beaten, slapped, caned, and made to kneel down in the sun, which are the common acts of punishing. Using abusive and derogatory language by the teachers has become so usual that students are very used to it and they seldom retaliate. Use of English words like ‘pig’, ‘buffalo’, ‘rascal’, ‘stupid fellow’, ‘useless’ etc by the teachers are so rampant that students have learned these words from the teachers and they use such words among themselves in their day to day activities. These punishments and reprimands are given to the students when they misbehave in the class or irregular in their studies. In both the schools it was observed that students are very afraid of the Physical Education Teacher (PET) as the duty of the PET is to maintain discipline in the school and they do this by giving
corporal punishments. If students do not listen to the teachers, they are taken to the PET who, in turn, either beat them or ask them to come to the school with parents.

Teachers in ZPHS are of the view that though corporal punishments are banned to keep students under control, they have to use it. They stated that a few years ago these corporal punishments were even more severe in the school, but one boy of VIII standard was admitted to a hospital when a teacher severely slapped him for misbehaving in the class. From then onwards, teachers are a bit frightened to give harsh punishments. Teachers further stated that parents too react when students are severely beaten. Shalini, a student in VI grade neither comes to the school nor studies properly. Her class teacher says she is not interested in studies at all. One day, the teacher slapped her and the next day, the student came to the school with her mother who angrily started shouting at the teacher. Later, her mother told the researcher, “being parents we have never beaten our children, so who are the teachers to beat them? It’s up to my child whether she studies or not”.

In NMHS, the director of the school invariably sits with a stick in his hand. When the founder of the school has this sort of behaviour, teachers too follow the same. Every teacher enters with a stick in their hand and even wrote their names on it so that it is not lost. It was found that students are so used to the beating that they feel teachers are beating for their benefit so that they can study well. One parent was very upset when her son was beaten by a teacher because he was not attentive in the class. She complained to the management and also expressed her annoyance in front of the researcher saying, “Children are not cows and buffaloes to be beaten with a stick all the time.” In both the schools, it was observed that students are never rewarded or reinforced properly.

**Performance, promotions and failures**
The reputation of any school depends a lot on the performance of the students in X board exams. Good performance of the students results
in upholding the schools reputation while poor performance of the students brings ill fame to the school. In the year 2008-09, 106 students appeared for the tenth board exams in ZPHS out of which only 36 students qualified the exam i.e., only 34 % of the students passed and the highest marks was secured by a girl who got 457/600 (76%). Teachers reported that every year, the pass percentage is usually between 25-35% and it never crosses the forty per cent mark. As more than seventy percent fail in class ten, they take up a full time economic activity after they leave the school. In Nayapally, there are many small companies (manufacturing plastic bottles, electric appliances, and the like) that require labourers who can work from morning to evening for meagre salaries. These companies do not require educated labourers. Most of the students take up a full time job after X standard in these companies. Among girls, some get married while others work in these companies. They are paid between Rs 1800 to Rs 2000 per month.

In NMHS, on the other hand, 54 students appeared for the board exam out of which 49 students passed and five students failed. In contrast to 34% pass percentage in ZPHS, here 95% students qualified the exam. Here also, a girl secured 552/600 i.e., 92% which was the highest for that academic year. The school boasts of having ten students who got more than 500 marks, and 32 students who passed in the first division. As soon as the results were declared, they were written on the signboards, brochures etc. as done by the other private schools. However, the management was not happy with the results of X standard students. The school director said that last academic year there were no failures and the highest mark was 565/600. It was observed that after the declaration of X results, the concerned teachers were called and were reprimanded saying that it was the teachers fault that five students had failed. When parents come and complain about the failures of the students, the issue is dodged saying that the corrections are done outside and not by school teachers, and hence, the school is not responsible for the results.
For the rest of the classes (i.e., till IX standard), the way the children are promoted and results are declared is strikingly different in a government and private school. Promotion to higher classes as mentioned in the progress report cards of NMHS is strictly based on:

- Class work and home assignments
- Periodical tests
- Term examinations
- Annual examinations

The marks and grades system adopted by the teachers in NMHS is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 6.4 GRADING SYSTEM IN NMHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89% and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In ZPHS, students till IX standard are promoted based on attendance and not on the marks. However, there is a grading system and grading of students is made on the following basis: A-70% and above, B- 55% to 69%, C- 40% to 54%, D-30% to 39%, E-29% and below. In the progress reports of students, it is clearly mentioned that though there are no failures, attendance in the unit tests and terminal examination is compulsory. The student is promoted to the next higher class only when this condition is satisfied. This is one of the reasons why students in ZPHS do not take their exams seriously and do not appear stressed before the exams. They have this confidence that if their attendance is good they will be promoted to the higher class. Teachers reported that if only marks are taken into consideration for promoting the students, most of them would fail. Only in X standard, their actual academic performance is assessed though board exams.
In NMHS on the other hand, the results are not based on the attendance of the student but entirely on the exams and tests conducted throughout the year. Since the school is having study hours, parents are under the impression that their child is studying well in the school. Usharani, a Hindi teacher admits:

Parents feel that their children are studying here as children spend most of the time in school. But in study hours i.e., from 4.30 pm-7 pm, all students are just made to sit together with no proper guidance. Sir wants to give only Rs 500 for study hours. Who wants to join for this much salary?

Some teachers even requested the director to appoint separate subject teachers during study hours, but he did not listen to anyone as he has to pay extra money for the appointed teachers. Pullaih, a Telugu teacher reports that the standard of students is very poor and parents too look for marks and not for quality. Narrating one incident, he states:

Initially, when I came here I evaluated papers honestly and discovered that most of the students wrote wrong answers and there were many mistakes in every sentence. As a consequence, most of them either failed or got very less marks. During that time almost fifty percent of the parents came to the school complaining that how their children can get less marks. The director then called me and asked me to correct leniently. So, in the next exam I gave pass marks to all and then none of the parents turned up.

He is of the opinion that if this kind of evaluation system is adopted then the standard of the student will come down. Though students will be studying and writing exams, there will be no quality and they will never be able to know the value of marks. Teachers argue that if a student is detained, parents put the blame on the teachers and the school saying that the teachers are not teaching properly.

After the annual examination, it was the time for declaration of results in both the schools. In ZPHS, the annual exams ended on 21\textsuperscript{st} April and results were announced on 23\textsuperscript{rd} April. On the result declaration day, the teachers reported in the school at 9am. Students were scattered almost everywhere in the school: playground, classrooms, corridors etc. They were very curious about their results, but not
nervous or stressed. The class teacher for each class was busy preparing report cards, but all the subject marks were not available to them as corrections were not completed by some teachers. Moreover, many regular teachers were not present in the school as they were given X standard ‘Spot Evaluation’ in which they had to evaluate X standard answer sheets.

Results were declared based on students’ attendance. As per the government rules, a minimum of 80% of attendance for primary classes and 90% for secondary classes is essential for promotion to higher classes. In the report card, it is mentioned that the shortage of attendance may be condoned by DEO up to 70%, DSE up to 60% and the State Government up to 60%. In ZPHS, it was observed that if a student had more than 60% attendance, he/she was declared as promoted. If students do not have 60% attendance then a medical certificate was required from the students based on which they were promoted. It is pertinent to highlight that teachers were deliberately inflating the attendance and marks in the report cards. Teachers reported that if they do not do such things then students will remain in the same class for years. Only those students who enrolled, but never attended the school were detained. Thus, in every class there were one or two such detentions. Students were asked to sit in their respective classes and class teacher verbally declared whether the child was promoted or detained. There were no report cards and parents were nowhere in the vicinity of the school. After knowing their result, students were dispersed, and some of them continued to play while others went to their houses.

The school reopened on 12th June, and some teachers’ (mostly regular) corrections were still incomplete. They were correcting answer sheets in the staffroom. It was observed that only two weeks after the school reopened, report cards were given to the students, but it was not of much significance as students had already been promoted. When asked the reason behind conducting exams and correcting papers when students are promoted based on attendance, teachers
reported that if there is a surprise inspection by the DEO or any other higher official, one can always show the marks register to them. Thus, exams are conducted and papers are corrected even though the final result does not depend on it.

In NMHS too, the exams concluded on 21<sup>st</sup> April, but results were declared on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April. Thus, a gap of one week was given to the teachers so that they can correct all the papers and prepare report cards. On the day of result declaration, all the class teachers were ready with the progress reports of their students by 8.30 am. The class teachers were made to sit on the chairs arranged in the open space of the school. They were sitting with report cards and answer sheets of all the three main exams which were arranged in files. The interesting point is that the teachers were given a list in which the names of those students were written who did not pay their school fees. The list was prepared by the school clerk and the management strictly ordered all the teachers that if the fee defaulter students come with their parents, report cards should not be given to them. In NMHS, it was mandatory for the parents to come and collect the progress report of their child.

From 9am onwards, one by one, parents started coming along with the student. As soon as parents arrived, they were welcomed by the teachers and asked to sit. Then the class teacher took out the students’ report card and read the total marks, grades and rank of the student. The teacher also tells the parent whether the child has improved or deteriorated, his/her behaviour in the class etc. It was observed that parents were mostly concerned with marks. From every class, only 4 or 5 parents came to collect the report cards. Although it is mentioned that a student failing twice in the same class will be asked to leave the school like at ZPHS, here too there were no detentions<sup>4</sup>. The teachers reported that the management has ordered them to promote everyone by giving extra marks. Unlike ZPHS, here

<sup>4</sup> In fact, from the year 2010, the RTE act made it mandatory that no child can be detained or expelled till the completion of elementary education, i.e., until class VIII.
the emphasis is on fees and marks, which form the crux of private schools. Teachers say, “Parents only want marks and nothing else. They will not see whether the child is able to understand the subject or not”. If there are detentions, parents blame the school saying that despite paying fees and sending their children to school for 12 hours they are detained. So, to avoid such hassles all the students are promoted to the next higher class. Tired of the pressure from the parents on marks, the school correspondent said, “Next academic year onwards we are planning to forgo marks and introduce grading system for the students. Parents complaints will be less and things will be easier to manage.”

Teachers’ perceptions towards students’ learning and performance

It is pertinent to highlight that teachers in both the schools, particularly in ZPHS, have comprehensive understanding of students’ lives. However, their understanding of students and their family background is class and caste based. Teachers always feel that there is a social class and status difference between teachers and students, and accordingly, they form their opinion on the students and their parents. In both the schools, teachers belonged to higher socio-economic class than the students and working class poor parents, which influence the way teachers understand children and their parents.

In ZPHS, the school personnel’s attitude towards their students was very pessimistic and discouraging. All the school teachers unanimously reported that most of the students in ZPHS are economically and socially backward. They stated that most of the parents are illiterate and work as labourers, have migrated from other districts and settled here for work. According to them, only those parents who could not afford fees were sending their children to government schools which corroborated with parents’ views too. All the teachers once again unanimously reported that more than 75% of the students were below average in their performance and were not interested in studies. Nevertheless, students are being promoted every
year based on their attendance and not on their performance. Teachers further stated that since most of the girls get married after X standard, they are less interested in studies. Only a few boys go for further studies after X standard whereas others quit studies and take up a full time job.

While having group discussions, teachers reported many reasons for poor performance of children which also reflected their attitude towards the students and their families. They say that the most important aspect is the family background of the students which influences their performance at school. According to them, students do not have proper guidance at home. Most of the times, parents are not at home since both the parents work. They come home late in the evening, have food, consume liquor and go to sleep. They are not bothered whether their child is studying or going to school regularly. Students also go home and either play or watch TV or go for work. Lack of proper parental guidance further aggravates the problem. Christiana, for instance, argues:

First thing is that the parents should be blamed. They themselves do not have any proper values, so what students will learn? Students come to us saying that their stepfather or stepmother is not taking good care of them when we ask them why they are not studying properly. Some students live in broken families too. When their family background is like that what children will learn?

Teachers feel that since parents are illiterate, they do not know the value of education and do not take any responsibility towards their child’s education. They never come and enquire about their child’s performance in the school. In fact, they do not have time as they work for meagre wages day and night. If parents come to the school, their daily wages will be lost, which they do not want to lose. As a result, there are no parent-teacher meetings held in the school as nobody turns up. A few parents, once in a while come and enquire about their child’s education, but such cases are very rare. It was observed that throughout field work, parents were nowhere near the vicinity of the school. Even on the result declaration day, their absence was very
conspicuous. Teachers argue that only when a TC is required or when a student is detained, parents come immediately to argue about why their child has been detained. Sridevi, an English teacher in the school argues:

Whenever they come, they try to find fault with the teachers. They blame the teachers that we are not teaching and taking care of the children properly. Parents think that teachers should teach everything to the students. But how is this possible? In the school the child spends only six hours. Rest of the eighteen hours the child is not in the school, but at home. So, where the child is spending maximum time? It is parents’ responsibility to take care of their child after school hours.

Despite having a negative attitude towards the parents it was observed that whenever parents come to the school, they were well received by the teachers. Teachers meet them and inform them about how their child is studying, whether the child is improving or deteriorating in studies.

Teachers also compared ZPHS parents with the parents of those children who are studying in private schools. They were all praise for the parents of private school going children and stated that in private schools, parents take good care of their children. Parents come and ask the teachers about their child’s progress as they pay fees to the school. They further reported that in government schools, if students’ performance is below average, neither the parents nor the students care for their performance. Thus, teachers reported that lack of proper parental guidance is one major factor for the students’ poor performance in the school.

The second reason identified by the teachers for poor academic performance is the economic activity of the child. They argue that a child’s early entry into wage labour affects the performance in the school. Teachers say that most of the children work outside and earn their own money. They work in provisional stores, gift shops and bakeries as well as deliver newspapers, milk, etc. Thus, they develop confidence that without education they can also earn. As a
consequence, they are frequently absent from school. In SSC exams, only 30-40% of students pass every year. Christiana says:

Whether students like it or not, they are forced to do the economic activity for their living. They do not know the true value of education as they are under the notion that they can earn without proper education. But after leaving the school students realise that what teachers used to say was correct\(^5\). They come to us and say that college teachers are not like school teachers. Not as good and friendly as school teachers.

Apart from family background and students’ economic activity, all the teachers unanimously feel that there is a lot of media influence on students which also affects their performance in the school. Vedavathi, for instance, says:

Television, movies etc are spoiling the kids like anything. As students have money, they go and watch all kinds of movies. If not movies, they go to the internet cafes where they pay just Rs 10 per hour and have unrestricted access of all kinds of websites. They spend lavishly on drinking and on movies. For these children studies are secondary.

Teachers also state that the peer group also has a lot of bearing on child’s performance. Students get influenced and carried away with peers and only listen to them. If one does something, others too follow the same. As one teacher stated, “Students of junior classes learn many things from their seniors”. They further reported that learning only takes place inside the classrooms. Those who are attentive in the class are able to get pass marks in the exams. Once students reach home, they don’t study.

Thus, teachers mostly put the blame on students, their upbringing and their family background for poor academic performance of children. When asked what factors inside the school affects students’ learning, teachers reasoned that students lack sound primary school experience which is very important. They stated that the foundation in primary school is not strong, hence most of the students lack

\(^5\) During the farewell party, a few X grade students were called to share their experiences in the school. Students expressed their regret for not studying from the beginning of the academic year and not listening to their teachers. Nevertheless, they advised IX grade students to study right from the beginning and always listen to the teachers and follow their advice.
fundamentals in the subjects. They stated that when students come to the high school, they do not even know the alphabet (which was also observed by the researcher).

Thus, all the teachers were very sceptical of the students in ZPHS. They compare their experience in rural schools and argue that in rural areas the situation is very different. Ramadevi says:

In the villages, there is a lot of respect for the teacher from the students irrespective of primary or high school. Parents also have a high regard for the teachers and co-operate a lot. They come and enquire about their children and their involvement is more. When villagers migrate to urban areas, they are not accountable or answerable to anyone. Since most of the parents are migrated here, parents and children do whatever they feel like. Students neither respect their teachers, nor care for their parents. If they are in their own village they will have some fear, but in cities nobody is there to warn them.

Teachers in ZPHS had a very positive attitude towards the private schools. But in NMHS too, teachers had a very similar opinion about students and their family background like in ZPHS. The director as well as the teachers reported that in this school students belong to socially and economically backward families. The correspondent of the school who was very sceptical of government schools stated:

Those families who cannot afford even minimum amount of fees send their children to a government school. Those families for whom fees is not a problem send their children to elite and corporate schools. So, those parents who do not belong to a very sound financial background, but aspire for better future for their children and can afford minimum school fees are opting for low-cost schools like NMHS.

Like ZPHS, here also the teachers reported that most of the students are below average in academic performance. Janaki Devi, a Telugu teacher states:

Parents do not take care of the children at home. Students are not at all good in Telugu which is their mother tongue, so forget about learning English. They learn that Telugu which parents

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6 Only one teacher, however, gave a contrary response saying that there is a mix of class background among the students and even children of sound financial background also study in the school. Their parents do not want to spend much on their child's school education as they feel that anyhow they have to spend a lot on higher education.
speak at home, which is not polished or literary. Even we cannot understand the Telugu they speak. They do not have anyone to guide at home. Ultimately, they are neither able to learn English nor Telugu.

Bharati, an English teacher reported that whoever comes to the school is admitted without any entrance test since management only wants fees from the students. She feels that this is not the correct way as the quality of the school and the students will be reduced. She says, “Management cannot expect good results when they are taking children without any preliminary screening”. Teachers further reported that parents admit their children in an English Medium school for goppa (prestige), but never look after the child’s progress or never come to school. For this reason, there are no parent-teacher meetings in the school because, as at ZPHS, it is believed that parents would not attend the meeting. There are guidelines mentioned for the parents in the school diaries like ‘parents are requested to attend the parent-teacher meeting without fail’, ‘parents are requested to do their part in enforcing regularity and discipline on children’ etc but teachers reported that nobody follows these guidelines. Parents come either for depositing the fees or when their child is detained. Unanimously, all the teachers and the director reported that apart from English, parents are very much concerned with marks of the students and not concerned with whether the child is understanding the subject and grasping the fundamentals. The director stated:

If the marks of their child are less, they put the entire fault on the teachers and the school. As parents are either illiterate or educated only up to the school level, they only look for marks and nothing else. Since parents are very result-oriented, schools also function accordingly to meet the parental demand.

Thus, the attitude of teachers towards the students and their parents is very similar in both the schools.

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7 In the recent RTE Act, it was proposed that no school can subject children or their parents to any form of screening procedures, and if tests or interviews are conducted, schools can be fined.
Conclusion

It is often said that teaching in private schools is superior to government schools. The present study contradicts this notion and attempts to put forth what exactly happens inside the school and classrooms of ZPHS and NMHS.

The kind of education which students in both the schools receive is ‘banking education’ (Freire, 1970) where the task of the educator is to ‘fill’ the students by making deposits of information which he considers constitute true knowledge (1970: 49). His work, which laid the foundation for critical pedagogy, attacks this kind of ‘banking education’ where education becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. He states, "it transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action, leads men and women to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power" (ibid: 77). As observed in the classrooms, the conventional teaching practices in both the schools do not leave any scope for the child to participate in the classroom. Children are never encouraged to raise doubts or to answer in their own words. In NMHS, utmost importance is laid on marks, and thus, rote-learning became a convention. Students memorise the lesson without actually understanding it. There are no innovative methods like group discussions, conducting experiments, group projects and the like. When asked why there are no contemporary teaching methods, the director of the private school sceptically said:

Excursions, tours, projects, and the like take place in highly commercial schools. If the teachers want to tell their students that the colour of an apple is red, they do it by taking students to an apple orchard and taught that these are the apples, the colour of which is red. For this, extra money is charged from the parents, which is again another way of making money.

Students in NMHS are overburdened with studies and stressed all the time, which was completely lacking in ZPHS. If students have not memorised the answer well, they are given corporal punishment as teachers feel that this is an apt method for instilling fear among the students for their teachers. Students are spoon-fed right from the
beginning of the academic year. They are socialised amidst punishments, guilt and ridicule. Since parents are mostly illiterate and do not contribute anything in their child’s education except fees, and thus, they have a sketchy idea of what goes on in the school.

In both the schools, information is mostly communicated by ‘telling’ rather than by ‘doing’. The ideal teaching-learning process takes an altogether different form in reality where the role of the teacher is to teach as much as possible irrespective of the child’s age. Likewise, the duty of the student is to learn whatever is being taught in the school by the teachers irrespective of his ability to understand. Thus, this kind of narrative education turns students into "containers," into "receptacles" to be "filled" by the teacher. The more completely he fills the receptacles, the better a teacher he is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are (Freire, 1970)\(^8\).

As far as academic system is concerned, ZPHS has its own drawbacks which are lacking in NMHS. In ZPHS, students are constantly experimented with various government schemes and pilot projects like State syllabus in English medium, SUCCESS schools, CALP etc. These schemes undergo change with change in the ruling government. Amidst these political moves, the worst sufferers are the students as they are the ones on whom new initiatives are tried out. Apart from this, the academic year in ZPHS witnesses many disturbances (like school acting as exam centre, teachers getting duty for exam invigilation, internship period of training teachers etc.) which interrupts the teaching-learning activities. In NMHS, there are no such disturbances. Moreover, there is uniformity in the curriculum and medium of instruction. Students do not constantly negotiate between State/CBSE syllabus and English/Telugu medium.

\(^8\) An ethnographic study by Lewis (1995) on Japan’s pre-an elementary schools points out that students in Japan have high academic achievement as Japanese pre-schools and elementary schools create community by minimizing competition, involving all children in leadership of the school and emphasizing kindness, collaboration and persistence and not test scores.
Private schools are mushrooming with the promise of English medium education, but only in the classrooms one can notice how competent the teachers are. Classroom observations revealed that ZPHS regular teachers were more competent, experienced and were adept in managing the class than the volunteers and the NMHS teachers. Most of the teachers in NMHS lacked efficiency in English. Many years ago, Mead pointed out that vernacular is the most effective and the most emotionally satisfying medium of instruction (Mead, 1955). She says, “Learning to read and write can be experienced within the security of the known, and the hurdle of a new medium need not be surmounted.” (ibid: 262). However, with increasing parental demand for English medium and the competitive job market outside, even government schools have started experimenting with English medium education, but it has its own limitations as discussed earlier.

The teachers in both the schools have a caste and class centric view of students and their families. They bring these notions to the school and classrooms and label the students as ‘inferior’, ‘dullers’ and accordingly construct their attitudes towards them. Thus, apart from family background and influence of peer group (as discussed in the previous chapter), teachers’ views on the students and their teaching practices affect a child’s engagement with learning. There is interplay between all these factors and together they contribute to a child’s academic performance.