

## **Classroom Realities**

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### **Introduction**

Education may be considered as a human right which aims to create a splendid society. Since human beings are entitled to equal rights every person should have access to equal education.

In order to achieve this goal a teacher is expected to play a key role. It is the teacher's prime responsibility to identify students' talents and abilities and to develop these accordingly. However, a realistic consideration of the atmosphere that prevails in a classroom reveals that students have become victims of teacher typification. This sad situation has become more or less a general feature of most of the classrooms in the Sri Lankan school system. The inevitable consequence of this is a distinctly unhealthy classroom environment. Consequently, the students may develop a tendency to ignore teacher activities in general. This will evidently be an obstacle which will prevent the students from enjoying the benefits of education.

This research study, therefore, makes an attempt to identify how teachers use their authority to typify students during the teaching and learning process. The study was conducted within a social science framework

### **Research methodology**

Using Becker's typification theoretical model, ethnographic research methods were adopted for the collection of data. Data collected from participant observation, interviews and discourse analysis, facilitated the triangulation of data while at the same time increasing the reliability of the collected data. The research site was a national school, and the research sample comprised of 12 teachers and 136 students. The focus of the research study was to find out the extent of typification and how it affects the academic progress and behaviour of the students.

### **Findings**

Teachers typified their students by using three determinants. They are learning, discipline and morality. The study revealed that 75% of the teachers typify the majority of the students as

"good learners" while the other 25% of the teachers hold the opposite view. Furthermore, the criterion used in typifying students as "good" or "bad" learners differed from teacher to teacher.

In the field of discipline teachers categorized the students as "having conformed behavior", "not having conformed behavior", and exhibiting dual characteristics (intermediary). The study revealed that the majority of the students were "having conformed behavior". The gender based analysis indicated that a high proportion of girls resorted to conformed behavior while a majority of boys violated the disciplinary rules. Almost all the teachers in the sample considered obeying the teacher's orders, completion of assignment work on time, and punctuality as main characteristics of discipline. Meanwhile noisy and irritating behavior inside the classroom was considered as one of the non- conforming behaviour. The students who fell into the intermediary characteristics were those who were "not difficult to handle".

Teachers categorized students as "followers" and "distracters" based on morality. This categorization was done based on several moral factors which they identified. These were cleanliness, non aggression, ambition and work, relationship between the peer groups, respect for elders, and moderate behavior.

### **Discussion**

The teacher perceptions of students were not based on any distinct factors. This revealed that the teachers lacked the professionalism expected from them. Though teachers are expected to be focused on the full development of the students, the teachers in the sample were concerned only about a few of the factors that affected the teaching- learning situation in the classroom.

Even though teachers are expected to be very concerned about students' disciplinary issues, the teachers in the chosen sample have only focused on the factors affecting the student's behavior during lesson presentation.

**Conclusions**

Although the teacher's primary role is to facilitate the students' learning to reach their full potential, it is also an unwritten concern

that teachers should be concerned about their discipline and moral development. However, the data in the study revealed that only a small percentage of teachers did so.