

# Social and economic classroom learning

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**O**UR classroom is a breeding ground for character building of a nation. Teachers and students are integral part and participants of classroom learning process. Both enter the classroom effected by the social and economic conditions of their society. Before we move any further, we have to admit the gravity of a teacher's role in the classroom. Also taken into account must be the socio-economic causes that impact both teachers and students and how they affect classroom learning.

We have strengthened our argument with two surveys held in Pakistan (one by Dr Salahuddin A Khan and the other by Dr Tariq Rahman) and

teacher is a blood donor and that the children are the recipients. If the blood is contaminated with disease, the children are bound to become sick. Hence it is necessary to ensure that our teachers are not 'sick' in any way so that they can play their roles effectively.

Besides this, there are various factors — social as well as economic — that can have an impact on classroom learning. These are: 1. The environment in which the child is born and raised; 2. The social, cultural and religious beliefs and practices of a society; 3. The mental and physical health of a child; 4. Gender issues; 5. Class background and stratification prevalent in a society; 6. Defective parenting skills — for example, a child coming to class hungry,

and only thirty per cent of the children went to schools regularly. The reason for the low turnout varied according to the child's gender and economic conditions. The boys were needed in the field to help the parents while the girls were not sent to school because that, the parents thought, might be a hurdle in finding a suitable match for them. Taking the case of the other village Sain, it was noted that in this place the mode of earning a livelihood was not agricultural. Instead, most of its males were working in the city nearby and 99 per cent of the parents wanted their children to get an education. Compared to Sain, here 76 per cent of the children regularly attended school. This survey was a good example of how socio-economic



reported in this section. They were on topics slightly different to ours but are still relevant to our discussion. For further analysis, we have carried out our own survey.

First of all, let us discuss the significance of the role a teacher plays in classroom learning and the impact of socio-economic problems on a teacher. If the mental or physical state of a teacher is unsatisfactory and he or she is not working properly then this can affect all the children in the classroom.

The reason a teacher might feel this way might have to do with lack of interest, irresponsibility, rudeness or job dissatisfaction. This gives rise to many psychological problems which in turn affects the learning of the child. To emphasize our point let us take two examples:

Imagine that a classroom is a workshop and the teacher a machine that shapes metal into nuts and bolts of different sizes and shapes. Now if the machine is faulty due to any reason it will produce deformed and faulty components. Or, imagine that a

late or improperly dressed; 7. Bullying in school and inside class; 8. The classroom's physical conditions, especially with regard to ventilation and lighting; 9. Cumbersome curriculum and inadequate outdoor healthy activities; The impact on lifestyles of new technologies; 11. The rural and urban divide

Dr Salahuddin A Khan carried out a survey in two villages of Rawalpindi and reported his findings on this page last December.

In his article he explained that we must have a good understanding of the culture of rural people and their problems. The lifestyle of most villagers differs from those who happen to live in urban areas. He held his survey in two medium-sized villages called Sain and Mohra, situated near Islamabad. In Mohra the farmers had a more negative attitude towards formal schooling, in particular those farmers who held arable land fertile enough to produce enough food to feed their families.

In Mohra, there were two primary schools for boys and girls,

conditions can play a key role in determining educational attainment and that is why we have chosen to quote from it liberally. The same is true for classroom learning.

In another survey carried out by Dr Tariq Rahman regarding tolerance and militancy among schoolgoing children, he found that the situation was quite different in the madrasahs and the English- and Urdu-medium schools. The children in madrasahs seemed to have a more militant attitude.

Now to our survey, which was carried out in Lahore. We sampled a total of 150 students (56 male and 94 female) at eight schools in the city in different localities. The results are summarized as follows:

\* 41 per cent of the boys and 40 per cent of the girls said that poverty is not a hurdle in classroom learning.

\* We asked students whether rich students are better academically. To this 34 per cent of the boys and 36 per cent of the girls said 'yes'. One reason for this was that since they were well-