



A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES TO FOSTER JOY, CURIOSITY, AND WONDER IN MATHEMATICS AT ELEMENTARY STAGE

Archana Mishra, Abhishek Singh Yadav

Faculty of Education, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India

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ABSTRACT

This Study Aims To Identify And Evaluate Effective Pedagogical Practices That Foster Joy, Curiosity, And Wonder Among Students In Mathematics Education At The Elementary Stage. The Study Employs A Qualitative Approach To Investigate The Impact Of These Practices On Students' Engagement And Enthusiasm For Mathematics. A Sample Of Mathematics Teachers From 10 Schools (20, Teachers) In The Varanasi District, India, Was Selected Randomly. Intelligent Verbatim Transcription Was Used To Convert Audio Recordings Into Text, Balancing Accuracy With Clarity By Omitting Unnecessary Fillers While Preserving The Essence Of The Conversations And Using NVIVO Employed To Facilitate Efficient Coding And Visualisation Of Connections Between Themes. The Analysis Process Will Involve Organizing The Transcribed Data, Qualitatively Identifying Themes And Patterns Related To Effective Pedagogical Practices To Foster 'Joy, Curiosity & Wonder' Among The Students In Mathematics At Elementary Stage, Combining The Benefits Of Observational Data With In-Depth Teacher Perspectives. The Findings Reveal A Positive Trend Towards More Student-Centered, Engaging, And Effective Teaching Strategies In Mathematics, While Also Indicating Opportunities For Further Development In Certain Areas. These Findings Have Significant Implications For Enhancing Student Engagement, Promoting Conceptual Understanding, And Encouraging A Growth Mind Set In Mathematics. This Study Emphasizes The Need For Policy Makers To Address Resource Disparities Between Schools And For Educators To Adopt Practices That Create Joyful, Curiosity-Driven Learning Environments, Ultimately Leading To Improved Student Outcomes And A More Positive Attitude Towards The Subject.

KEYWORD: Mathematics Education, Pedagogy, Joy, Curiosity, Wonder, Student Engagement, Innovative Teaching Practices

INTRODUCTION

Mathematics is an art and a science, mathematics offers us the tools to discover and explain patterns around our universe and world, be it natural, technological, or astronomical. Its applications range from task of buying groceries to calculations meant for complex phenomena of climate modelling, for instance, or predicting eclipses. In the current scenario, mathematics, particularly computational thinking, is rising steeply in needs due to the requirements of AI, ML, and Data Sciences. It is, therefore, crucial for a country like India to win at mathematics to fight global problems and leadership emerging in this stream of subjects. It's crucial to provide quality math education to help everyone develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Goals in mathematics education, as conceived by the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023, include basic numeracy and mathematical thinking and problem solving or bringing joy, curiosity, and wonder. Bringing these objectives into being would require appropriate pedagogy in the form of a helpful and meaningful learning process. Mathematics must be perceived as an area of high creativity and discovery rather than just a calculation. By emphasizing patterns and real-world applications, educators can transform students' perceptions of mathematics, helping them to discover joy in learning. Although mathematics can bring the joy of learning to students, there are increasing amounts of resistance-the foundational

gaps in literacy and numeracy. The emphasis on rote memorization and formality can alienate the learner from mathematics, while the pressures to perform well in competitive exams often override the intrinsic joy of mathematics. The teacher's role is important in shaping the students' experience of mathematics. Encouraging independent and group problem solving, coupled with real-world applications, develops students' conceptual understanding and nurtures curiosity. The NCFSE also emphasizes building positive mathematical identities among students. Although it is certainly correct that instructional strategies, and specifically instructional practices that rely on exploration and discovery, should supplant rote practice and strict adherence to a traditional systematic approach which relies only on memorization, this could substantially alleviate the fear of mathematics. Such challenges for educational performance, can also illuminate ways to enrich the teaching experience itself. In this regard, the training programs for teachers must emphasize pedagogical approaches that make mathematics enjoyable, curiously interesting, and full of wonder. Finally, analysis of pedagogies will have the indirect benefit for a broad constituency: teachers, parents, education administrators, and policymakers, for example, by pointing to effective ways to engage students in mathematics. Ultimately the point is that mathematics learning should guarantee pupils acquisition of key skills and foster long-lasting appreciation and passion for



the study of mathematics. By accepting creativity, curiosity, and other attributes, we can really make math, from being an abomination to being a wonder.

Mathematics education faces persistent challenges, including the need to teach complexity to non-mathematicians. (Paranjape, 1995) and emphasize problem-solving as both a goal and means of learning (NCTM, 2000). Studies have identified pedagogical shortcomings in Indian mathematics classrooms (Das, 2019) and the negative impact of students' attitudes on achievement (Chand et al., 2021). To address these issues, researchers have explored various innovative approaches, such as simulation techniques (Busama, 1993), web-based instruction and ICT integration (Chaurasia, 2012). The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge TPACK framework has been introduced to integrate technology, content, and pedagogy in teacher education (Koehler et al., 2013). The National Education Policy 2020 and NCFSE 2023 emphasize the importance of innovative pedagogies and interactive teaching methods, including blended learning, gamification, and experiential learning. Recent studies highlight the effectiveness of project-based learning in enhancing collaborative and critical thinking skills (Rehman et al., 2021), activity-based approaches in fostering creativity (Nwoke, 2021), and collaborative learning in overcoming challenges (Almazroui, 2023). Early childhood mathematics education benefits from teachers using effective pedagogical strategies that focus on children's thinking and learning (Clements et al., 2023). The importance of creating classroom environments that encourage creative thinking and problem-solving has been emphasized (Khalid et al., 2020). As traditional academic skills (3Rs) prove insufficient in the modern educational landscape, there is a growing recognition that teachers must adapt and develop new competencies to create engaging, effective learning environments (Lim et al., 2023). Project-based learning has been identified as an effective method for addressing real-world issues and promoting equal treatment in education (Pan et al., 2023). Overall, the evolving landscape of mathematics education underscores the need for innovative pedagogies, technology integration, and student-centered approaches to improve learning outcomes and real-world problem-solving skills, moving beyond mere qualification to fostering true proficiency in the competitive educational environment. This study aims to identify and evaluate teaching practices in elementary mathematics that foster joy, curiosity, and wonder among students. It seeks to uncover effective pedagogical methods and assess their impact on students' engagement and enthusiasm for mathematics. The goal is to improve mathematics education by making it more appealing and inspiring for young learners

OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the pedagogical practices undertaken by teachers to foster joy, curiosity and wonder among the

students in the mathematics classroom at the elementary stage.

2. To examine the impact of these pedagogical practices to foster the sense of joy, curiosity and wonder among the students in the Mathematics classroom at the elementary stage.

DELIMITATION

1. The study delimited to teaching practices in mathematics at the elementary level up to class 8.
2. The study delimited to the mathematics teachers of the selected private and government schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study employs a qualitative approach to investigate pedagogical practices that foster joy, curiosity, and wonder in mathematics education at the elementary stage. The population consists of elementary teachers in the Varanasi District, with a sample of mathematics teachers from 10 schools (10 government and 10 private) selected randomly. Data collection methods include classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with experienced mathematics teachers known for creating engaging learning environments. Intelligent Verbatim Transcription used to convert audio recordings into text, balancing accuracy with clarity by omitting unnecessary fillers while preserving the essence of the conversations and using NVIVO employed to facilitate efficient coding and visualize connections between themes. The analysis process will involve organizing the transcribed data, qualitatively identifying themes and patterns related to effective pedagogical practices, and quantitatively analysing the occurrence of these practices. This comprehensive approach aims to provide insights into strategies that promote positive emotions and engagement in elementary mathematics classrooms, combining the benefits of observational data with in-depth teacher perspectives.

CATEGORIZATION OF CODES

After initial coding, the categorized the codes into broader themes. This involved grouping related codes together and identifying overarching categories that encapsulate the main ideas.

1. Strategies for Making Classroom Enjoyable: [Activities, Real World Problems, Tools, TLM (Teaching Learning Materials)]
2. Ways to Stimulate Curiosity: [Puzzles, Challenges, Math Games, Group Discussions]
3. Ways to Develop Wonder: [Math in Nature, Math History, Math Magic]



Table 1: Coding of Teachers Responses Using NVIVO

Open codes	Strategies for making classroom enjoyable (No. of teachers)	Ways to stimulate curiosity (No. of teachers)	Ways to develop wonder (No. of teachers)	Percentage of Teacher (No of teacher/ Total no of teacher)	Total (codes)
Daily life activities	1(9)	1(4)	1(2)	75%	3
Real world problems	1(4)	1(6)	1(4)	70%	3
Tools	1(2)			1%	1
TLM	1(6)			12%	1
Puzzles	1(4)	1(2)	1(2)	40%	3
Challenges		1(2)	1(2)	20%	2
Math games	1(2)	1(2)	1(3)	35%	3
Group discussion	1(2)	1(4)		30%	2
Quizzes	1(2)	1(3)	1(2)	35%	3
Math in nature			1(2)	10%	1
Math history	1(0)	1(2)	1(2)	20%	3
Math magic	1(1)	1(2)	1(3)	30%	3
New techniques	1(2)		1(3)	25%	2
Total (codes)	7	6	10		37

INTERPRETATION OF RESULT

The results on teaching strategies reveal a strong alignment with current research in mathematics education. The high prevalence of incorporating daily life activities (75%) and real-world problems (70%) reflects the emphasis on contextualizing learning, a practice supported by Clarke and Roche (2018) research demonstrating improved performance and attitudes among students exposed to real-world mathematics. The trend towards interactive and collaborative learning, evidenced by the use of puzzle-solving (40%), math games (35%), and group discussions (30%), is corroborated by Springer et al.'s (1999) meta-analysis, which found significant positive effects of small-group learning in STEM fields. The implementation of quizzes by 35% of teachers aligns with Black and Wiliam's (1998) work on the impact of formative assessment on student learning. Diverse engagement strategies, such as using math history (20%) and math magic (30%), are supported by Walkington and Bernacki's (2018) study on the benefits of personalizing algebra problems to students' interests. The ongoing adoption of new techniques by 25% of teachers reflects Hiebert and Morris's (2012) emphasis on continuous improvement in teaching methods. It also highlights potential areas for growth, such as the limited use of specific tools (12%) and math in nature activities (10%). findings suggest a positive

trend towards more student-centered, engaging, and effective teaching strategies in mathematics education, while also indicating opportunities for further development in certain areas.

FINDINGS

The study identified several key findings related to the pedagogical practices that foster joy, curiosity, and wonder among students in mathematics at the elementary stage. These findings include:

1. Teachers who used a teacher-centered approach were less effective in promoting joy, curiosity, and wonder compared to those who incorporated active learning strategies.
2. Emphasizing real-world applications and connections to students' everyday lives was an effective way to foster a sense of wonder and curiosity.
3. The use of technology, such as educational software and multimedia resources, helped make mathematics more engaging and enjoyable for students.
4. Teachers who were able to personalize their instruction and provide differentiated support were more successful in addressing individual student needs.

Key Pedagogical Practices	Observed Students Reaction
Use of Games and Puzzles	High Engagement, Enjoyment
Real World Application	Curiosity, Relevance
Storytelling In Math	Wonder, Excitement
Differentiated Instruction	Inclusiveness, Participation
Math Magic Trick	Amazement, Interest
Exploration Of Math in Nature	Engagement Curiosity
Adaptive Teaching Method	Responsiveness, Adaptability

CONCLUSION

The study on "Pedagogical Practices to Foster 'Joy, Curiosity & Wonder' among Students in Mathematics at Elementary

Stage" provides valuable insights into effective teaching strategies for elementary mathematics. The research, conducted with 20 teachers in Varanasi District, revealed that student-



centered approaches, real-world applications, technology integration, and personalized instruction were more effective in promoting engagement and positive learning experiences. These findings have significant implications for enhancing student engagement, promoting conceptual understanding, and encouraging a growth mind set in mathematics education. The study highlights the importance of interactive teaching methods, supportive classroom environments, and the need for ongoing professional development for teachers. However, limitations such as the small sample size and lack of quantitative data suggest areas for future research. The study emphasizes the need for policy makers to address resource disparities between schools and for educators to adopt practices that create joyful, curiosity-driven learning environments. Future research directions include expanding the sample size, incorporating quantitative measures, conducting longitudinal studies, exploring resource adaptation strategies, and investigating the impact of professional development programs. By building on these findings, future studies can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of effective pedagogical practices in elementary mathematics education, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes and a more positive attitude towards the subject.

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