What is my Pedagogy?

Shifting understandings and practices of teachers in Government schools in

Kashmir, India

by

Gulshan Ara Tabassum Mir

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Graduate Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Master of Arts (2013/June)
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Abstract

India’s pledge towards universalization of elementary education by 2015 is a desirable goal. Having achieved progress towards universal accessibility to schooling, the problem of providing quality schooling through a necessary paradigm shift, is still a major challenge. This qualitative research study seeks to portray the nature of pedagogy in four elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir and understand its shifting nature with reference to the National Curriculum Framework (2005). Specifically, this study examines teachers’ classroom pedagogical practices, their understandings of pedagogy, the ways they encourage and manage student participation in classroom and the level of support and training they receive from government agencies. The findings of this study will have implications for both teachers and students, their specific roles, their understanding of pedagogy, classroom practices and more importantly students. This study recommends ‘contextually suitable’ pedagogical methods, informing teachers about effective teaching strategies, and outlining specific classroom participation strategies for students.

Key words: Pedagogy, traditional teacher-centered pedagogy, progressive student-centered pedagogy, critical pedagogy, National Curriculum Framework, Jammu and Kashmir
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I would also like to recognize the extraordinary support that my family has provided me during my on-going learning journey. This involved continuous persuasion to accomplish my desire to research education in Kashmir, through this thesis. I sincerely acknowledge the continuous patience of my husband, my mother, my son and my daughter who stood by me at every stage of this research study.
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<td>Activity Based Learning</td>
<td>ABL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual Status of Education Report</td>
<td>ASER</td>
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<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>B.Ed</td>
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<td>Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee</td>
<td>BRAC</td>
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<td>Block Resource Centers</td>
<td>BRCs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network</td>
<td>CLLRNet</td>
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<td>Central Advisory Board of Education</td>
<td>CABE</td>
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<td>Central Board of Secondary Education</td>
<td>CBSE</td>
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<td>Cluster Resource Centers</td>
<td>CRCs</td>
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<td>Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation</td>
<td>CCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperative Integrated Reading Composition</td>
<td>CIRC</td>
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<td>Diploma in Elementary Education</td>
<td>DEED</td>
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<td>District Information System of Education</td>
<td>DISE</td>
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<td>District Institutes of Education</td>
<td>DIET</td>
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<td>District Primary Education Program</td>
<td>DPEP</td>
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<td>Early Child Care</td>
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<td>Gender Parity Index</td>
<td>GPI</td>
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<td>Government of India</td>
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<td>Gross Enrolment Ratio</td>
<td>GER</td>
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<td>Jammu and Kashmir</td>
<td>J and K</td>
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<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
<td>MDG</td>
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<td>Minimum Levels of Learning</td>
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<td>Mid-Day Meal Scheme</td>
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<td>National Council of Educational Research and Training</td>
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<td>National Curriculum Framework</td>
<td>NCF</td>
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<td>National Council for Teacher Education</td>
<td>NCTE</td>
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<td>National Policy on Education</td>
<td>NPE</td>
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<td>National University of Educational Planning and Administration</td>
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<td>Term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operation Black Board</td>
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<td>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
<td>OECD</td>
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<td>Pedagogical Content Knowledge</td>
<td>PCK</td>
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<td>Program of Action</td>
<td>POA</td>
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<td>Progress in International Reading Literacy Study</td>
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<td>Program for International Students Assessment</td>
<td>PISA</td>
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<td>Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act</td>
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<td>Rashtraya Mahamadya Shishksha Abhiyan</td>
<td>RMSA</td>
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<td>Student Team Achievement Divisions</td>
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<td>Team Accelerated Instruction</td>
<td>TAI</td>
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<td>Teaching and Learning Materials</td>
<td>TLMs</td>
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<td>Universal Elementary Education</td>
<td>UEE</td>
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<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
<td>UNESCO</td>
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<td>Urban Resource centers</td>
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<td>Victoria Memorial and Princess Anne Memorial School</td>
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Chapter 1
Introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction

For centuries, education has played a vital role in the development of nation-states. It has perpetuated itself as an indispensable tool for upward social mobility, making knowledge available and accessible to all people, and eventually expanding the possibilities for humankind. Public systems of education came into existence in the 19th century in many countries in Western Europe and North America, and soon the concept of public schooling was stretched to other nation-states (Japan, South Korea, and Singapore) across the globe (Jha et al, 2008). The central aim of public schooling was to help create a knowledgeable and civilized society by ensuring availability and accessibility of basic education to all individuals of the society. The advent of public schooling instigated the premise of basic compulsory education, and later, the universalization of primary education gained global momentum (UNESCO, 2000).

In recent decades, attention to the quality of education has increasingly focused on classroom pedagogical practices. Researchers and practitioners in the field of education are fervently analyzing instances of teaching and learning that improve student achievement and maximize student participation. Indeed, effective classroom pedagogy has been identified as a critical variable for fostering student achievement (Allington & Johnston, 2000). International reports on education suggest that the world’s top performing school systems have recognized that the most important way to improve learning outcomes is by improving classroom pedagogical practices/instruction (McKinsey & Company, 2007). Central to these discussions and research has been a focus on the relative merits and limitations of various forms of
classroom practices ranging along a continuum from more traditional teacher-centered approaches to more progressive student-centered constructivist approaches.

While there exists debate as to which pedagogical approaches are more powerful, constructivist informed student-centered approaches have increasingly gained attention in classrooms across North America (Zwaagstra et al., 2010) and have been referred as the top educational events of the twentieth century (Schoen, 2008). Indeed, the most successful education systems of the world such as Finland, Singapore, Hong Kong-China and Shanghai-China have introduced and emphasized the use of constructivist forms of teaching and learning (OECD, 2011). Traditional teacher-centered approaches that emphasize passive rote learning and the memorization of disconnected facts (Darling-Hammond, 2008) are being viewed as insufficient in fostering the knowledge and skill demands of the twenty-first century and more countries, including India, are embracing constructivist informed pedagogy as the preferred way to deliver instruction to engage learners in the learning process.

1.2 The challenges of quality education in India

India is currently at the crossroads of an educational awakening, realizing the urgency to improve the quality of its education. At present, improvement of the quality of elementary education is one of the major priority areas under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), a campaign for the universalization of elementary education in India (Status of Education in India, National Report, 2008). According to Mehta (n.d.), the quality of education has been receiving much attention and is the current focus of all improvement programs relating to primary education. Ramachandran and Sharma (2009) in their review of many studies and surveys, conclude that the quality of schools in India is not satisfactory and that the poor quality of education is keeping children out of schools (Aggarwal 2002a, 2001; Jha and Jhingran 2002; Ramachandran 2003;
Vadiyanathan & Nair 2001 as cited in Sharma & Ramachandran, 2009). Recently, the international consultation on human development in India has also recommended a shift in focus from enrolment to raising the overall quality of education (Institute of Human Development, 2010). According to the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, 2007-2012 (GOI document), some reasons for the poor quality of education are attributed to the widespread teacher-absenteeism, inadequate teacher-training, outdated pedagogy, and insufficient accountability. Moreover, Jha, et al. (2008) point out that over six decades since India’s independence, the disappointing aspect of India’s development has been its failure to rise up to the challenges associated with the universalization of primary education, including gaps in male and female literacy and high dropout rates.

Challenges in the area of primary education vary from state to state across India. In the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir, the major issues concerning elementary education according to the “Performance Review Report of Jammu & Kashmir Economy (2009)” include: a low literacy rate, infrastructural deficiencies, out-of-school children, vacant teacher posts and inadequate teacher training. These factors, combined with other socio-economic and cultural considerations, lead to an unsatisfactory quality of education in Jammu and Kashmir (Report on Education Sector in Jammu & Kashmir State, 2008). In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the focus of the government, regarding education at the elementary level has, by and large, been on the universalization of access. Irrespective of the fact that the transition rate of students from primary to upper primary grades is 90.84%, (actually it has gone down from 94.3% in 2008-09), the level of achievement is disappointing (DISE Flash Statistics 2010 – 2011). The DISE Analytical Report, part I, 2008-2009 clearly states that:

8.4.7 The quality of education in terms of examination results and learners' attainment across the country is not satisfactory
According to DISE 2009-2010: Flash Statistics, the achievement rates were low; in grade V, 58.74% of boys and 58.10% of girls, and in grade VIII, 47.66% of boys and 46.47% of girls passed their exams with a grade higher than 60%. Additionally, in rural Kashmir 72% of grade III students cannot read grade I level text, and 78% of grade V students cannot read grade II level text; 29% of grade III students cannot recognize numbers up to 100 and 89% of grade V cannot do division (ASER, 2011, J & K Rural). Low achievement rates across India have been recognized as an indicator of its poor quality of education (Aggarwal n.d; Dyer et al, 2004; World bank, 1997). Reasons for this poor quality education in India have been attributed to various factors including an overemphasis on universal access to schooling and retention, an inadequacy of authorities to monitor and provide resources for teachers, poor implementation of policy and programs and problems in pedagogic practices (Sharma & Ramachandran, 2009).

Improvements in ‘teaching and learning’ practices concerning elementary education in India have been an underrepresented area. Evidence suggests that teaching practices are also an indicator of the quality learning. In countries like the UK, Australia and Canada, information on achievement levels, more specifically assessment results, are used to help improve teaching, thereby suggesting a correlation between student achievement and subsequent teaching practices (Aggarwal, n.d.). Recently in India, there has been increasing attention to how educational processes more specifically, classroom practices, take place in order to improve the quality of education. (Dyer et al., 2004; Raghunathan, M., (n.d.)). While defining the problems of elementary education in India, many reforms to enhance the overall quality of education have been suggested, for example, providing adequate teacher training and a change in teaching style, one that is more effective to learners (Aggarwal (n.d.), NUEPA; World Bank, 1997). In addition, Hewlett Foundation’s Global Development Program Strategy has called for investing in proven
instructional models for promoting quality education in developing countries like India, Africa, and Ghana (Hewlett Foundation, 2008). Evidently, the improvement of teaching and learning practices is a critical factor in the broader spectrum of delivering quality education worldwide and also in the state of Jammu and Kashmir as is the main focus of this study.

1.3 Statement of intent

The aim of this research study was to examine the nature of pedagogy and how teachers’ pedagogical practices are shifting in elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir with reference to the National Curriculum Framework (2005). Within this context, case studies of four elementary teachers were developed, examined and analyzed, with specific attention to their pedagogical understandings and practices, to student participation and to organizational supports or hindrances.

1.4 The core research question

The core research question that guided this study was: What is the nature of pedagogy (teaching and learning) in four elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir, and to what extent and why have these practices shifted since the introduction of the National Curriculum Framework (2005)?

Subsidiary research questions included:

1. How do teachers understand classroom pedagogy and why?

2. What pedagogical practices do teachers use to teach in their elementary classrooms and why?

3. How and why do the teachers encourage and manage student participation?
4. How and why have teachers’ understandings and practices shifted since the inception of the National Curriculum Framework (2005)?

5. What do teachers believe has helped them deliver instruction within the directives of the National Curriculum Framework (2005) and what do they believe have been hindrances?

1.5 Rationale and significance of the study

This study is important for a variety of reasons. First, the National Curriculum Framework-NCF (2005) that was introduced seven years ago to address a fundamental disconnect in the Indian educational practice, that is, the notion of learning being “an isolated activity” (p.21). The NCF recognized that learning had become a source of stress and burden on children and parents which was affecting the quality of learning. Hence, the following guiding principles for the curriculum development that gave primacy to learners, their experiences, voices and their active participation were mandated:

- Connecting knowledge to life outside the school
- Ensuring that learning shifts away from rote methods
- Enriching the curriculum so that it goes beyond textbooks
- Making examinations more flexible and integrating them with classroom life
- Nurturing an overriding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country

(India: National Curriculum Framework – 2005, Ch. 1, p.5)

There is a clear indication of a paradigm shift in the National Curriculum Framework document (2005) and many other Government of India (GOI) documents (SSA revised framework; Mid-Term Appraisal of the Eleventh Five Year Plan, chapter 6, 2007-2011) from traditional teacher-centered to student-centered constructivist pedagogical approaches. There is repeated acknowledgement that the pedagogy is out-of-date and initiatives have begun to shift
pedagogy to a more student-centered focus. For this reason, an examination of classroom practices is essential to understand the specifics of pedagogy and its shifting nature.

Educational research worldwide suggests that constructivist informed teaching is effective and enhances students’ academic achievement and participation. Studies conducted by Kim (2005) on 76 elementary students concluded that students preferred constructivist methods of teaching and that they were more effective than the traditional teaching methods in enhancing student achievement. Moreover, there is substantial research pointing towards the use of cooperative learning methods to promote student achievement. Tipps et al. (2010), indicate 72% of 68 studies on cooperative learning showed higher achievement for cooperative groups. Positive student-student interactions or student-instructor interactions during cooperative learning increase academic success and satisfaction of the students (Astin, 1993; Qin, Johnson & Johnson, 1995 as quoted in Becker et al., 2006). Sharan and Sharan (1989) concluded in their study of student achievement at elementary and secondary levels that group investigation, a cooperative learning strategy, results in a higher level of academic achievement.

Clarke (2001) mentions that there are limited instances of qualitative research studies with regards to the nature of the classroom practices in India. A number of government documents, books or Five Year plans on education in India focus mostly on “how education should function in the country”, and “few documents provide empirical accounts of the educational reality in Indian classrooms” (p.172). Classroom activity is rarely a focus of research study as “the main focus of research in India is on systems rather than people” (Battcharjea as quoted in Clarke, 2001, p.192). Additionally, Aggarwal and Chugh (2003), after looking at classroom processes in primary schools in Delhi, report that a lack of research into classroom teaching and learning situations is a major handicap towards building models of teacher-
interaction in the classroom that can improve learning outcomes. Their study further suggests that the knowledge of classroom teaching-learning styles provides “meaningful insights” (p. 43) into effective classroom practice and appropriate teacher preparation.

Lastly, qualitative research data concerning educational issues in Srinagar, Kashmir is scarce because the available research data on education in India focuses mostly on the states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, just to name a few. Actual portrayals of how teaching and learning actually takes place in classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir is, thus, also inadequate and virtually non-existent. A broad search of major databases, so far, revealed no direct evidence of qualitative studies about education from Srinagar, Kashmir, except for GOI documents mostly comprising of quantitative studies (Census of India, 2001, 2011; Annual report 2010- 2011; State Report Cards, Flash Statistics, 2011). In fact, a search of the ‘ProQuest’ database, using phrases such as ‘Education in Kashmir’, resulted in 1754 results with 249 pertaining to India, 19 to Kashmir. When narrowed by Location it indicated 298 Results: India OR South Asia OR Kashmir OR Pakistan, Kashmir OR Southeast Asia OR India, Jammu and Kashmir OR India, Punjab OR India, Himachal Pradesh OR India, Jammu and Kashmir, Jammu OR New Delhi India OR Mumbai India OR Punjab India OR Amritsar India OR Delhi India, yielded only 3 results pertaining to Jammu and Kashmir. A search of Shodh Ganga, an open access repository for research thesis revealed a total of 14 contributing titles from the University of Kashmir, but none from the education department. Since the digitalization of the resources at the University of Kashmir was in process (at the time of data collection), the online open access catalogue searched did not have any resources directly related to qualitative studies of teaching and learning practices in primary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir.
Given the above rationale, it is intended that the results of this study will be timely, considering all the educational machinery that is currently being directed at helping teachers in Jammu and Kashmir adapt to the new curriculum and improve the quality of education. This study provides actual portrayals of teachers’ shifting pedagogical understandings and practices in classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir, and their sense of factors that are supporting and/or hindering these shifts. In addition, the study explores “contextually suitable” pedagogical practices, particularly as they relate to student participation in the classroom in an earnest desire to benefit the children of Kashmir. Lastly, the study contributes to pre-existing educational research available locally with regards to Kashmir, and to the work of researchers in education who are specifically investigating classroom pedagogical practices internationally.

1.6 Chapter overview

Chapter 2: Literature review, provides a general overview and discussion of the kinds of classroom practices that are prevalent elsewhere internationally and specific classroom processes and practices in India. I discuss pedagogical practices through an international perspective, highlighting practices from Finland, U.S.A., Canada, China and Kyrgyzstan & Tajikistan. Since this study pertains to the classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir, that is located in India, therefore a review of the literature pertinent to pedagogical practices elsewhere in India is also presented. In addition, examples of emergent alternative models are also discussed. I provide examples of classroom pedagogical practices from different perspectives in order to demonstrate a broader understanding of the classroom procedures employed globally and their shifting nature.

Chapter 3: Theoretical/Conceptual Framework, discusses the theoretical/conceptual framework fundamental to this study. It begins with pedagogy, the different definitions and deeper meanings of this widely contested term. A theoretical framework of the traditional
teacher-centered pedagogy, progressive student-centered pedagogy and critical pedagogy is elaborated in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology, deals with the research process and the design. The introductory paragraphs discuss aims of the study, the research questions and justification of my research orientation, that is, the qualitative research method. In data collection methods section three methods observation, interviews, and review of pertinent documents that were utilized for this study are elaborated. Data analysis and interpretation section of this chapter discusses organizing multiple data systematically into manageable units, coding the data using coding categories, synthesizing themes and interpreting meaning of the themes. In addition, this chapter highlights reliability and validity procedures pertinent to this research study, ethical considerations and limitations of the research orientation. The last two sections of this chapter emphasize my role as a researcher, and my perceptions of the research topic.

Chapter 5: Background of the study, the research school, participant teachers’ and students’ profiles, provides the setting of the study, the research schools, the participant teachers’ profiles, and students’ profiles. Since the study pertains to classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir, background of the study section focuses on India and Jammu and Kashmir, the emergence and structure of the educational system, and different schemes of education that have been implemented from time to time to support elementary education. In addition, the current status of the state with respect to constant on-going turmoil is described. The research schools section provides general information about the participating schools, and teacher profiles section discusses the profiles of four participant teachers. Lastly the section on student profiles briefly discusses the traits of students.
Chapter 6: Characterizing teacher’s shifting classroom pedagogical practices: emerging themes, presents the data pertaining to the core and subsidiary questions that emerged as a result of the observation, and interviewing four participants of this research study and also through analysis of pertinent documents. In this chapter, an attempt is being made to present the data through the participants’ lens using their actual words. The data presented uses coding categories or themes to organize participant’s responses as descriptions to the research questions during thematic analysis. Sections 6.1 - 6.5 discusses results pertaining to subsidiary questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, while as section 6.6 presents analysis regarding the core question of this study.

Chapter 7: Interpretation: making sense of the emerging themes, discusses the interpretation of the emerging themes using several strategies. The meaning of the data is derived by: 1. comparing the findings of the study with the information gleaned from the literature and theoretical and conceptual frameworks. 2. Personal interpretation based on my personal experiences. This chapter concerns meaning making of pedagogy in elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir; therefore, the nature of pedagogy, the role of teachers, the students, the learning environment, and the support of educational authorities are discussed in its various subsections.

Chapter 8: Conclusion, reflections and recommendations, the concluding chapter of this research thesis discusses the implications of the findings which were deduced as a result of a qualitative-interpretive inquiry of the pedagogical contexts, the teachers, students and the education system in Srinagar, Kashmir. Concluding reflections and recommendations for future research in alignment with the NCF (2005) are outlined in section 8.1 and lastly thesis concluding remarks are presented in section 8.2.
Chapter 2
Literature review

As mentioned earlier, teachers’ classroom pedagogical practices have increasingly been viewed as a critical factor in delivering a quality education. In recent decades, the landscape of education has witnessed an increased focus towards improving classroom practices. Harris (2003) points out that past interventions and innovations in education have not been sustained at the classroom level despite the fact classrooms have been recognized ‘as the locus of change’ (p.4). In this review of the pertinent literature; I begin by discussing classroom pedagogical practices through an international perspective, highlighting practices from Finland, the United States, Canada, China (Shanghai and Hong Kong), and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Further, changing pedagogical practices specific to classrooms in India are discussed. Lastly, alternative pedagogical models emerging in different parts of the world are also described.

2.1 Pedagogical practices: An international perspective

This section explores pedagogical classroom practices from an international perspective. Examples from Finland, the United States, Canada, and China (Shanghai and Hong Kong) and Kyrgyzstan & Tajikistan briefly present an overview of the pedagogical approaches and the kinds of classroom practices that are employed in their respective classrooms. Additionally, this section also highlights shifts in the pedagogical approaches, if any, in these classrooms.
Finland has one of the most outstanding, competitive and well-performing educational programs in the world (Sahlberg, 2007; Tuovinen, 2008). According to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009 report, 15-year-olds in Finland performed second in science, third in reading and sixth in math, internationally (OECD, 2010). PISA results have sparked a lot of international attention to Finnish classrooms, and thus, their pedagogical practices. Sahlberg (2007) mentions that pedagogical practices focus on deep and broad learning giving equal value to all aspects of an individual’s growth of personality, moral creativity, knowledge and skills (p.6). According to OECD (2011), Finnish classrooms are learner-centered where students take an active role in designing their own activities and work collaboratively in teams on projects. This is contradictory to studies conducted by British researchers (as reported by Norris et al 1995 in Tuovinen 2008) who concluded that Finnish pedagogical practices have remained traditional (whole class teaching) with little evidence of student-centered or independent learning. This is referred to as ‘pedagogical conservatism’ by Simola (2005) as quoted in Tuovinen, 2008. Lavonen and Laaksonen (2009) report that a survey conducted by Lavonen and Juuti, et al. (2004) found that “traditional” practical work and the teacher asking questions and allowing an opportunity to make conclusions were among the most popular teaching methods in a Finnish science classroom. Students in Finland tend to accept authority and have an ethos of respect for teachers; they show concern for others and respect for property. Classrooms seem to be calm and secure places for the students (Simola 2005 as quoted in Tuovinen, 2008).

Finnish teachers enjoy a greater degree of respect and teaching is considered an independent, high-status profession. Highly qualified Finnish teachers have more autonomy on deciding what to teach; they select their own text books and write their own school-level teaching programs (Tuovinen, 2008). The core curriculum is less detailed or prescriptive; it
functions as a frame work and different teaching methods are employed to ensure learning. The Finnish school system utilizes internal modifications, allowing teachers to develop teaching and learning as needed. It is also remarkable to note that the teaching profession is at par with other professions (doctors and lawyers) in Finland.

**United States**

Schools in the United States have been increasingly implementing progressive student-centered teaching practices since the beginning of the twentieth century. Cuban’s work on school reform indicated that during the 1920s and 1930s, 25% of elementary schools had embraced progressive teaching practices (Spencer, 2000). At present, in the majority of school districts across the United States, there is strong emphasis on constructivist informed pedagogies such as project-based learning, discovery learning, inquiry learning, hands-on learning, and co-operative learning. Moreover, time spent on teacher-directed instruction, memorization of facts and formal testing is being minimized (Zwaagstra et al, 2008). A group of schools called the Co-nect schools in Memphis, Tennessee, for example, integrated project-based learning along with technology, which resulted in larger gains in standardized tests when compared with other schools (Barron & Darling Hammond, 2008).

Studies of elementary classrooms conducted by Allington and Johnson (2000) evaluating 30 grade 4 classrooms in 24 schools in 5 states (CA, NH, NJ, NY and TX) revealed the following: each instructional day in these sample schools consisted of tailored, collaborative and meaningful work; instruction was modified, built on student interests, needs, strengths and weaknesses; but it was not individualized. Inside these classrooms teachers strategically arranged for students to have ‘managed choice’; they were explicit when needed and they knew what students needed to know at a certain point or what students could find out for themselves. Working together was valued as an important learning skill
and collaborative learning was common. Students were expected to manage group work and longer-term work with assignments lasting a week or longer. Teachers worked alongside students individually and in small groups; less from the front of the classroom. Integration across subjects, time and topics was common.

Another study conducted on 214 5th-grade elementary students from 6 elementary schools in urban, suburban, and rural geographic areas in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. revealed that 70 percent of the students preferred hands-on classroom activities, including activities that promoted learning and, at the same time, allowed students to have fun (Johnson, 2006). Furthermore, Polak (2008) conducted a mixed methods study on 79 5th-graders and concluded that student self-efficacy and comprehension increased through the “Growing with Mathematics Program,” reinforcing the idea that a constructivist math program increases conceptual thinking, which is important for the advancement of global society.

**Canada**

In Canada, like in the United States, there has been increased attention to progressive, student-centered education in the twentieth century under the “much heralded 1937 curriculum revision” (Stamp, 2006). Canada is one of the countries that topped the international rankings in the Program for International Students Assessment (PISA), 2009 of 15-year-olds in three basic areas: reading, mathematics and science.

Student-centered constructivist informed progressive approaches to teaching and learning have been implemented across different school boards in Canada. According to the Ministry of Education website, research informed practices shared by teachers in the province of Ontario indicate the use of varied constructivist approaches to teach children. For example, Victoria Memorial and Princess Anne Memorial School - VMSPA (a newly
combined diverse community school) in London, Ontario have in recent years (2010-2011) implemented student-centered higher yield strategies such as engaging students in deep self reflection on their work and others’ work, involving them in rubric generation, student moderation, creation of anchor posters and student led conferencing. The teachers have shifted their role to facilitators or coaches. Teachers involved in such evidence based practices in their classrooms have confirmed that students become independent critical thinkers and confident problem solvers as a result of participating in high yield instructional strategies.

‘Success for All’, a program that has been introduced in elementary schools in Quebec and Ontario, works toward the specific goal of progress and attainment in reading for ‘at-risk students’ within the cooperative learning framework. This program employs co-operative learning classroom strategies, such as peer tutoring and think-pair-share, which reflect the constructivist pedagogy (Harris, 2003). At-risk students who participated in quasi-experimental studies in Montreal, Quebec improved their reading achievement for both years of its implementation (Chambers, Abrami & Morrison, 2001).

In Ontario, Canada, the ‘Literacy and Numeracy Strategy’ initiative was established by the Ontario government in 2004 to boost students’ reading, writing and math skills. As a result of this initiative the average pass rate of provincial grade 3 exams in reading, writing and math increased from 55% in 2003 to 70% in 2010 (PISA, 2009). Literacy and Numeracy blocks are widely promoted in Ontario (Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network-CLLRNet, 2009) and most schools provide literacy block time in their timetables in conjunction with numeracy blocks which have resulted in improved performance. A balanced literacy program in literacy or mathematics involves effective shared, guided or independent instruction. Effective mathematical instruction in Ontario schools, for example, mainly
comprises of active involvement of students in their learning, with focus on conceptual understanding and metacognition (thinking about their own thinking), and engaging students in mathematical activities that involve investigations, problem solving, reasoning and mathematical communications (A Guide to Effective Instruction Kindergarten to Grade 6, 2006). “Students in Canada are grouped by ability in ways that are very similar to the United States’ system. Elementary school-aged children are often placed in ability groups within heterogeneous classrooms” (OECD, 2011, p.68). In addition, teachers are guided to implement developmentally appropriate and meaningful activities that allow the students to work within the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Hence, teachers are expected to provide sufficient support through questioning, dialogue, guided discussion and selecting appropriate activities (ibid., p.40). Additionally, effective reading strategies used for student success in reading across Canada include frequent use of: scaffolded help to students in the form of modelling, guiding, and thinking aloud; differentiating instruction for individuals or small groups of students; explicitly teaching and modelling the use of high level thinking skills, using meaningful texts that matter to students and encouraging students to talk about the strategies that help them construct meaning (PIRLS, 2011).

Lastly in Canada, classroom pedagogical practices suggest a transformative intent as described by Evans (2008), “students are encouraged to inquire critically into various social and political themes and issues, and to use their findings to bring about personal or social change as active and responsible participants” (p.295). According to Evans (2008), Educating for Global Citizenship, which is part of the core curriculum for elementary and secondary classes (all provinces and territories including), students utilize instructional strategies that are participatory in nature. These participatory learning activities actively engage learners in meaningful real public issues that provide opportunities for conceptual understanding,
building critical inquiry skills and responsible engagement in the community, indicating advanced pedagogical approach.

**China: Shanghai and Hong Kong**

In 2001, a national curriculum reform was announced in China which strongly emphasized constructivist teaching and learning approaches. It has moved away from traditional rote learning and bookish knowledge transmission to relevant, real-life experiences and increased student participation practices. In Shanghai, for example, 15-year-olds achieved very high average overall results on PISA (2009) which has been attributed by local experts to the successful reforms whereby students are able to integrate their knowledge, make open-ended explorations and tackle real life problems (OECD, 2011).

Similarly, primary classes in Hong Kong switched to an ‘activities approach’ in 1970, but didactic teaching was still prevalent up until 2001. The constructivist informed pedagogical practices were adopted in 2001 and the examination system in primary schools was abolished, allowing teachers to develop relevant school-based learning. The consequence of this reform is reflected in the PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) 2006 international rankings where Hong Kong’s primary school children ranked 2nd in reading literacy worldwide (ibid.).

**Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan**

Current research in pedagogy also gives an account of “contradictory, evolving, complex and mixed methods styles” (Niyozov, 2008, p. 137) approach to pedagogy. The specific examples of the pedagogy from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan presented by Niyozov are indicative of the mixed methods model of pedagogy as teachers use direct instruction to the whole class to illuminate the good and bad aspects of a society through applicable examples. Teachers engage students in a series of activities which “raise students’ consciousness,
implant doubts in their minds, keep them from being fooled by information and sometimes impart critical and balanced thinking” (ibid. p.141).

Teacher-centered pedagogical practices relating to cases from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that illustrate the transmission of knowledge is exemplified by teachers doing all the telling through lecture or explanation, asking students to correct the mistakes or copy the lesson, or repeat or memorize dates, years and names, or by teachers explaining the same thing over and over again. Teachers strictly exhibit their authority or coercive attitude over students, demanding that students follow the rules and do as the teacher directs. Teachers’ progressive constructivist pedagogical practices engage students in varied activities, such as questioning or disagreeing with one another or the teacher, discussing social issues, problematizing a topic in history textbook, role playing and posing problems.

The international perspectives on classroom practices in Finland, the United States, Canada, China-Shanghai, China-Hong Kong and Kyrgyzstan & Tajikistan clearly indicate that progressive student-centered constructivist informed approaches have gained popularity since the twentieth century. The instances of pedagogical practices in classrooms in these countries show an increasing trend towards practices that promote the participatory role of learners by encouraging them to collaborate, explore, discover or inquire through meaningful learning activities. Countries, where progressive student-centered pedagogy was introduced very early, are considering the autonomous, self-regulating role of the learners and at the same time teachers tend to provide sufficient support to students in the learning process. On the contrary, countries new to progressive student-centered constructivist informed pedagogy are ambitiously adopting constructivist informed approaches, but with contextual relevance. In Finland, as the reports indicate, learners have autonomy in designing their own activities and work collaboratively with peers, yet teachers lead them through whole class instruction
and students are asked to derive conclusions for the questions. In the United States and Canada, classroom practices used by teachers facilitate conceptual thinking and metacognition, all designed to help students to succeed. Teachers in the United States use their teaching repertoire to allow ‘managed choice’ for students, while teachers in Canada use differentiated instruction for individual or small groups of students and varied active learning activities that build their critical thinking skills and help them become the agents of change. In China-Shanghai student learning is connected to real life examples and in China-Hong Kong teachers promote relevant school based learning to teach students through progressive pedagogical practices. Although China-Shanghai and China-Hong Kong have recently introduced constructivist informed approaches to teaching and learning (along with Finland, the United States, and Canada), they have shown substantial gains in student achievement which is attributed to current reforms. Finally, the examples from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan present instances where within traditional, teacher-centered settings, students are allowed to engage in dialogue that may occasionally be critical in nature and help develop consciousness and thus bear resemblances to the progressive, student-centered pedagogical approach.

2.2 Pedagogical practices in India

India, with all its states, is experiencing a paradigm shift with regards to the way teaching and learning practices should be undertaken. On one hand, there exists a history of more traditional and authoritative teacher directed classroom pedagogical practices and on the other hand, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) introduced in 2005 is advocating heightened attention to child-centered and constructivist classroom pedagogical practices. In this section of the literature review, I explore pedagogical practices in India with attention to the following themes: pedagogical methods of teaching and learning, teacher-student
interactions, perceptions of teaching and learning, the role of hierarchy and the role of
different state agencies in India with particular reference to Kashmir.

**Pedagogical methods of teaching and learning**

Dewan (2009), in his most recent analysis of ‘Teaching and Learning’ in the sample
classrooms in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, concludes that most of the teaching in
classrooms was through use of the blackboard and chalk, most of the time “with little
involvement or effect” (p.206). Teachers emphasized for students the memorization and
recitation of multiplication tables or copying from the blackboard. Text books (referred to by
Kumar as the “de facto curriculum” as cited in Clarke, 2001, p. 141) are at the center of all
teaching-learning activity, which are difficult for children to understand, and teachers face
problems using those books as well. Teachers involved in the study had no specific
suggestions about how children could be taught mathematics or modifying teaching for weak
children, as they didn’t feel the need to examine their own teaching methods.

Some earlier studies also point in a similar direction; for instance, Dyer 1996 (as cited
in Ramachandran et al., 2008) reports that the teacher’s perception of teaching was imparting
textbook content irrespective of whether the children learned or not. Teachers lacked critical
awareness about pedagogical practices and teaching problems. Also, teachers never took
responsibility for the students’ learning abilities and didn’t feel that the pedagogical practices
needed improvement.

Clarke (2001), in her book “Teaching and Learning: Culture of Pedagogy”, has used
qualitative methods to document teacher-thinking and classroom activity of mathematics and
social studies teachers in Bangalore, India. Clarke (2001) mentions that understanding the
subject is the teacher’s goal for instruction. Teachers make students understand mathematics
by “imparting, explaining, giving, taking, teaching and presenting” (p.51). Also, the teachers’
goal for student learning is to “understand and absorb what is taught to them” (p. 52).

Knowledge of facts, focusing on the main points, and knowledge of history and culture are the primary goal of teachers when teaching social studies. Students’ understanding is believed to be obtained through repetition and teachers reiterate, “Repetition is one of the most important things” (Clarke, 2001, p.53). “Questioning is the main way” (p. 123) to know if the students have understood content and it is also a way for teachers to assess whether students are following the lesson and are alert. One of the key findings is that teaching and learning, in the examples of classrooms from Bangalore, emphasize lower-order thinking, characterized by memorization and repetition which are used by teachers to help their students understand the textbooks.

Clarke (2001) calls for transformation in cultural models of teacher thinking and teaching to facilitate the development of complex, higher-order thinking through analysis, synthesis, reasoning, and creativity. Clarke’s proposed reform in teaching and learning [pedagogy], curriculum, examination, and teacher education is reflected in the NCF (2005), which draws upon the fundamental changes in the perceptions of learners and learning. As such, through its overt reform towards child-centered pedagogy, the NCF has recognized the need for a curriculum that gives primacy to the learners. It explicitly acknowledges the fact that the pedagogical practices, the learning tasks and, above all, the textbooks create receptive learning environments, and therefore, a departure from these current practices.

It is interesting to note that in the classrooms observed by Dewan in 2009, “neither the teachers, nor the textbooks and curriculum makers, were capable of drawing up tasks in keeping with children’s competence” (p. 240), as emphasized in the NCF. However, that is just one example, as there are some successful programs that are making progress towards engaging learners in an active role. Notable among them is the Activity Based Learning
(ABL) program in Tamil Nadu, a southern Indian state. ABL has also been introduced in the state of Jammu and Kashmir along with 16 other states during 2008-2009 at the primary level. ABL makes use of workbooks, reading cards, math and science kits, and computer aided learning materials at the primary level (Brief Overview of Quality Improvement in SSA, 2010-2011, (n.d.))

**Teacher-student interactions**

Clarke (2001) presents a comprehensive explanation of teacher and student roles through a complicated framework of cultural models, both explicit and implicit. Kindness, friendliness, authority and strictness are dominant attributes of student-teacher relationships. Teachers are kind and friendly to their students, but when it comes to work they are authoritative and exhibit strict attitude in getting the work accomplished. They seem to be shifting from one extreme to the other, friendly at one time and “in the next breath ..... they are very strict with their students” (p. 72). Non-verbal interaction takes the form of the teacher observing the students “by watching students’ eyes, facial expressions, reactions, attitudes” (p.74) and checking their work. In contrast to private schools, government school teachers do not keep a close eye on their students and students do not stare at them. Verbal interactions predominantly consist of the teacher asking questions and the student answering questions; teachers believe reasoning questions, for example, how and why questions, during teaching mathematics allow the students to think. The purpose of teacher-student interactions is mainly to find out whether the students understood the lesson, but not to deal with misconceptions or disparities. The above examples of student-teacher interactions reflect the passivity and transmission of learning by teachers and do not reflect value of interactions in that learning in the company of others enhances understanding.
Dewan (2009) points out that there is virtually no dialogue in the classroom, and no possible teacher-student interactions. Students in the mathematics classrooms in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan were like “passive receivers, not engaged in any tasks that would give them any sense of achievement or enhanced confidence”, and above all, “they were not expected to construct new problems or solve existing ones on their own” (p.240). The examination of classroom practices also draws attention to teachers’ actions in the classroom (both private and government-run schools showed no major differences). Although teachers acknowledge and emphasize the need to make their classrooms more activity-based, they don’t engage or involve the students in classroom activities, but ask them to respond to questions. More often, the ‘teachers show insensitivity towards the children’ by not paying attention to their responses (ibid., p. 241).

**Perceptions of teaching and learning**

According to Dewan (2009) there appears to be disparity between the objectives of the NCF (2005), vis-a-vis enabling children in their learning process through the construction of knowledge, and value system of the people (teachers, academic administrators etc.) who work in the state systems, in that their ideas about the processes of learning were confusing. A common perception held by the teachers and academic administrators involved is that children from poorer sections cannot learn because they have a different belief system about learning and the parental support needed for such children is not available. Children’s abilities such as genetic differences and low IQ were suggested reasons as to why children don’t learn. Teachers did not feel that methods of teaching were the reason why some children learn and others don’t; this belief was shared by academics and administrators indicating that people who work in the system did not value diversity.
According to Clarke (2001), students very rarely ask questions, and when they do, they are meant for clarification. Teachers thought students who don’t ask questions likely do so because of the strict nature of teachers. They believe that intelligent students ask lots of questions and their perception of such students is that during teaching “they are in the same intellectual level” as the teachers themselves (p.81). It is pertinent to mention here that the revised SSA framework makes mention of such practices: “to ignore the ground realities of children, and to espouse ‘deficit’ theories of learning which assume that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are also ‘lacking in ability or interest” (SSA, Revised framework, 2011, p.58), and acknowledges this as a failure of the system and has formulated interventions that are based on the fact that all learners are not alike and a climate of equality and social justice must be promoted (SSA, Revised Framework, 2011).

The role of hierarchy

Sharma (2009) in ‘Internal Dynamics’ makes elaborate reference to the traditional hierarchal structure that is predominant in the Indian administrational structure. Undoubtedly, education departments across India provide an excellent insight into the high degree of hierarchical functions which have been existent since the colonial times and it is ironic the system still exists to this day. The orders of superiors take precedence over the demands of the work. Sharma (2009), further points out that hierarchy at the school level exists between the principal of the school and teachers and “elementary school teachers continue to be the lowest in hierarchy” (p.149).

Similarly, Clarke (2001) sheds light on the nature of hierarchy “characteristic of Indian society” possessed by teachers. The teacher generally exhibits two types of hierarchy: structural and qualitative. Structural hierarchy symbolizes authority with reference to the organization of the classrooms, while qualitative hierarchy is representative of knowledge,
i.e. the “teacher knows everything”. As experts, teachers exhibit a “nurturing, responsible, empathetic” and caring attitude, and on the contrary the student as a novice displays “respect, esteem and reverence” (p.152). The government teachers act according to hierarchy; if a student approaches for help, they provide the help given that a subordinate has to actively demand attention from the superior and a superior does not interfere with a subordinate’s work.

*The Role of different state agencies*

The District Institutes of Education (DIET), Block Resource Centers (BRCs), Urban Resource centers (URCs) and Cluster Resource Centers (CRCs) function as academic resource centers and provide pre-service and in-service training to teachers. DIETs are directly responsible for developing contextually appropriate training modules for teachers, with consideration for the local knowledge, age-appropriate, inclusive child-centered activities and acting to strengthen the community, teacher and CRC association. BRCs and CRCs provide ‘on-site support’ to schools regarding quality improvements and teaching and learning resource material for different subject areas. The SSA Revised Framework has directives to improve the type of support provided to teachers. As such, ‘capacity-building’ measures are under way to equip the agencies (with regard their specific roles) to provide support related to gender issues, children with special needs and social issues (SSA, Revised framework, 2011). However, this is not the case as reported by Ramachandran et al. (2008) in their report about primary teachers: “despite the fact that the BRCs and CRCs were set up with this precise objective in mind, in practice these personnel fulfill routine administrative functions. The primary school teachers have no source of academic support, whatsoever” (p.66).
Dewan (2009) writes that in classrooms from Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan people involved in education lack a deep understanding about how education could be improved. However, at the same time they experienced frustration with the response to their efforts for improvement. There were no clear indications about what exactly happens in the training or what kind of training is imparted. In the same way, with reference to Jammu and Kashmir, for example, as per the Education Sector Report (2008), capacity-building measures are now beginning to come along as more and more teachers and Village Education Committee members are trained. The reports and documents on the improvement of education quality in Jammu and Kashmir schools present a vague picture of progress. For example, documents mention, “capacity-building programs are being organized for teachers during vacations, grants are given to teachers for developing subject-specific teaching and learning material and acknowledgement that achievement rates at primary level are low, (based on NCERT assessment report 2003),” (Report on Education Sector, 2008). The issue lies in the fact that this presents only a superficial view of how to improve the quality of education. In offering capacity-building programs for teachers, for example, no details are provided about the types of programs offered and how teacher development is supported or encouraged with respect to classroom practices.

Sharma and Ramachandran (2009) point out that there are a multitude of issues that the education system in India is facing, namely, diversity or lack of understanding of initiatives among the administrators, resource persons, and teacher trainers; lack of professionalism and problems in the formal system with regard to curricular and pedagogic reform, to name a few. They have suggested addressing the core problems of the education system, perhaps by restructuring the formal system and redefining policies, keeping in mind, the issues that confront the implementation of existing policies.
To conclude, Clarke (2001) talks about taken-for-granted models which are shared by teachers and other authorities that define their actions, for example, teachers’ perception of teaching and learning, their interaction with students, their use of the textbook and their roles in the classroom. Dewan (2009) talks about the value system of the people working in the state education department and their perceptions of learning, whereas the NCF acknowledges the systemic deficiencies and prescribes intervention in an aim to improve teaching and learning, specific to the aim of this study. One might contemplate what does a common government school teacher comprehend of all this and how are his or her classroom pedagogical practices shifting towards more constructivist informed classroom pedagogical practices?

2.3 Alternative pedagogical approaches emerging in different parts of the world

Increasing attention to pedagogy is also revealed in alternative educational contexts in different parts of the world. Examples of some exceptionally well documented reports of radical alternative forms of pedagogy as reported by Farrell (2008) include the Escuela Nueva in Columbia, the BRAC Non-Formal Primary Education Program Bangladesh, and the UNICEF Community Schools Program in Egypt. The Escuela Nueva (New Schools) of Colombia has been the oldest, internationally best known and successful program of primary schooling since late the 1970s and it has been declared a standard model for rural schooling by the local government.

Pedagogical approaches in each of these programs reveal attention to child-centered, active learning environments that focus more on learning than teaching. These continuous progress learning models are either multi-grade or multi-age peer tutoring (older or academically advanced children helping young or less advanced) pedagogical practices.
According to Farrell (2008), these alternative approaches, wherever present, regardless of whether implemented modestly or not, have been successful among disadvantaged young people.

Teachers in these aforementioned alternative pedagogical locales function as “facilitators” who facilitate children in their learning, individually or in small groups, according to their needs. Teachers make decisions and provide judgments regarding the progress of students through grade levels. Interestingly enough, teachers who utilize alternative pedagogical approaches, work under difficult conditions (when compared to other teachers around the world) and are poorly paid, yet they are still believed to be promoters rather than obstacles of school change (Farrell, 2008).

In the above examples of alternative pedagogical approaches, learners of different ages and different grade levels are actively involved in continuous progress learning. Learners work in “learning corners”, individually or in groups, using carefully prepared self-guided materials in contrast to rote learning. Besides gaining necessary learning academic material and skills, learners in these settings develop self-confidence and self-esteem. Learners enjoy active involvement in the governance and management of the school. Furthermore, they learn democratic citizenship education in addition to learning something of local relevance at the Escuela Nueva and art education in the BRAC and Egypt programs (ibid., p. 121).

The abovementioned accounts review pedagogical classroom practices from international perspectives, discussion of classroom practices from India and from the alternate emergent approaches. They provide a global outlook on classroom pedagogical practices and reveal that classroom practices related to basic education do not adhere to a “one-method-fits-all” approach. One thing is evident that in these global classroom milieus,
there is increased attention to the constructivist informed pedagogical approach of teaching and learning as this method engages a learner actively in a broad range of meaningful activities and promotes conceptual thinking and metacognition. The examples of the Escuela Nueva (the New School) from Columbia, the BRAC program from Bangladesh and the Community School Program of UNICEF, Egypt that incorporate student-centered teaching and learning in local settings show they have emerged as successful alternate models of teaching and learning. Meanwhile, mixed methods models from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan reveal that integration or interchanges of traditional or student-centered approaches may engage learners in critical and balanced thinking. Lastly, the literature from India reveals that classroom pedagogical practices in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and the city of Bangalore mostly resemble traditional, teacher-centered approaches. Although significant literature of actual pedagogical classroom practices regarding the state of Jammu and Kashmir is very scarce or non-existent, the literature pertaining to most states of India including the state of Jammu and Kashmir suggests that recently progressive student-centered constructivist informed classroom pedagogical practices have begun to be implemented in schools across India.
Chapter 3  
Theoretical/conceptual framework

In this chapter, I elaborate the definitions and varied meanings of the term pedagogy. In the subsequent sections traditional teacher-centered pedagogy, progressive student-centered pedagogy and critical pedagogy, which form the theoretical/conceptual frameworks that are fundamental to this study, are described.

3.1 What is pedagogy?

Pedagogy is a widely contested term (Watkins & Mortimore 1999), nevertheless, simply put, the word pedagogy means ‘the science of teaching’. According to Oxford dictionary meaning, pedagogy is the method and practice of teaching; a *pedagogue* is a teacher, a strict one. The encyclopaedia Britannica defines pedagogy as the art, science, and profession of teaching.

Pritchard and Woollard (2010), define pedagogy as the heart of teaching. It is about rules and principles that guide effective and efficient activities which lead to learning. Pedagogy is about teaching methods and principles of instruction. It is assisting students through interaction and activity in the ongoing academic and social events of the classroom.

“Pedagogy is the performance of teaching with theories, beliefs, policies, and controversies that inform it” (Alexander, 2000, p.540).

Broadly speaking, pedagogy encompasses extensive areas that individuals – ‘pedagogues’ [teachers] and likewise policy-makers involved in the field of education must be aware of. A model knowledge base for teaching according to Turner-Bisset (2001), comprises of following: subject knowledge – substantive and syntactic knowledge, beliefs
about the subject; knowledge of the curriculum; knowledge of different models of teaching;
Pedagogical knowledge - both general and pedagogical content knowledge; knowledge of
learner - both cognitive and empirical; knowledge of self, that is the teacher itself and
knowledge of the educational contexts.

According to Watkins & Mortimore (1999), the ‘conceptions of pedagogy have
become more complex over time’ because:

- the knowledge base is continuously changing due to extensive research
  conducted to elucidate how teaching and learning should be best conducted
- understanding of a learner or a teacher is getting more explicit, the
differentiation of educational settings according to the level of learners, and
- educational contexts have extended beyond the realm of school’ (p.3).

While many definitions of pedagogy stated above express a deeper meaning [rather
than superficial], they convey meanings about teaching and learning. One would contemplate
that if pedagogy is about teaching a learner or learning from a teacher, then teaching is
inextricable from learning. For this reason, Watkins & Mortimore (1999, p.3), define
pedagogy as: “Any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in
another.”

The above definition thus extends the meaning of pedagogy by including “learning in
another” that is the learner. Any act of teaching is impossible without the learner, so as to
say, that a learner is central to the learning process. Pedagogy could then be defined as:

*Pedagogy is an act or art of teaching and learning in which a ‘teacher’ is a person
who designs, plans and devises any conscious activity to implement learning in another the
‘learner,’ who is central to the learning process.*
It is the ‘conscious activity’ devised by the teacher (or any other person responsible) that determines how learning is organized and implemented for learning to take place. The teaching and learning process during any conscious activity must consider a variety of factors, such as the knowledge base, that is, type, age or need of the learner; different pedagogical approaches of teaching and the instructional strategies that inform the act or art of teaching. The aforesaid definition of pedagogy situates a teacher and a learner together in the learning process. One of the reasons that pedagogy is a contested term is obviously because of the arguments about how teaching and learning should be conducted as suggested by Watkins and Mortimore, (1999). Whether a teacher and a learner should have some fixed roles or interchangeable roles in this act of a conscious activity is debatable.

Pedagogy, when associated with terms like traditional, is generally linked to old methods and functions of transmission approach; with progressive it conveys interaction and becomes transactional and with critical, or radical, it brings empowerment and becomes transformational (as suggested in vast literature).

3.2 Traditional teacher-centered pedagogy

By traditional I mean ‘old school’, or ‘what has been going on since ancient times’ or ‘what is customary’. Traditional pedagogy refers to conventional methods of teaching and learning where the teacher is the direct or sole authority responsible for educating a learner in a teaching/learning situation. In traditional settings, the teacher is deemed respectable as well as knowledgeable - the ‘giver of knowledge’ and the learner is considered the ‘receiver of
knowledge’. Pedagogy in traditional locales is mostly ‘teacher-centered’ where the teacher orchestrates all the learning ‘telling students’ what to do, while the learner follows the instructions, memorizes information, facts, in a do-as-directed approach. Bruner (1996) names it “folk pedagogy” using didactic ways to incorporate learning as the most common practice (cited in Watkins & Mortimore 1999, p. 15)

Traditional models of teaching and learning find compatibility within societies that value respect for authority. The representation of a traditional learning environment is most often a disciplined, maybe dull and boring classroom that offers limited amount of activity to a learner. Such traditional pedagogy appears to be deeply rooted in ancient times when the transfer of religious and moral education, or long established information and skills were imparted to future generations in order to better prepare them for life ahead. The earliest known indigenous pedagogy in India (the context of this study) consisted of imparting ‘Vedas’, knowledge of various types, in the ‘Gurukul’, the homes of Acharayas, by the ‘guru(s)’, the men of high calibre in knowledge and spiritual progress, to the ‘Shishayas’ or ‘student(s)’, who would study and obey the instructions of the Guru (Jayapalan, 2005). The service of the guru was considered to be supreme like a spiritual father. A guru was a respected adult who inculcated in students a desire to learn and more importantly was responsible for all round development (both moral and social skills) of his students. Guru and shishaya exhibited a harmonious parent-son relationship. The highly disciplined environment of Gurukul imparted training in self control, self respect, right conduct and cooperation to the shishayas. The mode of teaching employed was mostly verbal and included recitation, discussion, illustrations with examples, question and answer techniques for developing reasoning and memorization with emphasis on pronunciation. (Chand, 2004)
A more traditional approach to pedagogy is premised in the Skinner’s behaviourist view of learning according to which learning is a change in behaviour. Behaviourist view of learning is concerned with connections between stimuli and responses and the evidence of learning is measured as observable behaviour and interpreted as competence, regardless, whether the knowledge learned makes any sense to the learner or whether the learner is able to apply the acquired knowledge in any new situations (Brown, 2004; Woollard 2010). Behavioural approaches to teaching have been found useful to teach explicit sequential and factual information or mastery learning. Nuthall and Wenglinsky (2002 as quoted in Uibu et al., 2010) indicate that providing identical information to learners, not considering students’ individual differences, and not modifying teaching to meet the individual growth and progress all exemplify traditional teaching practices.

**Role of the teacher**

In traditional forms of pedagogy, autocratic, authoritarian, coercive, meek dictators (Kumar, 1991) are common slogans attributed to the teachers working within teacher-centered pedagogical contexts. Teachers in traditional locales have a hierarchal role and are the only decision makers (Yoneyama, 2002) in the classroom. Teachers teaching to the transmission model exercise control vis-à-vis dictatorial power over docile children in the classroom through prescribed syllabus and textbooks. Kim (2005), reports that in Korean schools, teachers dominate the class with the over use of textbooks. Strictly following the prescribed curriculum, and the textbooks, the teachers in traditional classrooms generally expound the subject matter through whole class instruction (Darling, 1994), where two third of the talk for each lesson is contributed by teachers (Flanders 1970 quoted by Wells, 2002). According to Guthrie (1990), formalistic teachers lay emphasis on memorizing basic facts and principles and dominate the classroom by utilising most of the instructional time to cover
most of the content. In doing so, teachers conform to their common belief that individual pieces of information are taught separately and tested through examination after ensuring that the students have mastered the content taught. Nonetheless, the safe and speedy delivery of the content is guaranteed by maintaining order in the classroom (Kumar, 1991). Interestingly enough the disciplinarians according to Dunkin, (1977 as quoted by Guthrie, 1990) create enthusiasm and interest in the classroom and above all have been warm and supportive in dealing with children.

**Role of the learner**

The role of the learner in a traditional classroom contrary to the dominant role of the teacher is mostly passive. Learners [students] tend to obey the teacher and conform to prescribed types of behaviour in the classroom. They are largely dependent on the teacher for obtaining information related to the subject taught and essentially regurgitate the content learned through direct instruction by repetition and rote memorization. Learners in traditional settings experience limited amount of teacher-student or student-student interactions under the teacher’s control. The most predominant interactions are question/answer methods sought as clarifications of the factual information presented through direct teaching.

**Passive learning/ transmission of knowledge**

Traditional teacher-centered instruction is often portrayed as inert, passive and transmissive pedagogic approach where learners passively imbibe the values, skills, and the knowledge imparted by the authoritative teacher (Niyozov, 2008). It is believed that there is lack of appropriate cognitive processing during passive learning (Mayer, 2001, 2008 as quoted in Tobias & Duffy, 2009) and there is passive reception of information, for example, of facts and concepts by the students which are transmitted by the teachers. Teacher-centered instruction tends to focus on cognitive domains at the lower levels like receiving, responding,
remembering or understanding information (Arends, 2001, as quoted in Woolfolk et al., 2006).

Wherever existent, the traditional milieus are characterized by polarized descriptions, for example, Bowles and Gintis (1976, as quoted in Parr, 2005, p. 221) call it the ‘Mug and Jug’ approach referring to the traditional approach to learning as passive with the teacher [jug] as the expert and fountain of all the knowledge and the student as the recipient of this knowledge [Mug]. Similarly, Yoneyama (2002) describes the autocratic paradigm existent in Japan as “mechanical, instrumental and competitive” (p.73). Chung (1998, quoted in Bray, 2003, p. 169) refers to Chinese and Indian schools as “examination oriented-book education” and rote learning places.

Paulo Freire (1970) calls ‘traditional pedagogy’ as “the banking concept of education” (p.72). Freire’s banking concept of education regards learners as empty receptacles or depositaries which are filled by teachers, the depositor. The knowledge from the teacher is received, memorized and repeated by the learner which becomes the knowledge, thus transmitted. History, for example, in such settings is taught as facts, rather presented as immutable truths, and moreover, mnemonic regurgitation of the same facts by learners does not encourage in-depth contextual understanding (Kincheloe 1993, as quoted in Hyslop-Margison & Dale, 2010). In other words, information presented as facts does not encourage discussion or engage a learner to understand the content through thinking. According to Hyslop-Margison and Dale (2010), learners passively adapt and conform to existing social structures under someone else’s direction. Inevitably, such learning contexts mould students into the patterns prescribed by the society, and a prevailing socioeconomic structure is promoted “by providing a minimally skilled workforce and by ensuring the existence of a minimally literate class guaranteed to maintain class divisions” (p.134). A
passive compliance infused through instrumental education does not indicate that learners-the future citizens are able to master, control, or lead the direction of the society (Lankshear, 1993 quoted in Hyslop-Margison & Dale, 2010). To sum up in Dewey’s words, a traditional pedagogical approach does not pay attention to the “powers and purposes of those taught” (Dewey, 2000, p.45).

Traditional pedagogical contexts provide little room for dialogue which would be advantageous in building mutual trust between a teacher and a learner, hence better learning. Freire believed that the traditional pedagogical approach impedes the existential development and agency of learners (Freire as quoted in Hyslop-Margison & Dale, 2010); the teacher does all the telling which alienates a learner from the context of learning of which he/she should be the core. Learners in such instrumental learning milieus are treated as objects of functional literacy rather than subjects, who could speak, reason through dialogue. According to Kim (2005), traditional teaching devalues learners’ independent thought process. When asking learners questions, “most teachers seek not to enable them to think through intricate issues, but to discover whether student knows the ‘right’ answer” (p.2).

Uibu et al., (2011) report that traditional teaching is the preferred method of teaching in primary classrooms in Estonia where teachers focus more on academic development. Direct instruction and rote learning enhance students’ cognitive performance and academic achievement in addition to having a positive impact on students’ language competences and mathematics skills. In Estonia primary teachers use rote practices: memorization, recalling and drilling for achieving good results. Teachers may otherwise prefer direct teaching methods to overcome the overload of curriculum and ensure fast implementation of the curriculum.
Traditional models of teaching and learning that are often associated with didactic teaching practices include: direct instruction, lectures, presentation of the material, drill and practice, and whole class instructional approaches. Below, I provide a brief overview of direct instruction and rote learning.

**Direct instruction**

Direct Instruction or Explicit Teaching (Rosenshine, 1979, 1986) is a teaching approach that allows learners to learn content when teachers provide explicit or direct information (Larson & Keiper, 2011). Direct instruction or didactics is also referred to as active teaching by Good (1983a) and is a simple method that involves teacher explanation, demonstration and interaction with students (Woolfolk et al., 2006). Teacher-centered direct instruction is most appropriate for teaching basic skills such as mathematical computation, science facts, reading, grammar and vocabulary rules (Rosenshine & Stevens 1986 as quoted in Woolfolk et al., 2006).

Chall (2000), after analyzing results of many years of educational research at different times, has established that direct instruction is a helpful mode of instruction for students with learning disabilities and for struggling or at risk learners at all social levels. Also, direct instruction as a traditional pedagogy produced higher achievement among students as compared to progressive pedagogy (Hollingworth & Ybarra, 2008). Furthermore, direct instruction allows learners to connect ideas together for appropriate understanding (Anderson 1989 b in Woolfolk et al., 2006). A strong criticism of direct instruction is the passivity that it renders to the learner as a result of teacher doing most of the talking, presenting information and doing much of the cognitive work for the students (Woolfolk et al., 2006).
Rote Learning

Rote learning includes repeating, recalling, memorization and copying facts into the exercise books (den Brok et al. 2004; O’Sullivan 2006; see Perry, Donohue, and Weinstein 2007 as quoted in Uibu et al., 2011). Though rote learning is effective for learning such things as foreign vocabulary, periodic table, lines in a play or speech (Blakemore & Frith, 2005); it is less helpful in encouraging deeper processing, organizing and integrating of information. Rote learning is good for retention, but poor for transfer (Good, 2008, p172). Rote memorization creates static, passive knowledge as learners memorize actual words without actually understanding the context. “Howard Gardiner has been a strong critic of rote memorization” as it does not bring understanding and obviously students cannot apply memorized knowledge to new situations (Woolfolk et al., 2006, p. 262).

3.3 Progressive student-centered pedagogy

The onset of modernization transformed Western society’s outlook about pedagogy in general by recognizing the importance of the learner in the learning process. In other words, the birth of progressive education [and progressive pedagogy], or student-centered pedagogy, was a consequence of discontentment toward traditional education mostly because of the passive role that it imparted upon the learner (Dewey, 1938).

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PEDAGOGY

\[ \text{TEACHER} \quad \longrightarrow \quad \text{LEARNER} \]

Student centered or progressive education that places a child [learner] at the center of learning builds on the earlier works of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Dewey and Kilpatrick.
The substantive theoretical grounding in the earlier part of the twentieth century of what was
called child-centered [or learner or student-centered] and now known as ‘constructivist
learning’ is largely attributed to the works of, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygostky, F.C. Bartlett,
Jerome Bruner, the Gestalt Psychologists as well as the educational philosophy of John
Dewey and Paulo Freire (Woolfolk et al., 2006; Bowers, 2007). Constructivist-informed
approach to pedagogy can be distinguished from traditional approach by its emphasis on
actively engaging the learner in the learning process. ‘Constructivism’ emphasizes the *active
role of the learner* in the construction of knowledge through either individual or social
learning activities. Children [learners] actively construct the world through natural processes
of play and discovery learning is taken to the lengths of evoking the notion of the child as a
‘lone scientist’ (Watkins & Mortimore, 1999). Active-learning, student-centered pedagogies
according to Ginsburg (2006) have been endorsed by researchers and policy makers around
the world.

Constructivism encompasses a wide range of theoretical approaches to learning.
Constructivist pedagogy generally employs cognitive-constructivist or social-constructivist
perspectives. Cognitive-constructivism, which initially evolved from Piaget’s work,
conceptualizes learning as a constructive process. “Piaget’s fundamental insight was that
learners [individuals] construct their own understanding” (Woolfolk et al. 2006, p.38) based
on an “individual’s experience and prior knowledge” (Lowenthal, & Muth, 2009, p.178). The
cognitive view stresses that active learners initiate experiences, seek information to solve
problems, and reorganize what they already know to build new insight and make decisions
(Woolfolk et al., 2006). Uibu, K. et al, (2011), mention that cognitive-constructivist
approaches to pedagogy involve active knowledge building, meaning making, deep
understanding, critical thinking, and simulation of questioning. During knowledge building each individual in Piaget words has to be an agent of their learning process.

Social-constructivist theory, as it is generally known, has been greatly influenced by the work of Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky who emphasized the role of language, culture and social interactions on cognitive development. Constructivism as an approach to pedagogy, focuses directly on the learner and is based on the assumption that learning involves “negotiating understanding through dialogue or discourses shared by two or more members of the community of people who are pursuing shared goals” (Brophy, 2002, p.1). Learning occurs through the construction of meaning in social interactions within cultures, and through language (Lowenthal & Muth, 2009). Vygotsky underscored the importance of interactions between children and adults or experienced peers (Jarvis, 2005, p.28). In Vygotsky’s view, conversation and interactions take place between members in a cultural setting allowing them to share their thinking with adults or more able peers – parents and teachers. During interactions language serves as an essential tool “for expressing ideas and asking questions, the categories and concepts for thinking, and the links between past and future” (Das, 1995 as quoted in Woolfolk et al. 2006, p.45). Language primarily serves as a tool for communication and later as a psychological tool of higher mental functions of thinking, reasoning and problem solving. A child [learner], according to the social constructivist standpoint is an active agent who first co-constructs the ideas with adults during shared activities [interactions] and later internalizes the co-created ideas by constructing his/her own meaning, representations and understanding (Woolfolk et al., 2006).

Constructivist classroom contexts make use of scaffolding to support shared learning activities, for example, assisted learning or guided participation. ‘Scaffolding’, described by Jerome Brunner (1976) means adult assistance, or support that adults provide children to
understand a concept exactly or accurately and later children are able to work on their own. For example, providing prompts or clues, reminders, right encouragement at right time, or breaking the problem into steps at the beginning and eventually allowing the students to solve the problems on their own (as quoted in Woolfolk et al., 2006). Cazden (1983) describes ‘vertical scaffolding’ as adults asking children questions during reading to provide more information which helps with language development as it extends their understanding (as quoted in Andrews 2007 ). Direct observation of scaffolding used by a teacher during whole class discussion includes cueing the learners to “listen for”, “think about”, “listen to the story and be ready to share” and helping the struggling learners to respond by helping them to express their responses (Brophy, 2006, p 7). Gallagher (1999, as quoted in Kincheloe & Horn, 2007) mentions successful scaffolding results in change in learner’s mastery which means increased performance on a particular task.

Vygotsky laid the foundations for teaching as ‘assisted performance’ (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991 as quoted in Watkins & Mortimore, 1999; Turner Bissett, 2001) where teachers or more able peers assist learners in the ‘Zone of Proximal Development – ZPD’. Zone of Proximal Development is the catch phrase used in Vygotskyian constructivist view which means an area where a child [learner] cannot solve a problem alone or unaided, but can be successful under adult guidance or in collaboration with more advanced or capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Learners derive maximum benefit when assistance is provided firmly within the ZPD (Siraj-Blatchford, 1999). Shared or joint activities create context for interaction between learners and adults or more able peers. During interactions the more advanced partner helps the learner use the existing ability to achieve a desired higher level of competence (Gauvain, 2005). Shared problem solving, Vygotsky believed, also brings about cognitive development. According to Wells (2002), participants in a joint activity of any
scope and complexity nearly always differ in their knowledgeable skills so they can assist as well as learn from each other when doing different tasks. “Sharing task responsibility for thinking about and carrying out a cognitive activity as research has shown (Gauvain & Rogoff, 1989) brings more learning as it encourages joint understanding and inter-subjectivity (Rommetveit, 1985) allowing learners to understand the cognitive problem from someone else’s perspective” (Gauvain, 2005, p.28).

Social constructivist approaches to teaching have been applied to a broad range of subjects. According to Brophy (2002), many authors synthesized the best practices in teaching subjects like beginners reading, content area reading and literature studies, writing, number, geometry, biology, physics, chemistry, earth science, history, physical geography, cultural studies, citizenship education, and economics. They cited learning as meaningful and accessible for use when it was socially negotiated in the learning communities of the classroom. Studies conducted by Kim (2005) on 76 grade six students have concluded that constructivist teaching is more effective in terms of the academic achievement of students. Also, studies conducted by Armburster et al., (2008) after redesigning undergraduate introductory biology for majors and non majors students between 2006-2008, indicate student [learner]-centered pedagogy and interactive learning activities increase student performance which are consistent with earlier studies conducted by Ebert-May et al., 1997; Udovice et al., 2002; Knight and Wood, 2005; Freeman et al., 2007 and Walker et al., 2008.

**Role of the teacher**

Teachers who teach using a constructivist-informed approach to pedagogy are often described as facilitators, guide on the side (Gagnon and Collay, 2006), co-constructors of knowledge, friends, discussion leaders, model, coach (Wells, 2002) and monitor of groups. In the following sections, I explore these roles further.
**Teacher as facilitator:** As a facilitator, the role of the teacher is to involve learners in problem solving situations (discovery, experimentation, problem solving or role play) to enhance collaboration and promote social and cognitive development (Nuthall 2002; Ota, Berdondini, & Kutnick 2007 as quoted in Uibu, et al., 2011). Watkins and Mortimore (1999) suggest that the teacher as a facilitator does not only mean a non-directive teaching style, but stresses the importance of a range of teaching approaches that address particular learning goals and the specific needs and wants of different learners in particular contexts. They further suggest that facilitators need to be able to: promote autonomous learning by encouraging the learners to define their own goals and purposes, help learners to understand how they learn best and use this knowledge to make their learning as effective as possible, create an environment in which the views of all learners are valued and explored, enhance self-esteem and challenge learners’ own views, and more broadly, promote the concept of critical reflection within a supportive environment. Teachers provide a variety of resources and supports for the learners (Feldman & Mcphee, 2008). Constructivist teachers “assist, monitor and guide students in knowledge building as well as in expanding their independence and social competencies” (Uibu et al. 2011, p.93). In addition, “teachers encourage students to interact with one another, promote students interests and initiatives in order to find meaningful links between academic learning and real life situations” (Nuthall, 2002 as quoted in Uibu et al. 2011, p 93).

**Teacher as discussion leader:** As discussion leaders, teachers pose questions, seek clarification, promote dialogue, and help groups recognize areas of consensus or disagreement (Brophy, 2002). Teachers encourage free discussion through generation of new ideas and inviting students’ questions and answers (Kim, 2005) or testing their own thoughts or their peers’ ideas. In other cases, teachers facilitate learners in generating ideas about a
topic prior to presenting new information. Highly facilitative teachers make use of dialogue for discussion. Teachers using constructivist informed pedagogy encourage learners to engage into a range of different dialogues with them and with other learners, (Brookes and Brookes, 1993 quoted in Pitchard & Woollard, 2010). “Teachers pose open ended questions that offer learners of varying abilities a point of entry into the topic to be learned. More sophisticated students can opt for complex responses and less sophisticated students can work at different levels, for example, students with limited reading abilities can only draw the representation of the answer or describe their ideas in a story”(Gagnon and Collay, 2006, p. 41).

Teacher as model: Teachers establish a positive learning environment and exhibit a respectful behaviour. They are spontaneous and expressive, and above all, consider students’ feelings and praise them often (Feldman & Mcphee, 2008). They create a respectful environment for discussion by encouraging the learners to respect each other’s ideas/inputs and use other’s ideas after analysis and reflection.

Teacher as co-construct of knowledge: Teachers, to a certain extent, leave their expert roles and share authority with the learners. Wells (2002), in association with other teacher researchers at OISE/ University of Toronto, recognized teaching and learning as an enterprise of inquiry that is dialogically co-constructed by the teachers and the students together. The key components, according to Wells, are: creating communities characterized by inclusiveness equity and caring; prioritizing knowledge building and understanding through inquiry; encouraging collaboration between students and teachers and among students; involving the whole person in the activity (mind and body, feelings, values and rational thinking); and valuing student contributions to the activity in progress so that knowledge is constructed and not delivered unilaterally. A specific example of knowledge
construction as explained by Brophy (2002) includes the use of real and personal examples by the teacher “to articulate and illustrate major understandings in ways that legitimize students’ feelings and encourage them to share their insights” (p.10). Additionally, student-teacher interactions exemplify the effort by the teacher to involve learners in metacognitive self-talk to help students reflect on how they know what they know or the implication the learning has on each one of them.

Role of the learner

“Learning does not simply occur by transmitting information from the teacher to the child’s brain. Instead, each child constructs his or her own meaning by combining prior information with new information, such that the new knowledge provides personal meaning to the child” (Cobern, 1993 as quoted in Martin et al., p.12). Since its inception, a constructivist-informed approach to pedagogy has profoundly elevated the status of a learner as one who is actively involved in the construction of knowledge in any learning situation. Active involvement of the learner should encompass both physical manipulation and mental manipulation of ideas (Woolfolk et al., 2006). An active learner may have a multiplicity of roles such as being:

1. An active participant who is consciously engaged in the learning process and regularly interacts with the teacher as well as other learners in the social construct of the classroom;
2. An active thinker who thinks individually to derive meaning for self and collaboratively to construct social meaning with others, and also one who thinks critically about his/her learning. Bruner (1996) sees children as thinkers, who are able to reason and make sense on their own and through communication with others. They even exhibit metacognitive traits, that is, thinking about their own thinking, and correcting their thought process through reflection (Gipps & MacGilchrist, 1999);
3. An active challenger who asks questions, challenges others’ ideas, responds to others’ questions through well thought out answers;

4. An active communicator, who confidently communicates with others and effectively enters into a dialogue with teacher and peers, creates meaning by way of interactions with others;

5. An active problem solver who launches inquiry when presented with realistic/authentic problems to find solutions; and

6. Active initiators who negotiate, challenge, reason, justify and provide feedback to other ideas (during collective discussions presented by other members of the learning community) (Kumpulainen & Lipponen, 2010).

Active learning/ Transaction of knowledge

Transaction is interaction between two or more people and transactional education is a curricular process in which students use dialogue and interactions to reconstruct knowledge (Niyozov, 2008). “Transaction involves active learning”, where learners can choose the activity they want to learn (Kirkland et al., 2007, p. 137). Transactional teaching involves the integration of the pupil’s concerns and interests with teachers’ pedagogical goals (Cooper & McInntyre, 1996 as cited in Turner-Bisset, 2001). Allen and Tanner (2005) define active learning as “seeking new information, organizing it in a way that is meaningful, and having a chance to explain it to others” (Ambruster et al., 2009, p. 1). When students are placed at the center of instruction, it promotes a learning environment that is more acquiescent to metacognitive development necessary for the learners to become independent and critical thinkers.

Student [learner]-centered approaches seek to provide and promote the most productive, enriching, and supportive environment for learning (Feldman & Mcphee, 2008). Five specific teaching approaches that place the learner at the centre of learning and reflect
transactional active learning are: Inquiry learning; Problem-based learning, Cooperative Learning, Dialogue and Instructional Conversations; and Cognitive Apprenticeship.

**Inquiry learning**

In Dewey’s view inquiry is a central aspect of constructivism. Curiosity leads to inquiry; Dewey described the inquiry learning format in 1910 (Woolfolk et al., 2006), and J. Richard Schuman formalized inquiry by suggesting the following model (Feldman & Mcphee, 2008, p. 329):

- Teacher presents a situation
- Students work in groups, gather information, identify variables, hypothesize and test relationships, organize data, and propose improvements

According to Wells (2002), inquiry is a stance towards experience and information-a willingness to wonder, ask questions and an attempt to answer questions through various means and to present findings to one’s peers for critical review and improvement. Further, the aim of inquiry is to foster each student with life-long disposition of agentive action and collaborate with others in seeking understanding for an effective and responsible action.

**Problem-based learning**

Dewey developed the idea that problem solving should be an integral part of the student [learner]-centered curriculum. The teacher presents real problems to students and the students launch an inquiry to solve the problem. Cooperation and discovery problems can be generated by students to ensure relevance and purpose, and problem solving can develop social skills and thinking skills (Mulcahy 2007). Feldman and Mcphee (2008), suggest the need for teachers to teach questioning skills to students using Bloom’s taxonomy of questioning and thinking that include, knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis,
synthesis and evaluation; convergent and divergent questions that permit a range of acceptable responses or open questions that push learners to delve deeply into the topic.

**Cooperative learning**

Cooperative learning which traces its roots back over 100 years has been frequently used in classrooms since 1970 to support constructivist-informed pedagogy (Slavin 1994, 1995, as quoted in Jacobs et al., 2002). Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1993, quoted in Jacobs et al. 2002) define cooperative learning as the instructional use of small groups so that the students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning. Jacobs et al., (2002) define cooperative learning as principles and techniques for helping students work together more effectively, while Bartlett (2006) defines the purpose of cooperative learning is to ensure that individuals within the group take responsibility for their own learning and for other learners within the group. Cooperative learning increases academic success and satisfaction of the students as a result of positive student-student interactions or student-instructor interactions (Astin, 1993; Qin, Johnson & Johnson, 1995 as quoted in Bartlett, 2006). According to Woolfolk et al. (2006), cooperative learning symbolizes the constructivist viewpoint in multiple ways: group discussions allow participants to rehearse, elaborate and expand their knowledge, thus conforming to information processing theorists’ views. Piaget’s constructivist approach finds benefits of group interactions in creating disequilibrium and cognitive conflict which lead’ a learner to question his/her understanding and suggest new ideas. Vygotsky’s outlook of cooperative learning values the importance of social interactions within groups. Social interactions during cooperative learning provide social support, and scaffolding for learning gives rise to higher mental functions, for example, reasoning, comprehension and critical thinking which first originate during group discussions and are later internalized by learners.
According to Johnson and Johnson (1999) there are five fundamental elements that define a true cooperative group (Woolfolk et al., 2006, p. 335):

1. face-to-face interaction
2. positive interdependence
3. individual accountability
4. collaboration skills
5. group processing

During face-to-face interactions, learners in cooperative learning groups rely on positive interdependence of all group members; that is, shared goals link group members (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). Each member of the group is individually responsible for his/her share of the group work and needs to know the material. Group members monitor the group progress as well as the relationships between the group members to ensure effective working of the group (Woolfolk et al., 2006). Cooperation and collaboration are two vital elements for highly effective groups and are symbiotic in the sense that “without cooperation there is no collaboration; collaboration fosters cooperation. Cooperation is a positive relationship between pupils that is characterized by support and helpfulness” (Pritchard & Woollard, 2010, pp. 26-27), while collaboration is the process whereby individuals not only work together, but are involved in “sharing, discussion, argument, reflection and often negotiation” (Richey et al., 2011, p.134).

Pritchard and Woollard (2010), describe physical and cognitive aspects of cooperative activity. The cognitive aspects imply learners help each other to learn by doing (skill), showing (skill), telling (knowledge), and explaining (understanding). Loaning, giving, hiring and taking turns comprise physical sharing activities. Results of recent literature survey by Roseth et al., (2008 as quoted in Pritchard & Woollard) on academic and social impacts of interactive classroom practices indicate evidence of few empirical studies. The
results, however, suggest that young adolescents involved in cooperative learning show positive peer relationships and higher academic achievement. Group work provides open and relaxed settings for the learners, allowing them to learn from each other and encouraging them to think. Group work offers inclusive arrangement by grouping low and high level learners together to accomplish a learning goal (ibid.). Cooperation and collaboration in small group settings also impacts learners’ self-confidence because of the fact that each learner’s experience and knowledge is considered valuable in constructing new knowledge (Coultas, 2007).

Cooperative learning structures such as Student Team Learning Methods are based on the concept of individual accountability, team rewards and equal opportunities to the learners. Student Team Achievement Divisions (STAD), Teams Games Tournaments (TGT), and Jigsaw II are used for different subject levels across multiple grade levels. Cooperative Integrated Reading Composition (CIRC) is used for reading, writing and instruction (grades 2-8) and Team Accelerated Instruction (TAI) for mathematics (grades 3-5). Other cooperative learning activities that actively engage a learner are: Jigsaw I & II; Learning Together; Constructive Controversy, Peer Tutoring, Reciprocal Peer tutoring, Reciprocal Questioning, Scripted Cooperation, and Group Investigations, all of which emphasize interaction, investigation, and synthesis of information (interpretation) (Zingaro, 2008).

**Dialogue and Instructional Conversations**

Dialogue means conversation between two or more people. Littleton and Howe (2010) describe that dialogue is a highly inclusive concept encompassing all exchanges where one individual addresses another and the second replies. Within a classroom context, the nature and quality of the classroom talk becomes educational dialogue and when analysed through Freire’s standpoint it empowers a learner with a voice, and thus becomes a medium
of transformation. From a constructivist standpoint, dialogue in the form of ‘classroom talk’ is vital for interactions that allow a teacher-learner or learner-learner to negotiate understanding and construct meaning during the process of learning. Peer dialogue involves the exchange of differing opinions in the service of joint goals (Howe, 2010). Studies on peer dialogue conducted on students 10-12 years old learning about evaporation and condensation and force and motion through group work concluded that peer dialogue can promote cognitive growth. Interactions during peer dialogue are valuable as children express contrasting opinions in pursuit of joint goals. (Littleton & Howe, 2010)

Dialogic inquiry as a potential pedagogical approach for classroom interaction fits in the constructivist milieu as it promotes learner agency and active participation employing learners’ “funds of knowledge” (Kumpulainen & Lipponen, 2010, p.48). A dialogic inquiry approach as a medium for ‘participatory pedagogy’ in a contemporary classroom emphasizes students’ communication and collaboration skills and calls for genuine student engagement in productive interactions. Participation through classroom interactions becomes “a socially constructed phenomenon with each member of a classroom community having a participatory role. Participatory roles are obvious during interactions and the actions that each member takes, what each is accountable for, how each member is engaged in the interactions and above all how each member responds, interprets and constructs meaning from the ongoing interactions” (Kumpulainen & Lipponen, 2010, p.50). Alexander (2006) refers these pedagogical practices as “collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful” (quoted in Littleton & Howe, 2010, p.49). According to Littleton and Mercer (2007), an essential component of dialogic inquiry in a classroom is that members build openly and freely on each other’s knowledge and experiences, and in so doing they further their collective thinking about the topic or issue in question. Dialogic inquiry is connected to
Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory; that knowledge is constructed as a result of meaningful interactions between members of a community [classroom in this context]. “The local, moment-by-moment classroom interactions thus signal what counts as learning, participating and communicating” (Kumpulainen & Lipponen, 2010, p.51).

Empirical studies conducted on 13 grade three Finnish students in Helsinki, with emphasis on social interaction and discourse as tools for learning and thinking, have highlighted the ways in which learners’ agency is manifested in classroom interactions. The preliminary study observation by Wells (1999) had students working as a community of dialogic inquirers in academic tasks that comprised mostly of collective discussions and small group activities. Using the socio-cultural approach of thinking together in the classroom situation provided students with greater opportunities to communicate, collaborate and learn. During collective exploration of a statement that had been brought to focus by one of the learners, the role of learners was that of active agents in the classroom discussion who are “mutually accountable for constructing shared knowledge” (Boaler & Greeno, 2000 as quoted in Kumpulainen & Lipponen, 2010, p.53). In this event of active engagement, students flexibly interchange their positions as teachers and learners, “helping and guiding one another when needed, using each others’ support” (ibid., p.55) and collaborating in their zones of proximal development. Teachers in such locales negotiate their authority as they retreat from their expert roles and share authority with the learners.

Classroom practices that allow learners to engage in dialogue and communications using a relational approach were studied by Kutnick and Colwell (2010) in quasi-experimental design focused on children 5 to 7 years of age. Relational approaches focus on the importance of positive relationships, facilitation of social interaction for productive dialogue and cognitive development, and also explore how positive relationships promote
dialogue. The findings of the studies that indicate development of a relational approach among learners using group work allowed for higher co-regulated communication through mutually supported dialogue, greater academic and cognitive development and also increased focus on the tasks. In addition, Kutnick and Colwell (2010) point out that group work helped the learners to establish new social and academic alliances. An increased opportunity to learn from each other enabled them to be self-reliant, requiring less teacher guidance and more importantly the learners were able to relinquish their inhibitions like shyness and become more assertive. Quiet learners who would not otherwise talk in whole class instruction spoke in smaller group situations.

Instructional Conversation (IC), a term coined by Roland Tharp and Ronald Gallimore in 1988, is an approach of constructivist learning that includes joint activities where teachers, mentors or parents assist learners of all ages through action and talk to those aspects of the activity that they cannot yet manage alone (Wells & Haneda, 2005). This approach makes use of Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development where students need to approach problems in their ZPD and teachers or other learners provide scaffolding through interactions and conversations (Woolfolk et al., 2006). To promote learning, instructional conversations make use of instruction while conversations make use of the dialogue about shared experiences; “instructional conversations pertain to guiding learners to increased sophisticated levels of understanding by encouraging expression of students’ ideas and by building upon the information students provide regarding experiences they have had” (Goldenberg, 1991; Gallimore, 1988 as quoted in Lundy, 2008, p. 41). A result of the naturalistic studies examined by Many (2002) describes that instructional conversations between teachers and learners or between learners occur as scaffolding while learners construct meaning from the texts. Although instructional conversations should provide ample
time and support for rich discussion, the finding suggests that instructional conversations
function in diverse ways and support learning within the learner’s zone of proximal
development (Lundy, 2008).

**Cognitive Apprenticeship**

Cognitive Apprenticeship involves a relationship between an expert and a less
experienced learner, and follows the century old history of apprentice working alongside a
master to learn skills, trades or crafts. Apprenticeships provide powerful teaching and
learning opportunities that benefit both the master as well as the apprentice (Woolfolk et al.,
2006; Pritchard & Woollard, 2010). In Cognitive Apprenticeship, the master is an expert
guide and model who prepares an apprentice (learner) through guided participation to learn
any concept, and more so teaching the apprentice to take more responsibility until he/she is
able to function independently. The master in the Cognitive Apprentice model must possess
knowledge, skills, understanding and more importantly Pedagogical Content Knowledge
(PCK) to coach, tutor, and scaffold the apprentice through modelling, feedback, hints and
reminders. The apprentice, on the other hand, must first observe, enact and practice
knowledge, and skills, with the master’s help. For learners an important aspect of the
Cognitive Apprenticeship model is to articulate, reflect and explore the learned material in
order to become independent (Woolfolk et al., 2006; Pritchard & Woollard, 2010). During
any apprenticeship learning event, a learner appropriates the knowledge, skills and values
over time (Rogoff, 1995, 1998 as quoted in Woolfolk et al., 2006). Apprenticeship situations
make use of language and modelling: language serves as an effective tool of expression and
modelling provides learners a means of copying or adapting the actions of the master
(Pritchard & Woollard, 2010). Cognitive Apprenticeship inside the classroom focuses on
cognitive skills and can be applied to teaching reading comprehension, writing, and
mathematical problem solving. Woolfolk et al., 2006 describe that Schoenfeld’s (1989, 1994) mathematical problem solving uses Cognitive Apprenticeship processes such as planning, implementation, verifying, and altering the behaviour based on the validity of their solutions. Additionally, masters make repeated use of what, why and how questions to guide the apprentice’s thinking, hone their metacognitive awareness and help them in regulating their behaviour.

3.4 Critical Pedagogy

Critical Pedagogy is often attributed to Brazilian critical educator, Paulo Freire. His perspective on education is rooted in a concern for human beings, the central tenet being empowerment of the underprivileged through education. Critical pedagogy is known to educators around the world since the publication of Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed in 1967 and its subsequent translation in 1970 (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). McLaren (2000) defines critical pedagogy as “a way of thinking about, negotiating and, transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school and the social material relations of the wider community, society and nation-state” (Monchinski, 2008, p.2). According to Kincheloe (2008), “critical pedagogy is a perspective towards education that is concerned with questions of justice, democracy, and ethical claims” (p.7).

Critical pedagogy in its humanistic approach to education challenges the reproductive role of schools and considers schools as the sites of social and economic mobility (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Critical pedagogy deems that modern schooling upholds and reproduces the ideas of the dominant capitalist class. Schools pass onto individuals “a system of values, attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and morality that supports or reproduces the
established social order and the class interests that dominate it” (Braa & Callero, 2006, p.358). Processes that can contribute to this reproduction within the classroom include:

1. The use of a hidden curriculum in classrooms that conditions the students to conform to the hierarchical structures of power (Apple, 1990 as quoted in Braa & Callero, 2006);

2. In authoritarian classrooms the students are conditioned to develop into passive and obedient members of society who can be ‘easily manipulated workers and passive apathetic citizens’ (Shor 1992, as quoted in Braa & Callero, 2006, p.3); and

3. Schools promote existing social order by excluding certain forms of knowledge that might include asking critical questions regarding inequality, oppression, exploitation, imperialism, class struggle or labour movement (Apple 1990, as quoted in Braa & Callero, 2006).

In addition to challenging the reproductive role of education, critical pedagogy emphasizes the emancipatory potential of education by facilitating social change through counter hegemony that serves to oppose ideas and values of the dominant class. Important concepts of critical pedagogy are discussed as follows:

**Problem-posing education**

Critical pedagogy, referred to as problem-posing education by Freire, responds to the “essence of consciousness” of women and men as conscious beings (Freire, 2000). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) mention that, contrary to the banking model of education, Freire considers critical pedagogy as problem-posing education which allows individuals to think critically about their place in the world. They come to understand the world as something which is not rigid but transforming. Furthermore, problem-posing education is education for freedom where teachers work in partnership with students and both share knowledge, and the teacher is ready to accept solutions from the students. Critical pedagogy deals with the concept of ‘praxis’ that involves action and reflection (Monchinski, 2008; Duncan-Andrade
It involves thinking before an action and reflection after an action on part of students and teachers, alike. The ‘action-reflection’ cycle includes five steps:

- “Identify a problem
- Analyze the problem
- Create a plan of action
- Implement the plan of action
- Analyze and evaluate action” (p.25)

In this process, students in the role of social agents understand the problems facing them and their communities; they come up with solutions and implement them. Through reflection they revisit their plan of action, revise and re-implement it to reach a full solution (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Empowering education

One of the contemporary developers of critical pedagogy, Ira Shor (1992), describes “empowering education” as a critical democratic pedagogy for self and social change that is built upon reciprocal relationship between a teacher and a student. Empowering education believes that the self and society create each other; it promotes personal growth as “an active, cooperative and social process” and relates this personal growth to public life by “developing strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry, critical curiosity about society, power, inequality and change” (Shor as quoted in Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p.29).

Empowering education overtly condemns traditional education in that students are powerless and education develops them as powerless adults; it does not measure cognitive skills and the teachers and students feel disengaged from the curriculum.
Critical literacy

Critical literacy lies at the heart of Freire’s vision for effective pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Beck (2005) mentions critical literacy as “an attitude towards texts and discourses that questions the social, political and economic conditions under which those texts were constructed” (p.2); it helps in meaning making of different sources of information, for example, multimedia, complex visual imagery, music, sounds, or the virtual worlds. According to Beck (2005) the goal of critical literacy is development of responsible citizens who are able to confront social inequalities and take action against injustices. Critical literacy means “using language in all forms to solve problems, engage in complex thinking, and to communicate” (Kinnucan-Welsch, 2010, p. 239). Using critical literacy as an interpretation of a text, an individual constructs and deconstructs meanings from multiple perspectives. Use of critical literacy in classrooms includes the skillful use of questioning, choice of texts and creating space for students to explore an emancipatory stance in relation to the text. Within the critical literacy context, students achieve true literacy not by decoding texts or absorbing facts and information, but by critically thinking about what they are learning and applying it to their lives (Provenzo, 2009). Critical literacy involves a democratic and dialogic process where students’ voices and dialogues serve as the main tools with which students reflect on and construct meaning from different texts and discourses. During social interactions individuals use dialogue as an important tool to interpret meanings from different sources. Meaning making during dialogue raises critical awareness and allows students to think critically and take action (Beck, 2005; Provenzo, 2009).

Critical thinking

Critical thinking as stated by Paulo Freire in Pedagogy of the Oppressed is a thinking that recognizes an enduring harmony between the people and the world without any
dichotomy. According to Freire (2000), it is a thinking which considers reality as a process or transformation, but not a fixed entity. Critical thinking does not separate itself from action as it accepts temporality without the fear of any risk. Such thinking is based in the existence of dialogue, and Freire believes a true dialogue cannot exist without critical thinking. Dialogue is communication and if there is no communication, then there can be “no true education” (p.93).

Moon (2008) calls critical thinking an aspect of the activity of thinking, and defines it as, “a form of learning in that it is a means of generating new knowledge by processing existing knowledge and ideas using what we have called the tools of manipulation of knowledge” (p.33). These tools for the manipulation of knowledge include: critical analysis, understanding, synthesis, reflection, evaluation, appraisal, review, appreciation, management, awareness and care. The representations of critical thinking include:

“Oral: debate, discussion and other oral representations

Written: critical reports, reviews, critique, satire, essays, metaphors

Graphic: cartoon, pastiche, sketch” (Moon, 2008, p.30)

Deep critical thinking involves analytical thinking; it is not surface-description of issues. It “relies on an understanding of knowledge as constructed and related in its context”. In addition, in-depth critical thinking is directly related to the “level of epistemological development of the thinker” (ibid, p.126).

The descriptions presented in this chapter explored what pedagogy is and some meanings attributed to the term. It also examined three major pedagogical approaches: the traditional teacher-centered, the progressive student-centered and the critical pedagogy that devise theoretical and conceptual framework for this study. The elaboration of different pedagogical approaches differentiated their transmission, transactional and transformation
characteristics and also described specific teaching methods generally employed by the teachers to support each approach. Furthermore, the conceptual framework identifies the position of teacher in relation to the learner in the three pedagogical constructs described above. For this research study, the theoretical and conceptual framework of major pedagogical approaches discussed guides the development of research questions, and data analysis about the nature of pedagogy in the elementary classrooms in Kashmir, India.
Chapter 4  
Research methodology

This chapter about research methodology discusses qualitative research process and the design that was utilized for this study. The introductory paragraphs discuss the aims, the research questions and the justification of my research orientation, that is, the qualitative research method. In the data collection methods section, three methods, namely observation, interviews, and review of documents that were utilized for this study, are elaborated. The data analysis and interpretation section of this chapter discusses organizing multiple data systematically into manageable units, coding the data using coding categories, synthesizing themes and interpreting meaning of the themes. In addition, this chapter highlights reliability and validity procedures pertinent to this research study, and ethical considerations and limitations of the research orientation. The last two sections of this chapter emphasize my role as a researcher and my perceptions of the research topic.

4.1 Aims and rationale

The aim of this research study was to examine the nature of pedagogy and how teachers’ pedagogical practices are shifting in elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir with reference to the National Curriculum Framework that was introduced in 2005. The NCF recognized that learning had become a source of stress and burden on children and parents, which was affecting the quality of learning, therefore, a paradigm shift suggested in the National Curriculum Framework document (2005) and many other Government of India (GOI) documents mandated shifting out-of-date pedagogy from traditional teacher-centered to student-centered constructivist pedagogical approaches. For this reason, an examination of
current classroom practices in elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir was essential to understand the specifics of pedagogy and its shifting nature. Furthermore, qualitative research data concerning educational issues in Srinagar, Kashmir is scarce because the available research data on education in India focuses mostly on the states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, just to name a few. Literature concerning actual portrayals of how teaching and learning actually takes place in classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir, (hereafter referred to as Srinagar) is, thus also inadequate and virtually non-existent. For this research, case studies of four elementary teachers were developed, examined and analyzed, with specific attention to their pedagogical understandings and practices, to student participation and to organizational supports or hindrances. The core research question that guided this study was:

4.2 The core research question

What is the nature of pedagogy (teaching and learning) in four elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir, and to what extent and why have these practices shifted since the introduction of the National Curriculum Framework (2005)?

Subsidiary research questions included:

1. How do teachers understand classroom pedagogy and why?

2. What pedagogical practices do teachers use to teach in their elementary classrooms and why?

3. How and why do the teachers encourage and manage student participation?

4. How and why have teachers’ understandings and practices shifted since the inception of the National Curriculum Framework (2005)?

5. What do teachers believe has helped them deliver instruction within the directives of the National Curriculum Framework (2005) and what do they believe have been hindrances?
4.3 Research orientation and its justification

For this research study I employed qualitative research methodology, the basic principle of which is “an emphasis on the quality of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured”, (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.14). Qualitative research, which evolved during the latter part of the twentieth century, is about understanding the meaning that individuals assign to social and human problems (Creswell, 2009).

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) describe five features of the qualitative research: naturalistic settings, descriptive data, concern with the process, inductivity and meaning making. The actual (natural) settings of the research site or field where participants experience a situation becomes the direct source of data and it is possible to understand the actions of participants through face-to-face interactions by actually seeing them in action and spending considerable time with them, and talking to them directly. Qualitative researchers are concerned with details and believe thick descriptions of the social world are valuable (Creswell, 2009); as such, they gather multiple sources of data, for example, field notes, photographs, interview transcripts, videotapes, photographs, memos, personal documents and other official records. In understanding the contexts, a qualitative researcher pays attention to every detail that has a potential of being a clue and might allow a researcher to gain a broad understanding of what is being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Qualitative research emphasizes the process but not the outcome. In its actual sense, a qualitative researcher is concerned with an “individual’s point of view,” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.16) how definitions or labels come into being, and how one negotiates meaning. Qualitative research is inductive. A researcher collects different types of data, examines the particulars of each data, groups them together and finally builds abstractions about the topic of the research.
Bogdan and Biklen (2007) mention that the inductive process is “like constructing a picture as one collects and examines the parts” (p.6). Qualitative research is essentially meaning making. Meaning is derived from “participant perspectives” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) as to what meanings the participants hold about a given problem. Qualitative research allows the researcher to understand the assumptions under which people function and what their “taken-for-granted” beliefs are.

Creswell (2009) mentions qualitative researchers develop holistic accounts; using multiple perspectives they identify many factors involved and evolve a complex picture of the research issue. Qualitative research may thus involve an emergent design. This might mean changing the initial research design – the research questions or the strategies may change after a researcher has entered a field and collected data. Furthermore, Creswell (2009) suggests that qualitative research is a form of interpretive inquiry, a typical approach to qualitative research.

For this research study I worked within the constructivist-interpretive paradigm, also referred to as the ‘social constructivist’ paradigm. A researcher working within the social constructivist framework focuses on interactions between individuals in the research settings, hence the name. The constructivist-interpretive paradigm assumes that in order to make sense of the world, individuals engage in meaning making of their experiences, objects and things. Social constructivists believe that there are multiple realities out there and that their meanings are co-created by individuals, for example, the researcher and the participants. Creswell (2009) mentions the goal of the researcher is to rely heavily on participants’ views of the situation being studied. During interactions the researcher engages in open-ended questioning in order to derive a greater understanding of what is being said or done in the research setting. The interpretations derived are in part shaped by the researcher’s
background: personal, cultural and historical experiences. Keegan (2009) mentions “from a social constructivist perspective we construct our world, rather than perceiving reality, by interpreting the world in terms of the past experience and the context we are in” (p. 22).

Within the constructivist-interpretive paradigm of inquiry in qualitative methodology, I hoped to be able to interpret or confirm meanings considering my own experiences within educational settings.

This study employed the ‘case study’ strategy of inquiry. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), a strategy of inquiry consists of skills, assumptions and practices that a researcher makes use of as he or she moves from the paradigm to the empirical world. A case study involves an in-depth examination of one setting, program, event or activity, one or more subjects, or a single collection of documents (Merriam 1998, Yin 1989, Stake 1994 as quoted in Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell 2009). A case study is an exploration of a “bounded system” (Merriam & Makower, 1998 as quoted in Taylor, 2005) where cases are bounded by time and activity. A researcher collects detailed information using different data collection procedures over a time period (Stake 1995 as quoted in Creswell, 2009). Case studies present details on physical settings and major participants.

4.4 The sample

This research study was conducted with four teachers in four elementary classrooms in different government-run primary schools in the city of Srinagar in Kashmir, India. Teachers were selected using the purposive sampling in order to get in-depth information. Purposive sampling, meaning ‘purposeful’ or ‘sought out’, is used in qualitative research and involves choosing people (sample) from whom most can be learned about the issues that are central to the research study (Paton 1990 as quoted in Polkinghorne, 2005). Patton (2002) describes information-rich cases are the ones from which a great deal can be learned about
the issues that are important to the purpose of the research (quoted in Glesne, 2011). Criteria for selection included similar qualifications (at least Bachelor’s degree), and had been working for a considerable amount of time period (5-10 years experience) in primary classrooms with the Department of Education.

Five teachers working in primary classrooms in the subject areas of Science, Math or English were initially selected, but one had to drop out from the study due to personal reasons that kept her away from school for many days. The four remaining teachers worked in typical three different government-run schools in Srinagar District. The participant teachers taught multiple subjects in regular and average functioning primary schools, with moderate infrastructure, one teacher per classroom, and average student and teacher attendance. The sample classrooms were grades 3, 4 and 5 of about 7-15 students in each class, aged 7-13 years. The native language of most of the students was Kashmiri, while the medium of instruction was English and/or Urdu. Besides teachers who are the main participants in this research study, I also interviewed one DIET official as it become apparent that this would provide important additional details about changing educational policies and practices.

4.5 Data collection: Methods and sources

Data were collected from 3 elementary school sites from May through June, 2012 (6 weeks), where one or two days per week were spent with each teacher, for about a minimum duration of 1-2 periods per day. The qualitative data collection methods for this research study included interviews, observations and a review of pertinent documents (curriculum documents, lesson plans, examination papers, text books or resource guides).
**Interviews**

An interview is a “purposeful conversation” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p.103) between two or more people. Frey and Fontana (2008) point out the active nature of this activity that leads to a contextually bound and mutually created story—the interview. Interviews in conjunction with participant observations allow a researcher to gather descriptive data in the participants’ own words, thereby enhancing meaning-making of the topic of study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The interview can be categorized into three types: informal or unstructured, semi-structured and formal or structured interviews. Informal interviews are casual in the sense that they help establish a rapport with the participant and provide information about the participant, for example, “the flow of everyday life, the kind of information people are willing to divulge, and the topics that are sensitive” (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 29). Semi-structured interviews are used when making comparisons and they involve identical questions to each participant. A semi-structured interview permits an interviewer some flexibility over the order and details of how topics are covered by probing for clarifications when necessary. Participants, likewise, can speak out in their own terms without adhering to any rigid interview format. Bernard and Ryan (2010) mention that semi-structured interviews generate a lot of data; for instance, Harde’ and Sullivan (2008) collected 30 hours of transcripts, about 300 pages of single-spaced, size 12 font text, when they studied motivation techniques used by teachers in rural high schools. On the contrary, structured interviews allow the interviewer to ask the same set of pre-determined questions (usually close-ended questions) of all the participants “with a limited set of response categories” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.124). However, when the questions asked are open-ended, they allow people to respond in their own words, bring forth their views and opinions and details how they function, thereby generating large amounts of data (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Creswell, 2009).
In the case of this study, informal, unstructured interviews helped me establish a rapport with the participants, as well as gave me an initial glimpse into the participants’ nature of work, the teaching conditions and students’ participation inside the classroom. Next, semi-structured interviews enabled me to generate data in an informal yet directive way (APPENDIX-C). Finally, structured interviews ensured that the participants had some direction during interviews and also allowed me to gather information regarding the specific topics I aimed to cover (topics or clarifications from the interviewee that were not elaborated upon in the preceding interviews). Each structured and semi-structured interview session was approximately one hour long.

**Observation**

Observation is a fundamental and highly important data collection method of qualitative research; it involves a variety of activities such as spending time at the research site, getting to know people, observing how people behave and interact, and recording people’s actions (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Qualitative literature makes reference to different types of observation methods, for example, direct observation (Ary et al., 2010; Bernard & Ryan, 2010), participant observation (Bogdan & Biklen 2007, Creswell 2009, Denzin & Lincoln 2008), reactive observation and unobtrusive (non-reactive) observation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Direct observation, according to Bernard and Ryan (2010), means simply sitting and watching the activities while taking detailed notes. Direct observation is a commonly used observation method to study classroom behaviour (Ary et al, 2010). The direct observation method provides a comprehensive picture of a situation, when the purpose is to determine how a particular situation is taking place. Participant observation, on the other hand, means complete involvement with the participants at a research site, establishment of a rapport with the participants and following them in their everyday activities (Bogdan &
Biklen, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Bernard and Ryan (2010) point out that participant observation means being able to immerse in a culture, learning to remove yourself from it, being able to comprehend what was said and heard and then writing convincingly about it.

For this research study, it was my aim to be open about the type of participation with the primary participant, the teacher, and make decisions after initial contact with the participant. Initially, I used direct observation as it allowed me to minimize “observer’s effects” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Ary et al. 2010). An observer effect in a qualitative data collection method is described as the change in the participant’s behaviour because of a researcher’s presence. I interacted with my subjects in a natural, cordial way to minimize the observer’s effects. Later, as I developed rapport with the participants, I engaged in some participant observation after I negotiated the appropriate amount of participation in classroom activities which was limited to helping out during the subject specific activities or conducting read aloud sessions with the students in the presence of the teacher (the participant).

**Pertinent documents**

The documents, as a primary source of data, are being increasingly used in qualitative research. Documents provide supplemental information for a case-study strategy, where interviewing and participant-observation are the main data collection techniques (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Documents can be public (official reports, memos, files, and minutes of the meeting, curriculum documents, and year-books) or personal (journals, letter, diaries, autobiographies, e-mails, photos, videotapes or compact discs). For this research study, I reviewed different Government of India (GOI) education documents available online, text books and students notebooks in an aim to add towards valuable data for this study.
4.6 Data analysis and interpretation procedure

Data analysis involves working with interview transcripts, participant observation fieldnotes and documents, and organizing them systematically into manageable units by coding them, synthesizing them and then searching for patterns. Meanwhile, data interpretation means explaining the findings of the study in relation to the literature available regarding theories or broader concepts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Creswell (2009) suggested a linear, hierarchical, bottom-to-top approach, the main features of which include: organizing and preparing raw data, reading through all the data, coding it, generating themes or descriptions from it, interrelating themes and interpreting the meaning of these themes or descriptions. Over the course of my research study, I was cognizant of these steps, specifically when analyzing and interpreting the data gathered.

Data analysis is aided by different computer software programs such as the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software, NVIVO 8.0 or Filemaker Pro (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Such computer analysis software programs enable easy coding of the same segment in multiple ways; for example, Filemaker Pro can help build a template to code the interview. For data analysis pertaining to this study, I didn't make use of computer analysis software since the themes were generated after manual coding. The research questions and the questions asked of interviewees aided in the development of coding categories, and finally, themes.

Coding procedure

The coding system is widely used to analyze data in qualitative research design. During data analysis, “the text data or pictures” (p.186) are organized into manageable chunks or segments before interpreting any meaning from it. The segments of the text or
images are separated into coding categories and then labelled using a common term based on the actual words of the participants (Creswell, 2009).

For the coding procedure regarding this research study, I first gathered all the data together and, knowing that I had multiple sources of data (observation field notes, interview transcripts, pertinent documents and pictures), I began a holistic approach to sort the data into categories. I read through observation notes, interview transcripts and pertinent documents to search for obvious topics and patterns. After reading the data, I generated a list of topics that formed the coding categories and directly aligned them with each research question. In order to mechanically sort the data, I number coded similar data that pertained to each coding category from observation field notes, and from three interview transcripts of each participant into chunks of information. The descriptive data from multiple sources was then assembled together for each coding category and categories conveying similar themes were grouped together and used to write up the response to each guiding question.

For interviews a systematic analysis is done through “transcription”, which involves listening to a recording and converting its content into a digital text file (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 49). The participant teachers for this research study did not allow recording of the interviews. Consequently, the written transcripts of the interview conversations were generated during and immediately following the interview and later coded and aligned with the categories and themes generated from other data collection methods, i.e. observations and documents.

4.7 Reliability & validity

Validity in qualitative research means reviewing for accuracy of the findings while reliability refers to checking different data sources for congruency (Creswell, 2009). Validity and reliability for this research study were safeguarded by the following strategies: First
choosing different schools and different classrooms (one from each school) provided an opportunity to include multiple participants who gave accounts or their perspectives of their teaching practices and educational experience (Polkinghorne, 2005). Second, triangulating data to establish external validity (Warren & Karner, 2010) includes the use of multiple methods or “triangulation” to help safeguard a more accurate understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.7; Creswell, 2009, p.199). The purpose of collecting data through multiple methods (for example, interviews, observations and document analysis) was to gain an in-depth understanding of the teaching and learning practices in Srinagar. Third, member-checking and peer-debriefing ensured accuracy of the data collected, Member-checking, which is also called respondent or informer validation, is a feedback from the respondent on the inquirer’s findings (Schwandt, 2007), and peer-debriefing is allowing a trusted and knowledgeable peer or another research student to serve as good listener and provide feedback about the analysis process. Fourth, using a homogeneous sampling strategy allowed me to ‘describe the experience’ in depth by gathering data from a parallel sub-group of subjects (Polkinghorne, 2005). Finally, transcripts, field notes and document analysis notes were checked for any errors or mistakes during the process of coding. In order to confirm that the data gathered was reliable, the interview transcripts generated were shared with the participants during and after the third interview.

4.8 Ethical considerations

The overarching aim of this study was to work towards understanding ways to improve the quality of education in the schools in Srinagar. More importantly, there was no intention to evaluate the teachers or judge their abilities within the context of the classroom. Furthermore, this research study was not aimed at doing any harm to any of the subjects whatsoever; the confidentiality of all subjects enrolled under this study remains anonymous.
under all circumstances. All the participants and the research sites have been identified through pseudonyms. Any information that might put the subjects in unfavourable situations, harm them physically or threaten their lives will not be revealed. Throughout the study, I was mindful of the two issues that concern research involving “human subjects” as pointed out by Bogdan and Biklen, 2008 (p.48): first, informed consent, and, second, protection of informants from harm. Ethical approval was acquired from the Ethics Department of the University of Toronto, and the Department of Education in Srinagar, Kashmir, India before proceeding to conduct research in the classroom settings.

To gain entry into the classrooms in Srinagar, for this research study I obtained permission from the Secretary to the Department of Education, Srinagar, Kashmir, and subsequently from the Director of School Education Department, Srinagar District (Appendix-B). It took me about three weeks to obtain permission to conduct research after submitting a brief research proposal that indicated the reason for choosing the sites, the type of activities that were likely to take place at the research site, whether the research activity will cause any disruption, the benefits of the study to the Department of Education, and finally, how results will be reported. A written consent (written in English) to participate in the study was made available to all the participant teachers (Appendix-A), principals, and other government officials involved. Any kind of participation was deemed voluntary and where written consent was not secured, a verbal consent was obtained. Some other ethical considerations that I was mindful of were: being clear at the very beginning about the aims of this study, being respectful to the participants of the study, and maintaining integrity.
4.9 Challenges and limitations of the research orientation

There were many challenges and limitations associated with this type of qualitative research orientation for me. I found participant observation to be very time consuming (Bogdan & Biklen 2008). To gain an in-depth understanding of my research topic, it was important for me to spend a considerable amount of time doing field work and being at the research sites for a number of months to collect rich data. Descombe (1998) talks about the time consuming nature of data analysis, and that data preparation and analysis are end-loaded; data transcribing and coding are time consuming task for a researcher even after collecting data for an extended time.

Second, I found that a number of factors hindered and interfered with my intended timeline. Glesne (2011) describes the time frame for conducting research may vary as a researcher does not know how long it will take to actually gather the data. In fact, Descombe (1998) warns “research can flounder if permission is withheld or withdrawn” (p.40). Certain factors like gaining access to the research site, introduction to the school’s teachers and unexpected events at the schools at times delayed the whole research process.

Third, I recognized that generalizability would not be possible given the small size of my sample. Qualitative research findings derived from in-depth study of one or two instances is not sufficient to generalize to other instances (Descombe, 1998).

As a qualitative researcher, I was aware of all the above limitations of this research orientation. Keeping this in mind, I understood the protocols of the Department of Education, Srinagar before proceeding with the permissions process, and I also took help from credible sources for quick approval to start the research within the intended time frame. Considering this research study, it meant spending extra time at the sites keeping in view the time lost during the period of strikes when the schools were closed, ensuring my personal
safety and at the same time making up for the time lost due to these unavoidable circumstances. It meant making unwanted visits to schools during strikes (from the research site heads and participants’ perspectives), utilizing the observation time to review documents or conduct interviews so that observation time was not compromised. In the research settings in Srinagar, Kashmir, I had to ensure that the research site also did not pose personal danger of any sort particularly when such strikes or complete shutdown were called for. Lastly, the results generated from this study pertain to the case study of three government-run schools; as such, the results may or may not draw generalizations for the whole population.

**Insider/ Outsider Role**

Dwyer & Buckle (2009) emphasize that qualitative researchers must be aware of positive and negative aspects of their insider and outsider roles with regard to the group they are studying. An insider in the research is one who is a member of the group(s) studied, shares the language, identity and experiences of the research participants of the group(s), while an outsider is a non-member. Being an insider gains a researcher quick and complete access into the group because of belonging to the same group and the participants show more openness due to their shared understanding with the researcher. However, being an insider may not be without problems because the researcher might have difficulty separating personal experiences as a past member from the participants. Further, in the dual role of an outsider and an insider, the researcher might experience role confusion given that the researcher has knowledge of the research field and the participants in a different capacity.

Being an insider is not always necessary as sometimes being a non-member may be beneficial. An outsider, one who is external to the experience, may be able to “adequately conceptualize”, see through complexity, “appreciate the wider perspective of the experience of the participants” and can overrule “the self-deception” (p.6). Insider and outsider status
may not matter (Fay, 1996 as quoted in Dwyer & Buckle 2009); what is important is the “researcher should be open, honest and authentic who is committed to adequately and accurately represent the participants’ experience” (ibid., p.6). In order to reduce problems related to membership roles, Dwyer & Buckle (2009) further suggest a researcher shows “disciplined bracketing and detailed reflection on the subjective research process, with a close awareness of one’s own personal biases and perspectives (p.6)”. Within the context of this research, I played both insider and outsider roles. Being native to the culture, I was accepted as an insider and language played an essential role when interacting with the participants involved in the research. However, I was also judged to be an outsider in certain situations when negotiating roles in the classroom or when sharing sensitive details regarding the topic of the study; as Dudu (2004) indicates “being native does not guarantee the researcher treatment as a complete insider” (p.100).

4.10 My role as a researcher

Qualitative research is innately interpretive with the researcher being the key instrument in the interpretation process. A researcher’s role is therefore fundamental as it is the researcher who is involved in “a sustained and intensive experience” (Creswell, 2009, p. 177) with the subjects. In essence, the researcher is responsible for collecting the views of the participant, interpreting these views, and then conveying them to the audience of the study. The outcome of the research study may be shaped by a researcher’s biases, values and personal background, for example, culture, history, socio-economic structure or gender. As such, at the beginning of the study the identification of the aforementioned issues was important.
My own perceptions of teaching and learning have been shaped by my personal experiences of being a student and a teacher in educational settings in both Srinagar and Canada. At a personal level, I have benefitted by the student-centered, active, participatory and interactive approaches to learning. For me, it has been a means of learning with understanding and taking responsibility for my own education. On the other hand, having previously been educated in the teacher-centered, examination-oriented setting has reminded me of the disciplined and respectful, but non-interactive, nature of the classroom, being passively involved in learning ‘do-as-directed’ procedures. Additionally, my outlook about teaching and learning is shaped by the fact that whether an individual is taught in the traditional or constructivist methods, individuals are nevertheless capable of achieving their goals. In my opinion, it is not that the progressive approach to teaching and learning is better than the traditional approach or vice-versa. An ‘Either-Or’ approach, as Dewey names it, may not always be the most effective way to decide upon a teaching method; different possibilities may also exist between the two approaches, which can be derived from their commonalities. Having said so, I have confronted my own biases in this study and have attempted to report my findings based on the analysis of the data as it has been revealed to me. As Bogdan and Biklen (2007) point out, a researcher’s main goal is to add to knowledge; not pass judgement on a setting, but portray many dimensions of the situations. During my time observing teaching sessions, it became evident that whole class, teacher-centered teaching does not always render passivity to learners, but can actively involve learners in the learning process when the teacher provides opportunities for the learners to participate during whole class instruction. Also, it became apparent that teaching and learning practices must not be redundant, as learners must be challenged to think, explore, investigate, and explain during any learning activity for deep understanding.
In chapter 4, the research methodology, I described the research process involved in conducting the research study named: “What is my pedagogy? Shifting understandings and practices of teachers in government schools in Kashmir, India”. I provided justification for my qualitative research orientation, description about the sample and the sampling criteria. Besides, data collection methods (observations, interviews, and review of pertinent documents) that I utilized for this study were elaborated. The data analysis and interpretation section of this chapter discussed the coding process; that is, coding the data using coding categories, synthesizing themes and interpreting meaning of those themes. In addition, this chapter also highlighted reliability and validity procedures pertinent to this research, ethical considerations and limitations of my research orientation. Lastly, I emphasized my role as a researcher wherein I explained my personal understanding of the topic of the research and any biases that I confronted.
Chapter 5
Background of the study, the research schools, participant teachers and students’ profiles

5.1 Background of the Study

In this chapter description of background of the study, the research schools and participant teachers’ profiles are discussed. As this study concerns schools in Srinagar, Kashmir located in India, therefore, the background of the study section focuses on India and Jammu and Kashmir, addressing the emergence and structure of the education system, and different improvement policies or schemes that have been implemented from time to time to support elementary education. This chapter also describes the current status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir with regard to decades of on-going turmoil. The last two sections, the research schools and teacher profiles, provide general information about the participating schools and discuss the profiles of four participant teachers.

India

Located in South Asia, India is the second most populous country in the world, with about 1.21 billion people (Census of India, 2011). A culturally diverse country, India has 28 States and 7 Union Territories. Ever since its independence from British Colonial Power, India has experienced progress in many sectors of the economy particularly in industry and agriculture. In fact, it has one of the fastest growing and most vibrant economies in the world (World Bank Report, 2006). At the educational front, India’s progress cannot be underestimated even though it has progressed steadily. The current literacy rate stands at 74%, with 82% literate males and 65.5% literate females (Census of India, 2011), and it is six times higher than the literacy rate of 12% that was present at independence.
Education in India has evolved as a national system of education following its independence from the British colonial power. Since independence, the central government has played a critical role in developing a fairly uniform system of education across the country (Sharma & Ramachandran 2008). Its structure is like that of many other organized education system of the world, comprising of 8 years of elementary education from 6-14 years (primary being grades I-V (for ages 6-11), and upper-primary being grades VI-VIII (for ages 11-14), 4 years of secondary education (secondary being grades IX & X and senior secondary being grades XI & XII) and 5 years of higher education (3 years of undergraduate degree and 2 years of graduate degree program). National institutions including the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) that were established post-independence, are currently responsible for devising policies of education, curriculum frameworks, teacher education and advising state governments in matters of implementation and delivery of education from time to time. The National Policy on Education devised in 1968, 1986 and 1992 (revised version of NPE, 1986) and POA (1986), formulated educational policies and proposed a national framework to develop a national system of education aimed to encompass India’s diverse cultures, geographic areas, core values and academic components (Yadav, 2011). A series of curriculum reforms have been introduced since the year 1975, namely, the Curriculum for the Ten Year School – A Framework (1975), the National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education (1988), the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2000) and the National Curriculum Framework (2005) (NCERT, 2011).
Access to elementary schools in India is either through formal government-run, tuition-free schools; non-formal centers of education that are run or supported by government; or through fee-charging private-run schools that may be aided or unaided. In India, government-run schools are available to educate children from all castes and creeds, yet they provide education largely to poor and marginalized children (in non-formal centers), while children from well off, upper class families attend private schools (Dewan, 2009). The goal of providing free basic education to its people has always topped India’s post-independence agenda (Jha et al., 2008; Kumar, 2006), but of all the levels of education, none other than elementary education has received extensive impetus in the post-independence era. In accordance with the goal of “Education for All” (1990) in Jomtien, Thailand, and subsequently at the World Education Forum (2000) in Dakar, Senegal, India is committed to universal elementary education for all its children (Annual Report, 2010-2011). Over the past sixty years, in compliance with Article 45, the Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in India has always been “a cherished goal” on the developmental forefront (Chugh (n.d.); Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, 2000). The efforts to make elementary education accessible to all, rich or poor, have been supported by schemes and programs such as, Operation Black Board (OBB) 1987-88, District Primary Education Program (DPEP) 1992, Restructuring and Reorganization of Teacher Education 1987, Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) 1995, Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL)1991, Movement to Educate All (2000), Fundamental right (2001) and more notably, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) (2000) (Lall, 2005; World Bank, 1997; GOI – SSA; Mehta (n.d.); Banerjee & Mukerjee, 2008).

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) campaign was launched in 2001 as a “flagship program for achievement of the Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner” in partnership with states and local bodies as mandated by the 86th
Amendment according to which free and compulsory education to the children of 6-14 years age is a fundamental right. (SSA website; GOI Documents; Kumar, 2006; Banerjee & Mukerjee, 2008). The overall goals of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for universalizing elementary education are, universal access and retention, bridging of gender and social gaps in education and enhancement of learning levels of children by the year 2010. (SSA website; Eleventh five year plan, 2007-2012, Vol. 2). The framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG, 2000) extended the target date for the UEE to the year 2015, for improving all aspects of quality of education (Results Framework Document, 2011-2012; MHRD, Annual report, 2010-2011).

**Jammu and Kashmir**

Jammu and Kashmir (J and K), the northern-most state of India with a total area of 222,236 sq. kms., shares it borders with China, Tibet and Pakistan, out of which 78,114 sq. kms form part of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and 37,555 sq. kms are under China. (J and K, State Development Report, 2003). The total population of the state according to the Census Report of India (2011) is 12,548,926, out of which 6,665,561 are males and 5,883,365 are females. J and K comprises of three regions Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. Srinagar is the summer capital of the state of J and K while Jammu is the winter capital. The valley of Kashmir, considered one of the most beautiful places on the earth, is located amidst the majestic lofty Himalayan Mountains, between the Pir Panjal range and the western end of the Himalayas.

Jammu and Kashmir has a high-cost mountain economy which has limited capacity in the public and private sectors, is landlocked and far from major markets, and is vulnerable to natural disasters that cause income volatility, leading to hardships for the poor (Performance review report of J and K economy, 2008-09). The economy is mostly reliant on agriculture,
horticulture, handicrafts and tourism. Agriculture constitutes an important sector of the state’s economy, as more than half of the population of J and K derives its income from this sector (ibid.). The region is considered economically backward as it lacks large-scale industrial infrastructure, although it is said that there is potential to use the region’s rich mineral resources to support industrial development. Due to its topography, the valley of Kashmir is linked to the rest of India with just one national highway which mostly remains closed during winters.

The literacy rate of the state of J and K is 68.74%, with more literate males, 78.26%, than females, 58.01% (Census of India, 2011, Provisional population totals as per the Census website). The overall literacy rate has grown from 55.52 percent in 2001 to the current figure, showing a decadal growth rate of more than 13 percent. The state lags far behind in this regard, in comparison to other northern Indian states such as Himachal Pradesh (83.78%), Punjab (76.68%), Haryana (76.64%), Delhi (86.34%) and the newly-created Uttarakhand (79.63%). J and K’s literacy rate is in fact below the national average (74.04%) in all three categories (persons, male and female) along with Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

The structure of schooling is similar to the educational set up in India: I-V primary, VI-VIII Upper primary, IX- X secondary and XI-XII senior secondary. In Jammu & Kashmir, the majority of children attend government schools, which represent 81.86 % of the total schools, while some attend private (unaided) schools that represent 18.14%. About 95.16% professionally-trained teachers teach in government schools where the average pupil-to-teacher ratio at the primary level is 16 (DISE, Flash Statistics, 2010-2011).
The nature of pedagogy is mostly teacher-directed (not reflective of the whole population); teachers understand their role as responsible, caring and supporting individuals who impart or instruct subjective, textbook-centered knowledge to students.

Current Status of the State

Kashmir, once a princely state, has been in dispute with India after the then-ruler of Kashmir acceded to India, following India’s independence from Britain in 1947. The people of Kashmir have ever since been fighting for the right to self-determination, which was promised by the United Nations under the auspices of India. Unfortunately, the land that has been often referred to as the ‘Paradise on Earth’ has suffered economically, socially and also politically due to the old and renewed political upheaval about its statehood for almost three decades. The people of Kashmir have suffered equally at the expense of armed militancy as well as by the security forces who try to normalize the uprising for ‘Azaadi’ [freedom] of the state. After claiming the return of normalcy due to the decline of militancy, in June 2008, the state witnessed renewed agitation over land transfer disputes. This has reverted the youth of the valley to the resurgent demands for ‘Azaadi’. The year 2010 brought on violent anti-government protests, separatist strikes, and a security lockdown which lasted for almost three months from June, 2010 to September, 2010, claiming more than 112 deaths, mostly teenagers. The educational institutions remained dysfunctional for about four months (Reuters, 2010). Consequently, the renewed collateral damage of this turmoil has resulted in considerable setbacks to the educational system, whereby children’s daily school routines are affected anew by ongoing strikes, curfews etc. A pondering question remains: given the situation, how should the school experience remain a valuable one for each learner?
5.2 The research schools

The research schools for this study were three government-run schools located in district Srinagar in low and/or in the vicinity of high middle class neighbourhoods. Below is the brief description of each school with attention to student population, total number of staff, infrastructure, and other general conditions.

School A is located inside a low middle class neighbourhood adjacent to a secondary school. Actually a middle school, but functioning as a K-8 school of 96 students with a total staff of about 17 teachers, one head master and one helper (some teachers from other districts are attached to this school). School A’s feeder areas range from very low middle-class to poor labour class households who speak languages other than Kashmiri and English, such as Bengali, Guajarati, Oriya and some dialects from Bihar. This school consists of two small buildings: one single storey that has two classrooms and one headmaster’s room (minimal infrastructure); one two storey building that has four classrooms. At the back of the building there is a kitchen for cooking midday meals. Midday meals are provided to children from K-8. There is a small playground in front of the building which is not well kept or properly maintained. Due to ongoing construction, materials such as sand and bricks occupy one corner of the playground. The surroundings of the school, especially the entrance to the school are not hygienically clean.

School B, a K-5 school, is located in the suburbs on the main road in a co-shared building with a high school and has a total student population of 150 students, out of which 65 students are in primary grades. Although the feeder area of School B is middle class (both low and average), and local village people yet most of the students come from labour class. Some of the students (usually from secondary and only a few from primary school) work as servants in nearby middle class households. The shared campus of the high school and the
primary school consists of one main building comprising of 16 rooms, out of which 4 rooms are occupied by the primary section. The total staff of primary school comprises of about 11 teachers, one head master and one helper. There is a computer room with about 10-12 computers which is mostly used by high school students and by upper primary and the middle school students, upon the request of teachers. The entrance to the school leads to the back of the building with the front facing two small one roomed kitchen and a canteen. Midday meals are provided to children from K-8. There is a big playground on the side of the building which is not properly maintained. The courtyard is also co-shared where children play and teachers sit during their planning (free) time. The surroundings of the school are moderately neat.

School C is located in a poor to low middle class neighbourhood in a high school where a total of about 200 students attend the school with about 90 students in primary grades. There are about 18 teachers, one principal, and one helper. This school has two big buildings, only one in use, with broken doors, windows and sunken flooring. There are 16 rooms which are co-shared by the primary, upper- primary and the high school. Most of the classrooms are well furnished with wooden desks and benches (often dusty/muddy) as compared to other research school sites. The huge playground hosts frequent interschool tournaments; Cricket, Soccer or Volley ball matches are often held in this huge playground. There is a computer room with about 4-6 computers which often remains closed and is used by the high school students. Midday meals are cooked in a small kitchen located at side of the main building. The walls of corridors bear incidences of environmental awareness through statements, “Save the forests”.
5.3 Teacher profiles

*Participant teacher Nyla*

Nyla is a subject teacher who teaches Science, Social studies, English and Mathematics to grades 5-8. Her educational qualifications are a B.Sc., and a B.Ed. and she has been teaching for five years in the present school. Nyla’s instruction time is 18-20 hours per week. In addition to teaching, she is responsible for making substitute teacher timetables and is (along with three other teachers) also in-charge of club for organizing assembly and sports activities. She prepares news boards and helps students prepare topics for the morning assembly. Nyla displays a warm and welcoming attitude towards all her students, treats them equally and teaches them with great enthusiasm. Nyla’s teaching style reflects teaching for understanding using direct instruction with managed student participation during reading or other activities.

*Participant teacher Nahid*

Nahid is a class teacher who teaches Math to grades 3 and 5. Her educational qualification is B.Com and M.Com (previous). She has been teaching for past 15 years and she doesn’t have any formal teacher training. In the past she taught English and Mathematics to middle school students, but for past four years she has been teaching Mathematics and Environmental Studies to grades 3 and 5. Nahid’s instruction time is 18 hours per week. Nahid has a good control of her students, demonstrates respect and care. She teaches explicitly through direct instruction and also utilizes activity-based pedagogical practices giving high importance to student participation.
**Participant teacher Amina**

Amina is a subject teacher who teaches Mathematics, Science (Environmental Studies –EVS) and English to grades 3-5. Her educational qualifications are a B.Sc., and a B.Ed and she has three years of teaching experience. Amina’s instruction time is about 10-12 hours per week. She commutes a distance of 35 miles every day to get to school. Amina uses laughter, fun during textbook centered direct instruction and encourages student participation through one-on-one interaction and shows deep concern for student punctuality.

**Participant teacher Zeenat**

Zeenat is a class teacher who teaches Mathematics and Science (Environmental Studies –EVS) to grades 2-5. She also teaches “Games - Physical Education” to grade 4. Her educational qualifications are a M.A., and a B.Ed. and she has been teaching for past 12 years. Zeenat’s instruction time is 18 hours per week. She is responsible for maintaining the SSA funds at her school, and for distributing mid-day meals once per week. Like other participant teachers, Zeenat uses textbook to teach students through direct instruction, explains the topic keenly and encourages guided participation of the students.

**5.4 Students’ profiles**

The students who were observed during this research study at the three different elementary schools had the following general traits: dressed in uniforms, timid, “clever, cheerful, respectful” (as mentioned by Nahid), friendly, shy, obedient, focused, disciplined, well mannered, and “with better minds” (as described by Amina). Some of them were often punctual, while some of the students were frequently absent. In all of the four elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir, students exhibited diversity with regards to their abilities; some students were performing above average as they responded quickly and accurately when asked to answer or comprehend a concept; some of them were quiet and too slow to
respond and needed extra support during each teaching session. There were very few special needs students, about two in two different classrooms, and teachers have to make accommodations for such students during instruction.

In this chapter, context of the study with reference to the location and the education system of India and more specifically, Jammu and Kashmir, were discussed in the section named background of the study. The subsequent sections discussed profiles of three research schools, participant teacher profiles and lastly the students’ profiles section provided some insights into students’ general and specific traits.
Chapter 6
Characterizing teacher’s shifting classroom pedagogical practices: Emerging themes

This chapter presents key themes emerging from the data in relation to the core and subsidiary questions of this study based on interviews, classroom observations, and an analysis of pertinent documents of the four participants of this research study. Data analysis involved careful coding and identifying of the themes that became obvious from the data. Themes addressed in this chapter focus on the core and subsidiary questions identified at the outset of the research study. Themes emerging from the subsidiary questions are addressed initially followed by those of the core question.

1. **How do teachers understand classroom pedagogy?**
2. **What pedagogical practices do teachers use to teach in their elementary classrooms and why?**
3. **How and why do the teachers encourage and manage student participation?**
4. **How and why have teachers’ understandings and practices shifted since the inception of the National Curriculum Framework (2005)?**
5. **What do teachers believe has helped them deliver instruction within the directives of the National Curriculum Framework (2005) and what do they believe have been hindrances?**
6. **What is the nature of pedagogy (teaching and learning) in four elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir, and to what extent and why has it shifted since the introduction of the National Curriculum Framework (2005)?**
6.1 How do teachers understand classroom pedagogy?

In order to derive a broader understanding of the nature of pedagogy in the classrooms in Srinagar, it was important to know teachers’ understandings of pedagogy; that is, their understandings of teaching and learning. During my interview conversations with the teachers it was apparent that pedagogy was not the commonly used phrase. However, when the question was paraphrased to imply anything related to teaching and learning, teachers’ understandings were diverse and their responses suggested various meanings that ranged from their role as teachers, to teaching methods, books, syllabi used and to their commitment towards the teaching profession. Participant teachers revealed their own unique awareness about knowledge of teaching and learning and the key themes that identify teachers’ understandings of pedagogy are discussed as: the varied yet high perception of their role as teacher, teachers’ professional knowledge, motivation for teaching & learning, and teachers’ recognition of student diversity.

The varied yet high perceptions of their role as teacher

Participant teachers’ understanding of teaching and learning was signified through their held high views of their role as teachers. Teaching, they believe, is an ideal and noble profession. For teacher Nyla, teaching is like worship and she feels that if she does it rightly, it would be good for her too. Her aim in life is to help her students gain maximum knowledge through whatever means she has. Nyla also believes that “a student is like a blank paper; whatever we write gets stamped on it” (Interview transcript 1). She feels powerful and confident when students understand her. Teacher dedication is not only being able to deliver the lesson; Nyla puts herself in the mode where she understands her students beyond a classroom lesson. She believes that for a student, a teacher is his/her idol. Besides classroom instruction, she feels teachers teach etiquettes to students. Similarly, Amina specifies that
teachers are responsible for creating society, meaning that her students may choose to become doctors, politicians or something else, and if the teacher taught him/her good things, he/she will reflect it in the society. Zeenat understands that in her role as a teacher she demonstrates equality, giving more attention to her students than her own children regardless of their socio-economic class. She works for student success. Nahid realizes that it is the teacher who creates a positive learning experience for a learner so that he/she is able to fully concentrate in the class. Teachers’ understanding of their role demonstrates their consciousness and high sense of responsibility in teaching a learner, attributing the highest value to teaching, that being an act of worship.

*Teachers’ professional knowledge*

Teachers’ limited awareness of pedagogical knowledge, both general and subjective, and also their perceptions about effective teachers reflected their professional understanding. My multiple observation data indicated the use of monotonous and repetitive instructional technique of direct instruction, which was suggestive of teachers’ inadequate pedagogical knowledge. Teachers also exhibited different pedagogical understandings and their respective Bachelor of Education programs (B. Ed.) appeared to inform their pedagogical knowledge. As three of the four participant teachers had undergone formal teacher training, they were able to recollect few aspects of their formal training program. During teacher training, Amina was taught how to deal with children and to use different teaching methods. Amina didn’t remember specific teaching methods, but mentioned few teaching strategies, for example, “use of mother tongue to explain the lesson and checking for understanding at the end of a lesson verbally or some other way, or assigning homework” (Interview 2). Although Zeenat was not formally taught lesson planning, she was aware of different techniques of lesson planning, for instance, writing main points of the lesson and questions in a diary.
Additionally, she demonstrated knowledge of school management processes and about educationists, both Indian and international, as she made reference to progressive educationist like John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky. Nyla stated that whatever she learned during her B. Ed. was far from the realities of the classroom. She recalled from her training that there are different types of learners (intelligent, below average or low) and teachers have to know their interests. Nyla’s training included learning how to handle students at the elementary level, maintain school records, and report results. It is essential to mention that even though these teachers have been exposed to educational psychology and philosophy during their B.Ed, none of them could recall the varied teaching methods that they learned about during their respective trainings.

Participant teachers’ knowledge of the profession also emphasized the importance of foundation years for learning. Two of the participant teachers shared a common belief that the foundations years are important, stressing that elementary education should be better. Nyla explained, “if our elementary levels are excellent, we will have strong base and consequently our other levels will be good” (Interview 1). Amina also expressed the need to focus on lower classes, mentioning, “we have to give more attention to kindergarten and lower primary grades, as “they are our future and we have to take pains” (Interview 1).

Furthermore, of all the participants, Nyla and Nahid demonstrated an understanding of the subjective pedagogical knowledge. Nyla mentioned that when the students know what the alphabet is, what a consonant is and how to join the words, they develop a strong base. During interview 1 with Nahid, it was evident that she had a sound knowledge of introducing alphabets to students at the kindergarten level, although Nahid didn’t undergo any B.Ed. training. Nahid emphasized the importance of subjective knowledge, reiterating, “if any teacher is teaching a subject that she is not knowledgeable about, what will he or she teach?”
Participant teachers’ perception of qualities of effective teachers also provided insights into their pedagogical understanding. According to Nyla, “Effective teachers show dedication in work, organize meaningful learning and also recognize that the classroom should be attractive.” Nahid believes a relaxed and calming classroom environment, classroom materials, proper lesson planning, student involvement/interaction and two-way communication are necessary for effective teaching. For Amina, the effective way to teach is to make the child understand the way they want to understand. Furthermore Zeenat thinks preparedness, punctuality, being attentive to students and cognizant of their needs, and also making use of the resources is essential for effective teaching. The views of teachers implied many positive attributes all suggestive of teachers’ personal and professional responsibility.

Despite the fact that the above examples present assorted descriptions, they illuminate teachers’ professional understanding through their limited pedagogical knowledge (both general and subjective), their understanding of the importance of the foundation years in learning, and lastly, their perceptions of effective teachers that depict teacher responsibility and sound professional knowledge.

Motivation for teaching & learning

Motivation of a teacher for teaching and motivating students for learning was considered by participant teachers as a factor that is of significance to a teacher’s role in the classroom. Teachers’ awareness of motivation as fundamental to creating an effective learning environment suggested their understanding of ways to promote student learning. Nahid, for instance, affirmed that a teacher should first create a learning environment that is conducive to learning, that attracts children to the class, and the learning will follow; “when the class is calm, you can teach well” (Interview 1). In her class, students should be motivated enough to pay attention. Furthermore, Nahid believed the use of friendly
language, using good words (instead of threatening or beating) encourages student learning and creates a positive learning environment. Amina affirmed that children can be motivated with love. Having learned about motivation during her pre-service training, she recognized that motivation is important to generate interest in her students. She thought that it is the teachers’ responsibility to motivate students and if they don’t, teaching fails. Understanding motivation and its conditions indicated teachers’ beliefs of the learners within the teaching and learning process.

**Teachers’ recognition of student diversity**

Students’ exhibit diverse characteristics and this theme appeared to be common among all the four participant teachers admitting that not all students are alike and implying that they understand student diversity, for example, background of the students or their ability, and teachers suggested how they support student diversity in their respective classrooms. Nyla affirmed that she has to be mindful of students’ backgrounds and tries to help them in every way. If they are away from school, Nyla says, “I have to ensure to teach him/her previous lessons otherwise they may not succeed” (Interview 1). Nahid said, “All students are not alike: some get it quickly, some need more attention, some are slow, some are naughty, some don’t respond, while some without understanding say they got it” (Interview 1). She recognized that children differ from each other, and that a teacher has to think about the individual capacity of a student and give more attention, not only to students who have special needs, but also to those who are shy as “sometimes an able student cannot speak out because of shyness” (Interview 1). Amina felt, “Students have to understand that they come to school to learn and as teachers we understand and look into the needs of the students as they come from poorer backgrounds, for example, we fulfill their needs by providing notebooks, pens, pencils and uniforms” (Interview 1). Zeenat said, “Not all
students are the same; some are average while some are below average. Some work quickly and some work slowly and for the slower ones, I repeat till they get it. I give them more practice” (Interview 2).

Evidently the above accounts indicate that teachers’ recognition of student diversity is broad. Teachers understand that students may be different in their abilities, backgrounds or personalities. However, teachers’ understanding of the special needs students was very narrow as they referred to such students as students with problems, and lacked the knowledge to properly support those students. Some even felt that special needs students are hindrances in the classroom.

Although the above results present distinctive descriptions of participant teachers’ understanding of pedagogy, they share common themes among teachers, those being: high perceptions of the teacher’s role, teachers’ professional knowledge, motivation for teaching and learning, and recognition of student diversity. My interview conversations with each teacher provided insights into teachers’ understanding of classroom pedagogy. The results pointed out teachers’ varied but high perceptions of their role as teachers with teaching being valued as a noble profession and even being equated to worship. Multiple observation sessions in four different elementary classrooms repeatedly confirmed teachers’ recognition of student diversity and their responsibility and commitment to teaching as being very essential to student learning. They were respectful to all the students and allowed each one of them an opportunity to participate in each learning cycle. While explaining the lessons and in order to make them understand, participant teachers exhibited deep enthusiasm towards all the students which confirmed their consciousness towards students’ learning. However, it was also evident that teachers’ understanding of teaching practices was restricted to direct instruction only, indicating limited pedagogical knowledge. Inside the classroom, teachers’
views seemed to contradict their actions concerning their use of repetitive teacher-directed instructional practices and use of varied resources, for example, TLMs.

6.2 What pedagogical practices do teachers use to teach in their elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir and why?

Central to understanding the nature of pedagogy in the elementary classrooms in Srinagar was to know how teaching and learning processes are conducted daily. Based mostly on multiple classroom observations, interview conversations and analysis of pertinent documents, teachers’ pedagogical practices were indicative of following themes: ‘Play-way practice’, ‘learning-by-doing’, or ‘the activity-based practice’; teacher-directed, guided instruction with the textbook as the main resource; teaching for understanding and checking for understanding; and goals for students - perfect knowledge, understanding and learning well and writing neatly.

*Play-way method/learning-by-doing /the activity-based method*

Participant teachers of this research study during interview conversations acknowledged that they have been directed to teach students making use of the ‘play-way’, ‘learning-by-doing’, or ‘activity-based’ methods which teachers prefer to use. Play-way method means making learning fun, joyful, and interesting for learners, while activity-based method is engaging students in an activity designed to bring about learning (teachers interchangeably used the play-way method and activity-based method to mean the same). Learning-by-doing involves students in the activity and students enhance understanding of the lesson by actually seeing or feeling the examples of things or doing it for themselves, for example, doing experiments or using teaching and learning materials (TLMs). Nyla mentions that the play-way method makes use of singing, acting or role-playing to teach a lesson and students are able to retain their learning by recollecting these actions later. Nahid believes
“[the] play-way method engages students in learning while playing and the new math book has activities to support this method” (interview 2).

Zeenat mentions that she selects activities from the textbooks and uses relevant TLMs to teach through the play-way-method. For Amina, the play-way method means teaching children as if they are playing, for example, when teaching English she involves students in role-playing. She also uses this method to teach rhymes; students are able to retain information through actions, as she says, “Yaad rehtaa hai – students remember. Likewise, teaching multiplication tables (and saying 2x1=2) in a rhyming way helps children remember.” Amina feels the old method is not the way to teach and that using different teaching methods enhances teaching; it is no longer monotonous. For example, children learn better when they are taken outdoors to see for themselves, when learning about their surroundings or the environment. She teaches verbally when she feels the use of chalk and black-board is boring for students.

Teacher-directed, guided instruction with the textbook as the main resource

Inside each of the four elementary classrooms, multiple observations of teaching sessions pointed out teacher-directed, guided instruction as the most frequent method of teaching with the textbook as the main teaching resource. Teachers’ actions were repetitive for each lesson, however, in interview conversations all the teachers emphasized that they teach by the play-way method, learning-by-doing, teaching by showing or the activity-based method, examples of which were not very obvious in every classroom observation.

For each teaching session, teachers use the textbook to teach each lesson in accordance with the syllabus, announcing the name of the lesson at the beginning and briefly telling students what is expected to be covered in the lesson. Since each lesson is written in the English language, the teacher and the students read each lesson (Science: Environmental
Studies in this example) page by page and the teacher explains the meaning of the sentences in Urdu or sometimes in Kashmiri, line by line, followed by explaining the meanings conveyed in the paragraph. While explaining, teachers connect the text to relevant examples, for instance, prominent personalities, recent events, or other daily life events. They also explain the meanings of words or phrases, called ‘hard words’, which teachers think are difficult for students. Students take turns to read paragraphs from the lesson one after the other. After this, students complete comprehension questions and other exercises through guided activity which is led by the teacher. Nyla teaches her students “as per the lesson” (and the lesson is taught according to the syllabus outline without any deviation), helps her students understand the lesson using pictures and words to help them read at times talking to students individually to motivate them. For example, ensuring the meanings are clear to students when teaching about a house, she explains the distinction between a house and a home. She even breaks the word into syllables to make it easier for them to understand and stresses knowing the right word and correct spellings.

During mathematics instruction, each teacher explains the basic concept first and then introduces the new concept asking students to come up and solve the questions on the board, providing equal opportunities for all students to participate while she guides the activity. Teachers cautiously monitor how students solve the questions (division and multiplication in this case) guiding them at each step. Amina makes her students understand math problems, even using the mother tongue to explain the steps clearly. Zeenat mentions, “When the students can’t perform the division, I ask them to recite the multiplication tables first and then perform the division” (Interview 2). There are instances when teachers engage in one-on-one interaction with the students and Amina believes that it is possible because the number of students per classroom is small.
Teachers in classrooms in Srinagar seem to direct each pedagogical activity through whole class direct and guided instruction, monitoring and directing students’ actions step-by-step. Teachers talk most of the time and Amina acknowledged that she talks for about 90% of the instructional time. Students quietly follow what their respective teachers ask them to do during an activity.

*Teaching for understanding and checking for understanding*

Teachers’ teaching for understanding is discernibly checking for understanding. In elementary classrooms studied, teachers believe that it is their responsibility to make students understand the lesson properly, therefore they don’t mind repeating the information conveyed through direct instruction. Consequently, they re-teach the lesson over and again until they feel students have understood the topic. Teachers often go over the lesson verbally, explaining, telling, and asking students about the lesson. Nyla says, “I repeat the previous lesson until I am assured that students have understood. My conscience does not allow me to move forward if any student says that he/she was away and I go back and repeat the previous lesson” (Interview 1). Similarly, Amina doesn’t mind repeatedly explaining the topic many times until she is assured that the students have understood the topic properly by answering each question. Amina checks for understanding at the end of the lesson by asking students (she sometimes walks to each desk) to repeat information as she thinks repeating helps students to retain information and it also helps in cross-checking, as children tend to forget. In all, teachers mention that verbal checking for understanding is a form of assessment and Nahid says, “When a student is called to the board and asked to either answer a question orally or solve it on the board, if he/she cannot do it, I come to know whether they have learned or not. Input equals output, that is, whatever you teach you should assess at the same time through recapitulation; if I taught students 10 sentences, a student should be able to
recap and tell me about 5 sentences” (Interview 2). For Amina and Zeenat, if students answer questions, it means they have understood, and if they are silent this means they have not understood, Amina attributes it to two things: they might need help or they have a problem at home.

The other forms of assessment that teachers use are class test held either weekly or bi-weekly, and annual examinations. Homework completion is another form of assessment.

Evidently the purpose of teachers’ repetition of information is to make students understand and checking for understanding verbally is a way for them to know that they have explained explicitly and that students have understood.

**Goals for students - perfect knowledge, understanding and learning well, and writing neatly**

Central to each teaching activity are goals or objectives that teachers have for students and during my interview conversations with the participant teachers, understanding and learning well, perfect knowledge, and writing neatly were their goals for students. All of the participant teachers implied that it is students’ learning that matters most to them and they want their students to understand concepts clearly, understand everything properly and learn well, and to accomplish this Zeenat and other teachers believed that they have to teach their students effectively. Nyla emphasized that her students should be “aala”, that is, above all and perfect in the subject that she teaches them. She believes that children are our future and we have to secure them. Her students should get perfect knowledge, and by “perfect knowledge” Nyla meant that her students should be capable of performing above level. For Amina, her students should be at par with private school students, and for Zeenat, be well settled as she believes that children are our future.

In addition, writing neatly on fair note books is given importance by all the teachers. When asked why writing neatly is important, the teachers replied that if question and answers
are written neatly in the fair notebooks, it is easier for students to learn from notebooks for the examination. Amina stated, “In rough notebooks they can make mistakes and in fair copy if there are no mistakes, they will learn properly for the examination. Since the language proficiency of the students is limited, it helps to have a fair (good) copy” (Interview 2).

The above findings present evidences of pedagogical practices that teachers use to teach in classrooms in Srinagar. Teacher-directed, guided instruction is the frequently used pedagogical method that teachers use to teach students in elementary classrooms in order to achieve goals of teaching children well, imparting perfect knowledge, writing neatly and teaching for understanding and checking for understanding. Repeating information through monotonous teacher-directed, guided instruction helps teachers teach for understanding. It is essential to point out that teachers in Srinagar acknowledge using play-way method, learning-by-doing, or the activity-based method along with the textbooks. However, when teaching through activities, teachers make use of direct instruction, being in control and directing all the activities.

6.3 How and why do the teachers encourage and manage student participation?

The preceding findings identified pedagogical practices prevalent in classrooms in Srinagar. This section describes the nature of teacher-student relationships with regard to their participation and ways teachers encourage and manage participation. The following themes emerged from the data and they will be discussed as follows: respect for each other, the student as a friend, positive reinforcement used by teachers, student engagement-arousing curiosity and using alternate ways to capture interests, whole class participation and one-on-one or individual practice.
Respect for each other

Within the four studied elementary classroom, teachers hold a superior position with regard to students; teachers are in full control of the classroom, while students follow the directions of the teacher. Students and teachers demonstrate respect for each other which starts with exchanging greetings at the beginning of the class. Students ask for permission, and quietly obey what their teachers; they often raise their hands for any action and take turns (sometimes too many questions are asked at a time in Amina’s class without consideration for turn taking). There are very minimal classroom management issues in the classrooms every day.

The student as a friend

During classroom observations all the participant teachers demonstrated a friendly relationship with their students. Nyla mentioned a student is a friend or “hamrah” (friend/companion); a teacher has to teach, “ek dostana tareekey sey” (in a friendly manner), and in doing so, she believes a student will express himself/herself to the teacher. Teachers do however emphasize that they are not friendly all the time as they also show concern by being firm, being strict with the students, warning them of punishment, and at times persuading them to work, through shouting, to show anger or demand attention from all the students. Participant teachers don’t subject students to any kind of corporal punishment as they are aware of the Right to Education Act. Nahid informed, “As per the act (Right to Education Act, 2009), giving corporal punishment to students is against the law and it has been banned especially in the schools located in villages” (Interview 2).

Positive reinforcement

To encourage student participation, teachers in Srinagar use positive reinforcement when students demonstrate understanding of a lesson and perform better. Teachers acknowledge their good work by frequently using positive phrases such as, “shaabash”
(good). Nyla calls students “jigar” (dear); cheering or clapping for their good work, ensuring not to embarrass weak students in front of the class, and at the same time making sure they realize that they have to “do it right”. Amina said that she shows care, love and concern for her students. She often encourages student learning by giving rewards like sweets, toys, pens, small gifts, paying for their picnic (₹ 30-40 field trip) or giving bonus marks to her students for class work or homework completion. There are times when she plays with her students and she feels children appreciate this the most. She rewards her students every month usually after a class test.

**Student engagement: arousing curiosity and using alternate ways to capture interests**

Participant teachers use varied ways to engage students in learning. Amina believes that arousing curiosity is essential to capture children’s interests as they are always curious to learn. She describes, “In my lesson about the festivals, I started off by asking them about the festivals we celebrate and then asking them about the national festivals (from known to unknown knowledge). They knew a little bit, but they were interested in knowing more about Gandhi Jayanti. After giving them background information about the Republic Day, students wanted to know more” (Interview 2). Teachers in Srinagar believe that students have different abilities which teachers have to probe to help students express themselves in a better manner. To capture students’ interests and keep them engaged in learning, Nyla uses alternate ways like singing or storytelling to teach when she feels students are bored. For her special needs student, she encourages him to work on art as the student likes to paint.

**Student participation: whole class and one-on-one**

In the elementary classrooms in Srinagar, during whole class instruction, students’ interactions take the form of students acknowledging that they have understood or seeking clarification. Students repeatedly confirm to the teacher that they understand what is being taught to them by repeating the teacher’s words (Observation notes). Also, students ask
clarification questions of the teachers; likewise, they answer the teacher’s questions with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers. Students always check with the teacher for correct answers/responses, and unless their teachers validate the answers, they don’t sit quiet. During mathematics instruction, students move frequently from their desks to the blackboard to solve the questions on the board upon the request of the teacher.

Some teachers also manage student participation through group work when doing math or involve students in an activity when teaching science. Amina mentions, “If we are doing an activity on environment about the use of plastics, I ask them to make a bag out of cloth or paper to make them understand ways to eliminate the use of plastics.” For special needs students Zeenat makes accommodations, saying, “I have to pay attention to him/her. I teach him/her separately as he/she does not understand at levels of regular students.”

In addition to the above methods, Amina, Zeenat, and Nyla make use of the peer learning strategy when students don’t understand the topic, and they discuss it with other students. According to Nyla, allowing students to comment on each other’s work helps them recognize or understand their difficulties. Zeenat asks a strong student to help a weaker student in completing the class work.

It was evident during multiple classroom observations and my interview conversations with the participant teachers that calling students to the front of the class to individually solve questions or write spellings was a frequent method to manage student participation because of multiple reasons. As indicated in the previous section, immediately following the explanation of the lesson, teachers ask the students to participate through one-on-one interaction (but through guided participation) which allows them to check for students’ understanding and also work on their difficulties by re-teaching the lesson. Further, it encourages the students to participate in learning and keeps them engaged. For Nyla,
checking students for understanding, one-by-one, allows her to identify their difficulties and work on them by encouraging the habit of learning. The smaller number of students per classroom allows teachers to have one-on-one interaction with each student. Nahid asks students who don’t usually respond, especially those who hide behind others, to participate. Nahid mentioned, “Those who respond more, I avoid them deliberately because I want those students who do not respond to participate. I make them participate as I keep 2-3 days per week to specially involve those students who hide behind other students”.

From the above discussions, it is obvious that participant teachers in Srinagar use varied ways to manage and encourage student participation. Teachers promote an environment that encourages learning by being respectful, using praise, rewards and alternate ways to acknowledge and foster student learning. Besides teachers believe that interaction during whole class instruction or one-on-one interactions during individual learning are fundamental to student participation.

6.4 How and why have teachers’ understandings and practices shifted since the inception of the National Curriculum Framework (2005)?

Understanding the influence of the National Curriculum Framework (2005) on the pedagogical practices was elemental to this study. Data collected during classroom observations, interviews, and syllabus & textbook analyses of the four participant teachers highlighted the following themes that exemplify why and how teachers’ understandings have changed since the inception of the NCF (2005). The themes include: teachers acknowledge change in teaching methods, but no knowledge of NCF; from rote learning to the play-way method/learning-by-doing/activity-based method and the new textbooks.

*Teachers acknowledge change in teaching methods, but no knowledge of NCF*

In order to understand the shift in pedagogical practices in the elementary classrooms
in Srinagar, it was imperative to examine teachers’ awareness about the changes that have been mandated in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) since its inception in 2005.

The participant teachers involved in this research study repeatedly confirmed that the syllabus has changed and they use the play-way method to teach, making use of activities from the textbooks, teaching by showing examples and TLMs to deliver instruction as directed by the Director of Education’s and the District Institute of Education and Training’s (DIET) office. Interestingly, however, the teachers’ interview conversation revealed that they had little or no understanding of this framework. When I asked them, “What is the NCF?” teachers clearly stated that they didn’t exactly know about it, but it must be some sort of policy that the government has devised (mentioned by Zeenat) or a framework for textbooks (stated by Amina). All of the participant teachers, however, agreed that changes in the methods of teaching have taken place. Zeenat mentioned, “We have directions from above, the Director of Education’s office and the DIET office, to teach using the play-way-method”. In addition, the DIET official stated, “The School Board and the Academic Department of the school board know what the NCF is; it is not required for teachers to know the NCF. They should know the textbooks, TLMs, and deliverance of the syllabus”. A positive aspect of teaching within the directives of the NCF, as informed by the DIET official, is that the academic level of the students has improved as the textbooks have been updated and they are student friendly with concepts delivered in an easy way in primary classes. The teachers confirmed that the books have been redesigned for the activity-based method and guide teachers in their use of TLMs.

From rote learning to play-way method/ learning-by-doing/activity-based method

Participant teachers acknowledged that almost 3-5 years ago they had directions from the school board, Srinagar, to move from old methods of teaching to the new methods, such
as the play-way method, learning-by-doing, or activity-based method and arouse curiosity in young minds. Teachers mentioned that first they used to teach by the lecture method, that is, reading the lesson, explaining it and completing question answers through rote methods referred to as, ‘rata or gota’, in Kashmiri, and the students had to learn as directed by the teacher. Now, it is learning-by-doing or showing, and a teacher shows examples; for instance, Nyla said, “If I have to teach about an apple, I get an apple, show them and ask them if they have seen it at home,” and Zeenat said, “If we teach about a tree, we have to actually show children”. All teachers realize that they have to substantiate their lessons with relevant examples and Nyla reiterated that it is no more teaching by telling or holding their hands, rather it is the “play-way method - khailtey, khailtey samjhana hai” (teach by playing)” (Interview 2).

In the learning-by-doing method teachers have to demonstrate to the students by doing the experiments, providing them with materials for the activity or engaging them in different activities such as drawing, colouring or writing activities. Nahid, during her second interview specified, “When I had to teach geometrical shapes, I brought glued paper and asked the children to cut shapes. In social studies, I asked the students to sort out the animals as domestic and wild animals, so that they know the difference. In addition, I can engage students actively in a writing activity by asking them to contribute to one writing piece where each student provides one sentence”. The evidence of students’ work as a result of such activities was displayed on the walls of classrooms.

The use of TLMs for any lesson is encouraged as per the new curriculum and a TLM may be a chart showing pictures of things pertaining to the topic of the lesson (Nahid shared a chart of domestic and wild animals). Teachers in the elementary classrooms in Srinagar referred to the use of TLMs during different lessons and they believed that using TLMs made
it easy for the students to understand and caused less burden or problems for the teachers. Zeenat mentioned that she involves children in preparing posters and she has started displaying children’s work (noticeable on the walls of the classroom); she feels that the children love it. However, during my multiple observation interactions with the participant teachers, the actual use of TLMs was minimal, as sometimes teachers said they forgot to bring the materials for the activity. Upon my visit to the Cluster Resource Center, it was appealing to see the display of the TLMs designed for different topics from cost-effective, simple materials which I hoped teachers would be able to introduce in their respective classrooms in the future.

It is apparent from the above explanations that as a result of directions from the Director of Education’s office and the DIET office, the classroom pedagogical practices should be delivered according to the play-way method, learning-by-doing, or the activity-based method. The teachers in Srinagar have begun to modify their pedagogical practices, though minimally, in alignment with the new curriculum.

*New textbooks*

For each teaching activity, the participant teachers in Srinagar, Kashmir, use textbooks as their main resource. Textbooks are provided free of cost to students in government-run schools, especially to those from poorer backgrounds as they cannot buy books (as stated by Amina), and each student gets one text book for each subject. Using document analysis of textbooks, observation and interview methods of data collection, I was able to gain information about the textbooks and how they support the shift in the pedagogical practices.

During classroom observations all the teachers relentlessly used the textbooks for each teaching session. Amina mentioned, “Textbooks serve as our curriculum, we have to
follow the textbook,” and Zeenat confirmed, “the textbook is something that is used for teaching; from the book we know what activity and what TLM we have to use.” Teachers informed me that the new textbooks are mostly activity-based with few practice questions to reinforce learning, and in mathematics, questions are presented as descriptive problems (story like) and it take students time to understand as their English language proficiency is limited. Amina thought because of this the textbooks were not up to the standard and Zeenat mentioned that now she has to read mathematical problems like a story to children, and they keep on looking at her, confused. On the contrary, Nahid thought the contents of the books had been simplified and easier for children to follow, but the chapters in books don’t progress sequentially (the topics do not progress) through grades. It is a problem for teachers to generate their own questions for mathematics for grades 3, 5 and 8 because students write their board exams for term 2 at different schools and teachers cannot set the papers for their respective grades and Amina mentioned, “we don’t know what type of questions will be asked”.

A document analysis of a grade 5 Science (Environmental Studies) textbook highlighted that the book has been “developed and based on the National Curriculum Framework, 2005 (as stated in the foreword)”. This book has been designed to inculcate the sense of good environment, that is, how to develop values and skills in learners to protect the environment. The chapters in the book are based on situations surrounding a student’s day-to-day life. Within each chapter, sections such as “Think and discuss” ask the students to express their feelings and critically reflect on a given situation and also to extend their understanding of, for example, natural disasters. In addition there are activities like paper folding or finding/writing poems related to the topics. Similarly, a textbook analysis of the grade 4 Environmental studies book (EVS), which has also been designed within the
guidelines of the NCF (2005), reveals chapters that tie the topic to the context of the students. For example, Chapter 1, ‘Going to school’ encourages the students to understand different ways of getting to school. This chapter conveys multiple topics at a time like bridges, pulleys and means of transport used for going to school. Some activities in the book are unrealistic as they ask the students to make a small bridge by tying bamboo poles together. Furthermore, in the new grade 3 mathematics book, there are many exercises that engage the students in a play way method. Nahid mentioned that in this playing method math, children learn as well as play, for instance, “you can draw a snake using sand”.

Textbooks, which are the main resources for teachers to implement instruction through play-way and activity-based methods, reflect that as a result of curriculum revision, knowledge is being presented in revised books through activities that require students to engage in learning, express their feelings and reflect critically. However, as indicated in the teachers’ analyses of the books, there are many weaknesses which hinder their proper use.

To sum up, since the inception of the National Curriculum Framework (2005), teachers in Srinagar have acknowledged that under the directions of the Director of Education’s and the DIET office, they have begun to shift their pedagogical practices from the old lecture methods of rote learning to the new play-way or activity-based-methods. Nevertheless, they don’t have any knowledge of the NCF (2005) as they have not been informed by the authorities directly about the required changes. To support the methods of instruction, the textbooks have been revised and include activities that require students to engage in learning, express their feelings and reflect critically.
6.5 What do teachers believe has helped them deliver instruction within the directives of the National Curriculum Framework (2005) and what do they believe have been hindrances?

Teachers Nyla, Nahid, Amina and Zeenat acknowledged that the Education Department of Srinagar District has been conducting trainings, revised the text books in alignment with the new play-way method and/or activity-based method, and changed the syllabus to help teachers adopt to new pedagogy, but there are many inherent barriers which affect teaching and learning that may or may not be directly related to the NCF directives. In this section, I describe the emerging themes that teachers think have helped or hindered them deliver instruction as desired by the authorities. The role of the DIET, teachers in-service training, and improvements under SSA are the themes that describe what has helped teachers and themes such as, background of students and family support, carry on system, syllabus, classroom environment and school conditions, resources to support play-way learning, student absenteeism, infrastructure, language barriers, special needs students and mid-term transfers describe what has hindered teachers deliver instruction.

6.5.1 What has helped teachers?

The role of the DIET

A visit to the District Institute of Education and Training, (DIET) and a subsequent interview with an official highlighted the role of the DIET. The District Institute of Education and Training is basically responsible for academic control of the education department imparting different types of trainings and executing various programs: the Sarva Shishksha Abhiyan – (SSA) and the Rashtraya Mahamadya Shishksha Abhiyan (RMSA). DIET is also in charge of institutional planning, school management, orientation programs
for quality training, Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) and, Early Child Care (ECC). Different trainings that are conducted by the DIET are:

1. Capacity Building Training: This type of training is important to build teachers knowledge in different subject areas. There are two types of Capacity Building Trainings - Inclusive and Exclusive. Inclusive training involves all the subjects: English, Math, Science or other subjects in one training session and Exclusive training is subject-specific training, (for example, English, Math or other subjects individually). The hard spots are identified and experts are called in from the Education Department, University or Colleges to deliver the training and clarify the concepts. “Not all teachers attend the workshops. We conduct training for 50, 60 or 70 teachers in a month. During winter break we train about 1000 - 2000 teachers” (DIET official). In the academic year 2011-2012, Capacity Building Trainings were conducted for English, Math, Kashmiri, Social Science, and Science for seven zones in Srinagar District (DIET Digest, 2012).

2. Induction level training is imparted to newly hired and newly promoted teachers (Laboratory assistants and Rahber-e-Taleem teachers). Teachers are taught their role with regard to academics, staff, attendance, admissions, registers, cash books and other duties regarding their job. As indicated, the DIET has a proper training program to train librarians and laboratory assistants who are promoted as teachers. However, some teachers mentioned that newly promoted teachers don’t have proper training in pedagogy for elementary grades, for example, they don’t know phonetics in English.

3. Diploma in Elementary Education (DEED) is a 2 year program also offered to newly promoted laboratory or library assistants (high school graduate, their minimum qualification is 10+2) and Rahber-e-Taleem teachers (These teachers are hired locally and their minimum qualification is also 10+2). All of the teacher candidates study subjects like
psychology, and school management and the syllabus is devised by the Board of School Education. They can however opt for teaching subjects like English/Math, Math/Science according to their choice. The teacher candidates are taught different methods of teaching, such as, teaching with TLMs, group teaching and micro teaching.

During interview conversation with the DIET official, he described the nature of trainings and stated, “During quality teaching workshops, training is imparted to teachers about transitions in the class, how the students can be monitored. Even in Capacity Building trainings, we teach them. DIET provides district level training, but when there is state level training, that is for all”. The DIET official further mentioned that at the institute teachers are taught pedagogical skills of student-centered teaching and learning, for example, when primary teachers are taught how to teach the days of the month, “The teachers come up with poems like “tees hain din September key, bakee din … (thirty days of September, remaining days…) adding, “this is the kind of pedagogy we want them to use for teaching their students, student friendly - a teacher has to come to the level of the students. The situation in the class room should be such that the students get clear concept of the topic”.

DIET has developed the “Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation: (C.C.E) for the assessment of teaching and learning process for both the scholastic (academic) areas and the non-scholastic areas. DIET is currently involved in devising lesson plans for grades 6, 7, 8. The Zonal Education Officers – (ZEO’s) give the lesson plans to teachers. “We are going to prepare teachers guide for class transactions,” (DIET official).

Recently, DIET has started monthly subject level ‘Capacity Building Training’ at the Cluster Resource Centers (CRCs) for all the zones where subject teachers get together on the 15th and 16th of each month and discuss problems related to the lessons in different subjects or the syllabus. Participant teachers of this study acknowledged that they get together in
groups and discuss difficulties with the peers and they discuss easier ways of teaching a concept. My observation of this specific training at the CRC, Batmaloo zone, confirmed that teachers had come to attend the training and there were three separate groups of teachers in one room for English, Mathematics and Environmental Studies. While some of the groups were disengaged (it felt they didn’t have any direction), the maths group was very involved where a group of 8-10, grade 5, teachers were discussing strategies for teaching the radius and the diameter of the circle. One teacher had taken the lead role to explain strategies for teaching this lesson to other teachers. All the teachers were getting help from each other.

*In-service training: Teachers’ insights*

It was very helpful to gain participant teachers’ insights about the nature of in-service trainings, their duration and their timings. Participant teachers acknowledged that trainings take place and some of them had been part of the trainings at different times during past 3-5 years. Teachers informed me about the Capacity Building Trainings that are offered to teachers from time to time and how it is helping them. They appreciated the Department of Education’s support with regard to trainings and mentioned that the government is doing a lot to support the teacher community. Nahid indicated that they receive training to teach using the activity-based teaching method. Different types of Capacity Building Trainings that the teachers were familiar with: 1. During winter the DIET organizes training for teachers for 10-20 days. The training dates are usually published in the newspaper. 2. The cluster level trainings offered during the summer are 1-2 days long and teachers are compensated ₹ 60 in cash and the refreshments (as reported by Nahid and the Cluster Resource Person). This recently introduced, subject specific Capacity Building Training at the CRC is liked by teachers as teachers from the same zones (designated by the Department of Education, Srinagar) are able to discuss instructional issues or improvements with their peers, and can
receive or give help. Nahid believes, “I feel this training is beneficial to me as it is helping me discuss my issues related to teaching mathematics. It is relevant as compared to Kashmiri trainings which were boring as the teachers felt they spoke Kashmiri and they would not require such training”. At the CRC there are resource persons to help teachers with matters pertaining to instruction; however teachers reported that there are no subject experts or specialists available to help the teachers (teachers informed that in future they may get help from specialists).

Participant teachers had varied experiences with these trainings as they are imparted in varied topics and all teachers had not attended all of the trainings. Nyla has attended trainings in the following areas: understanding student inquiry, book discussion on the content of science text book, and Kashmiri language (Kashmiri language instruction has been recently introduced in schools) while, Zeenat has attended one training in winter where she was taught about lesson planning. Nahid has attended a crafts work training for 25 days that was offered to teachers in New Delhi where she was taught how to teach students to make objects out of daily materials, tie and dye techniques so that they can earn their livelihood by making such crafts. Amina hasn’t been to any of the trainings so far and she sites two reasons: for winter training, “I was called to attend once, but I was not available, as it was during winter” and for summer training, “we received the information late”. Nahid also believed that the timings of the winter trainings don’t suit all teachers.

Some of the participant teachers pointed out inadequacies of these trainings, for example, Zeenat said that no formal training is given to teachers to deal with special need students; some trainings are not meaningful because of their repetitive nature (teachers should be taught new ways to deliver instruction as the books are tough). Furthermore,
trainings should be designed for diverse groups of teachers and with the availability of resources in mind and should be offered to all teachers.

*Improvements under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan – SSA*

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, a program for the universalization of elementary education, supports quality learning by providing midday meals, funds for teaching and learning materials and for school improvement.

According to Nahid, “There have been lots of improvements under SSA:

1. Midday meals motivate parents who live at or below poverty line to send their children to school. “It is an attraction for children to be at school,” said Amina. “Students eagerly wait for their meals and enjoy their lunch,” said Zeenat.

2. School development fund from SSA is used to upgrade classrooms, for instance, providing matting for the classrooms.

3. There are also scholarships for children varying from ₹ 200 to ₹ 2000 offered to merit holders or to students below poverty line or students form backward classes, as stated by Amina.

Zeenat mentioned that according to SSA all children should be able to read and write. SSA provides funds for wheel chair access to special needs children. There are three types of funds: 1. for school maintenance ₹ 5000 2. for school grants ₹ 5000– wherever needed for infrastructure 3. for TLMs – Teaching and Learning Materials, each teacher gets ₹ 500, and at the cluster resource center teachers are taught to develop TLMs from common materials.

To sum up, under the supervision of the DIET, Capacity Building in-service trainings at the district level are imparted to teachers with the aim to train them in student-centered approach to pedagogy. Among different trainings the recently introduced, subject level, Capacity Building Training at the Cluster Resource Centers is helping teachers to discuss
instructional issues or improvements with their peers and vice versa. Lastly, improvements because of SSA, specifically, providing teachers ₹500 for TLM and training the teachers to develop TLMs at the cluster resource center is benefitting teachers’ shift to new pedagogical practices.

6.5.2 What are the hindrances?

In this section, I describe the hindrances faced by the participant teachers on a daily basis that are not only impeding the teachers’ ability to deliver instruction within the directives of the NCF (2005), but they also affecting teaching and learning in general. The following themes discuss the hindrances faced by the teachers: Students’ background and family support, the carry on system, syllabus, classroom environment and school conditions, resources to support play-way learning, student absenteeism and infrastructure. Other barriers include language, lack of resources for special needs students and mid-term transfers.

Students’ background and family support

Students’ background and their family support for teaching and learning is a major hindrance. All the participant teachers mentioned that the majority of students come either from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or their parents are less educated. According to Nyla, there is a difference between the school and home environment. Students do not have support at home as there is no reinforcement of learning and students come blank from home. The parents are either working or less educated and they do not listen to their children as they tell them to keep their school matters at the school. At home, students don’t revise the content learned at school, therefore they don’t remember and whatever the teachers teach at school stops at the school.

Nahid mentioned, “They (students) don’t do anything at home. They close the books
at school and open them the next day at school again; the bags are brought in the same
condition as they were packed at school”. For Nahid, homework completion is an indication
that the students have revised the lesson at home. In addition, when they respond to questions
the following day, it shows that they have reviewed the content.

Amina said, “Parents are disinterested and they don’t do their part as they show no
interest. At times we also have to counsel parent to be involved in their children’s studies and
take interest. We tell them that the way they care for their child’s food, they have to care for
their education. Parents go for work and send their children to school at God’s mercy (Uper
waaley kay bharosay pe baijhte hain) and don’t bother how they study. The children who
study here have family problems; they have many siblings (more children per household),
and are weak as they lack proper diet.”

According to Zeenat, because of their family background, school is not a priority for
students, and thus they don’t pursue higher studies. Parents stay at home and they want their
children to do the same. They don’t even come to collect their child’s report card (only 1%
shows up) because they work as labourers or farmers and don’t have time. “If we ask the
children their D.O.B (date of birth), they don’t know. Nowadays some parents are aware and
ask their children to read or write.”

*The carry on system*

The policy of the “carry on system” allows mass promotion of students to the next
grade level. Teachers acknowledge that this system has been designed to promote
accessibility to elementary education because if the students fail, their parents are hesitant to
send them to school because they may be labeled as failures in the community. However,
teachers have differing beliefs about this policy. Nyla thinks that students who don’t even
know how to write their names are promoted to the next grade level in order to avoid them
suffering from an inferiority complex. In addition, the carry on system allows students to move upwards even if they are performing below grade level, as for some students the intelligence is ‘hidden’ and they might perform better at a later point. On the contrary, Nyla feels that if students are not promoted, the teachers could work on their weaknesses until they are prepared to move on. Nahid believes that due to mass promotion of students to the next grade level, the students cannot cope with the syllabus and they cannot demote such students back as the system does not permit doing so. According to Nahid, this has lessened the burden for teachers as, previously, they had to produce 60-80% results.

**Syllabus**

The syllabus which is developed and designed by the Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education, Srinagar, actually refers to textbook lessons, specifically the lessons that are to be covered. Participant teachers mentioned that the syllabus has recently been revised as the textbooks have changed. According to Zeenat, the syllabus changed three years ago for Mathematics, English, and Science (more so in Mathematics), and when the books change the teachers come to know that the syllabus has changed. Teachers usually get a copy of the syllabus from the headmaster of the school who keeps the master copy. Teachers Amina and Zeenat mentioned, “We get a copy of the syllabus, which is developed by the School Board authorities,” while Nahid indicated, “We get syllabus from the Board of School Education which is divided (by month) into topics for Unit 1, Unit 2, Term 1 and Term 2, (all pertaining to the textbook)”.

Teachers highlighted many weaknesses of the syllabus, for instance, Nahid indicated, “the syllabus was lengthy and elaborate in the past, but now it is less; there has been a kind of downgrade. They have deducted many chapters and the books are not progressive in the sense that topics used to progress as the grades progressed (information was built up as the
grades progressed).” Amina feels the need to have General Knowledge and Computer Studies included in the syllabus, especially in the primary classes. Nyla informed that the government stresses the completion of the syllabus regardless of whether a student learns or not. However, the syllabus is not completed because instruction has to be repeated to students who don’t respond during the initial explanation of the lesson. Teachers Nyla, Nahid, Amina, and Zeenat have never been involved in textbook or syllabus making, but Nahid mentioned that teachers can provide feedback to the Zonal Education Officer (ZEO) about the textbooks or the chapters therein.

**Classroom environment and school conditions**

All the participant teachers affirmed that the nature of the classroom environment affects learning. The conditions of the teaching and learning environments where the participant teachers taught were evident at the outset. With the exception of Amina’s classroom, all other teachers were teaching in classrooms which were not conducive to learning. Nahid and Zeenat taught in co-shared classrooms (as there are not enough classrooms) where two different classes occupied diagonally opposite spaces of the classroom (Observation notes). Nyla taught in a classroom that had access to the staff-room and this was a source of constant disturbance for the students. (Staff room is in vicinity to the classroom, students hear what teachers are saying—Observation notes)

Nyla thought a co-shared classroom causes intermingling of voices, while Nahid said, “In a co-shared classroom, we get disturbed when one teacher is teaching loudly so the other has to stop. A classroom environment should be calm, but not noisy.” Similarly, Zeenat said, “There should be no distraction or disturbance during learning, (Interview 2)” indicating that the classroom atmosphere is very noisy as there are two classes going on at the same time which is difficult for teachers and affects student learning. In addition, the classrooms are not
well lit; they don’t have lighting or electric connections. During the first unit test, it was
difficult for students to write the test due to low visibility inside the classroom as it was dark
and cloudy outside (observation notes).

Furthermore there are limited classroom supplies: 1. Lack of dusters and limited
supply of chalk. Teachers frequently send students to get these items from the office. 2. Some
classrooms have a proper blackboard, while others (especially the co-shared classrooms)
have very small blackboards at floor level and the teachers experience great difficulty writing
on them (all the teachers felt this was the foremost barrier to their ability to teach), 3. There is
lack of tables and desks, and the mats made of jute are very hard to sit on.

*Resources to support play-way-learning*

In the classrooms in Srinagar lack of many different resources affect the quality of
learning through the play-way method. The teachers acknowledged that educational
resources to support play-way method learning are lacking. There are no computer rooms. “If
learning-by-doing has to be used in the classrooms, we should have proper resources as we
cannot only use the blackboard. It would be very good for children and it would benefit them
as they don’t have computers at home.” Similarly, the use of technology to enhance teaching
and learning of any lesson may not be implemented because of the unavailability of
equipment like television, video/DVD recorder, overhead projector or LCD projector. In
contrast, Amina’s school had computers for primary grades because the school was run by a
private school sometime ago and the Central Reserve Police Force donated computers to the
school. However, the teachers have occasionally been able to acquaint students to the
computer and its different parts.

Secondly, resources for ‘learning-by-doing’ that require children to visit places
outside of the school is not possible. For instance, a visit to historical place requires
permission of higher authorities and there are many obstacles. Nahid said, “In history, I had to teach about places like Delhi. Actually, I had a personal video of the city. I wanted my students to watch the video, but I did not have the means to show it. Also, I wanted to take them to the zoo but I could not; at that time I felt a display of a zoo would have helped. Eventually, I had to teach them verbally. There is a lack of many such resources” (Interview 2).

_Student absenteeism_

Student absenteeism affects the teaching of all the participant teachers as they have to repeat the lesson(s) for such students and this in turn affects the timely completion of the syllabus. Nahid acknowledged, “It is similar to when a teacher is gone for a long period and the students suffer”. During classroom observation, Amina’s often asked her students, “Why don’t you come daily? Ask your mother/father to come and see me at the school.” She felt that absenteeism of students is a serious problem and added, “Students come to school for one day and stay at home for two days. They are not punctual to school and not very interested in their studies. The parents are responsible as they don’t care. You see a student who comes regularly to school benefits and performs well in class” (Interview 2). Zeenat stated that it is difficult to teach and she can’t repeat the lessons as she has to complete the syllabus. She said, “While some students are regular to school, some don’t come regularly. Like one day four people show up, and the next day another four show up. They come up with all sorts of excuses, but it is the students who suffer as they miss instruction” (Interview 2).

_Infrastructure_

Observations conducted at the research sites and the teachers’ impressions of the schools, classrooms, and the resources for teaching in an appropriate way revealed the following: 1. Access and location of the school: location of the school by the road side
constantly exposes the students and teachers to noise (horns of different vehicles) and the classroom environment is no longer calming as the teachers wanted it to be. In addition the surroundings of the schools are untidy either because of nearby garbage dumps, run-off water or the dirt. 2. Condition of the classroom: the classrooms were untidy as there was lot of dust/mud on tables and chairs in some classrooms. Amina acknowledged, “Classroom cleanliness is important, but the classrooms are untidy. I encourage the students to use dustbins”. 3. All the schools lack proper washrooms. 4. Weather hinders teaching and if the cold weather sets in early they have to close schools as they don’t have proper facilities to continue schooling during the winter. The conditions are worsened if the classrooms have broken windows and panes. 5. There are not enough classrooms per school and classrooms were co-shared as at two of the research sites.

**Strikes (Hartals)**

All the participant teachers confirmed that the strikes (hartals) are the fundamental hindrance to learning. These strikes have consequences for government-run school students as parents don’t send their children to school. On the contrary, the private schools don’t shutdown frequently as a result of strikes (unless there are strict orders for compliance). The teachers following the strict orders by the government come to school and the schools function without the students. The participant teachers commented on the strikes in 2010:

“During 2010 there was no school for 3 months. Following the government orders for the reduction of syllabus, we slashed the syllabus to 50%. The final marks for all subjects were given out for whatever portions of the syllabus were covered.” said Nahid.

Amina mentioned, “Day to day situations like hartals (strikes) affect our teaching immensely. With time for teaching lost, it is hard to cover the entire syllabus. In addition, if
children don’t revise the previous topic and due to interruption in their teaching cycle, they tend to forget and this consequently affects my teaching.”

Zeenat stated, “Due to the situations here education is disturbed, call for strikes is an everyday affair. This is the main problem that hurts education. Due to the disturbance as a result of strikes in the year 2010, the syllabus was not completed. For example, in 3rd grade the students had learned the concept of multiplication, but not other concepts due to reduction of syllabus and in the following year, that is 4th grade, these students didn’t understand some topics as they had not learned the concepts properly in the previous grade.”

Other barriers

Language

Students have language and pronunciation problems and their English language proficiency (reading, writing, listening and speaking) is below their grade level as noted during classroom observations and as stated by the teachers. The books are written in English and students need help to read the text and understand the meaning. During observations it was also noted that students have limited reading proficiency in other languages such as Urdu. However, teachers can now use mother tongue to teach. Nahid mentioned, “Before we could not teach in mother tongue, but now we can teach in our mother tongue,” and students can understand the lesson.

Lack of resources for special need students

Resources to support special needs students in schools are almost negligible. There are separate schools for special needs students at two different locations, but the parents prefer to send them to the neighbourhood schools as they are nearby. Also, parents don’t have the means to send their children to such far off specialized schools. Although, there are
few special needs students per classroom and all the teachers realize that they have to make accommodations for such students, there are no resources for them at local schools. Due to the lack of resources, Zeenat and other teachers of her school feel that a special need student is a hindrance to others as he/she cannot understand the regular content and she cannot force him/her to study regular content because she know he/she has a special need. Therefore, needs of such students are not met.

**Mid-session transfers**

Mid-session transfers of teachers produce unnecessary hurdles for teachers as well as students. Nyla mentioned that mid-session transfers are not good as the teacher has known the students for a number of days. Nahid declared that mid-session transfers have a direct impact on student learning as the students take time to get adjusted to the new teacher. During the observation phase, one of the teachers was transferred to another location and the incumbent teacher did not teach the same subjects as her. The students lost valuable learning time, but luckily the teacher was able to reverse the transfer until the end of the session, which worked in favour of her students. Teachers believed that when relevant subjects (for which they are qualified) are not assigned to teachers, it becomes a barrier, as any teacher’s concerned subject knowledge helps him/her deliver proper instruction.

**6.6 What is the nature of pedagogy (teaching and learning) in four elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir, and to what extent and why have they shifted since the introduction of the National Curriculum Framework (2005)?**

The findings pertaining to the subsidiary questions derived as a result of extensive data analysis and careful coding, and the resultant emerging themes guide the response to the core question of this research study, that is, the nature of pedagogy in four elementary
classrooms in Srinagar, and its shifting nature with response to the NCF (2005). Participant teachers characterize classroom pedagogy through high and varied perceptions of their role as teachers, their professional knowledge, recognizing students’ diversity, and motivation for teaching and learning. Teachers’ pedagogical practices within the classrooms highlighted the use teacher-directed, guided instruction (with the textbook as the main resource), as the frequently used pedagogical practice, with some use of the play-way method, learning-by-doing and the activity-based method. In addition, themes such as teaching for understanding and checking for understanding, and teachers’ goals for students helped understand teachers’ preferences for the pedagogical practices employed in their classrooms. Themes including respect for each other, the student as a friend, positive reinforcement used by teachers, student engagement-arousing curiosity and using alternate ways to capture interests, whole class participation and one-on-one or individual practice expounded the nature of students’ participation in the classroom and the different ways through which teachers encourage and manage such participations. Furthermore, themes such as teachers’ acknowledgement of change in teaching methods with no knowledge of the NCF, their understanding of the shift from rote learning to the play-way method, learning-by-doing, or activity-based method, and their use of activities from new textbooks exemplified why and how their understandings have changed since the inception of the NCF (2005). Lastly, the analysis of multiple data and emergence of the role of the DIET, teachers’ in-service training, and improvements under SSA shed light on factors that have helped teachers teach using new pedagogical practices. In the same way, themes such as students’ background and family support, the carry on system, syllabus, classroom environment and school conditions, resources to support play-way-learning, student absenteeism, infrastructure, strikes (hartals), language barriers, lack of resources for special need students and mid-session transfers describe what has hindered
teachers from delivering instruction in general and within the directives of the NCF (2005).

The following analysis about the nature of pedagogy in the elementary classrooms in Srinagar and the extent to which it has shifted and why, as mentioned earlier, is guided by the aforesaid themes and discussed as follows: teacher-centered, direct instruction promoting active student involvement—the main pedagogical method; shift in pedagogical understanding, but inadequate shift in pedagogical practices; and lastly, understanding the directives of the authorities.

Teacher-directed, guided instruction with active student involvement—
the main pedagogical method

With regard to the elementary classrooms in Srinagar, the data collected (especially the multiple classroom observations in four different classrooms) repeatedly displayed incidences of teacher-directed, guided instruction with active student involvement for each teaching session, which thus emerged as the main pedagogical method used by the teachers currently. Using the textbook as the main resource, teachers involve students in whole class, guided instruction. With the teacher in control, each teaching session consists of reading the lesson, explaining the meanings, and check for understanding by calling students one-by-one to respond to the teacher’s questions. For example, Zeenat explains the meaning of each word in the text, line by line and word by word in the Urdu language, for example, “Aap andaza lagao”, meaning “guess”. She makes sure that she explains all the questions and activities to all the students, who follow along (Observation notes).

My observation field notes of a science lesson read as, “The teacher read from the text book and explained the meaning of each sentence (explaining the meaning in Kashmiri where necessary), and asked the students to underline the hard words. Students took turns to read and the same process was repeated till the class was done reading. During the lesson the
teacher checked for understanding many times, repeating the same information over and over
again”.

Teachers’ preference for this method appears to be guided by their understanding of
the teaching profession. First, there is a high perception that teaching is a noble profession, a
revered one, which is even regarded as an act of worship by some teachers. Participant
teachers understand their responsibility in the broader spectrum of the pedagogy as
possessing good professional knowledge, imparting perfect knowledge, understanding
student diversity and teaching students to the best of their abilities, creating a safe classroom
environment that promotes learning and, at the foremost, teaching for understanding. It is
constant repetition of information through repetitive teacher-directed, guided instruction that
teachers believe helps them teach for understanding. During this process the teacher demands
all students to actively contribute by either answering the questions posed or confirming their
response with the teacher.

The active involvement of the students by the teachers usually includes, reading
paragraphs from the lesson, checking for understanding verbally by asking all the students to
respond to questions one-by-one, or calling them to solve mathematical questions on the
board. Keeping a constant eye on students while they write on the board, each participant
teacher guides the students to derive correct answers ensuring that they have dealt with all
segments of a unit or a lesson.

*Shift in pedagogical understanding, but limited shift in pedagogical practices*

In order to determine the extent to which the pedagogical classroom practices in the
elementary classroom in Srinagar have shifted, the examination of the play-way-method,
learning-by-doing, or the activity-based pedagogical methods emphasized a meager change
in already existent teacher-directed, guided instructional practices. As evident from the
teachers’ respective interview conversations, the play-way method meant either learning while playing or playing and learning through actions, role play, singing or acting. In learning by doing, teachers made use of actual examples (wherever possible) to help students understand a topic, while during activity-based method teachers utilize an activity and accordingly engage students to accomplish learning. Even though teachers’ perceptions indicate old methods of lecture or rote learning as being monotonous, their repeated use of the textbook and explaining the lesson over and again didn’t indicate that they have moved away from their current predominant method of teacher-directed, guided instruction. During classroom observations of activity-based lessons, in Nahid’s and Zeenat’s classes, they read and explained the activity step-by step to students using the text book and through guided instruction helped students perform each step of the activity (Observation notes). While the teachers indicated the use of varied ways as described in section 6.4, during my observations I noticed some instances of activity-based-learning in Nahid’s and Zeenat’s classes and they were also conducted through guided instruction. Nyla and Amina’s methods were mostly textbook-centered, teacher-directed, guided instruction on the days when I observed their classrooms.

In support of the aforementioned discussions, teachers’ portrayals of the play-way method, learning-by-doing or the activity-based methods do indicate a shift in their pedagogical understanding, as they state that they can no longer teach through rote methods or teaching-by-telling. Teachers also demonstrate understanding of different ways to engage their students, such as, through fun and using creative ways: colouring, drawing and writing activities. Additionally, teachers also understand the importance of motivation, for example, arouse interest by only lending them some information so that they are curious to know more; show care and love; use praise and give rewards. On the contrary, it appeared teachers
had limited understanding of what is expected of them as they have no exposure to the NCF (2005); for them the play-way method was teaching by playing or in a fun way and using an activity from the textbook to teach which they evidently implement through teacher-directed, guided instruction.

Lastly teachers’ shift in their pedagogical understanding is also understood through the in-service trainings that they have received so far and the revised textbooks that teachers diligently use for instruction. During one Capacity Building Training, teachers come together for 1-2 days and through shared learning opportunities provided by the CRCs, they discuss issues related to instruction. Teachers’ experience with the in-service trainings is varied and they don’t directly seem to target classroom instruction at the school level. For teachers, textbooks are their only means to know what they are required to teach and they use activities designed in the new textbooks to actively involve students in learning, therefore confirming a meager shift towards new pedagogical practices.

**Directives of the authorities**

Teachers’ shifting understanding of pedagogy is a result of the directives they have received from the authorities to deliver instruction using the play-way method, learning-by-doing, and the activity-based method, as explained in section 6.4. Teachers are required to use the prescribed textbooks to implement these new pedagogical practices. The directives from the authorities are not straightforward as teachers have not received any training about the NCF (2005) so far. However, the efforts of the Department of Education, Srinagar District and the SSA support teachers through in-service trainings and funds to buy TLMs direct teachers to employ new methods of instruction in their respective classrooms.

In this chapter, I presented an analysis of teachers’ understandings of classroom pedagogy, and how teaching and learning takes place in the four elementary classrooms in
Srinagar, focusing on the predominant and new classroom pedagogical practices utilized by the teachers. The data obtained as a result of multiple observations, interview conversations and analysis of pertinent documents also highlighted the ways through which teachers encourage and manage student participation, analyzed how teachers’ understandings and practices have shifted since the inception of the National Curriculum Framework (2005), revealed teachers’ perceptions about the factors that have helped or hindered them deliver instruction within the directives of the NC F (2005) and, lastly, attempted to present an analysis of the core question concerning the nature of pedagogy in the elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir.
Chapter 7
Interpretation: Making sense of the emerging themes

This chapter presents the final phase of data analysis, that is, interpretation of the emergent themes or meanings that can be derived from the various sources of data used. The data is interpreted by comparing the findings of the study with the information gleaned from the literature and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Interpretations are also based on my personal experiences as an educator in India. As specified in chapter 1, this research inquiry was intended to examine the nature of pedagogy and how teachers’ classroom pedagogical practices are shifting in elementary classrooms in Srinagar, within the context of the National Curriculum Framework (2005). Specifically, the following interpretations focus on the understandings deduced regarding the nature of pedagogy, teachers’ pedagogical practices, their shifting role, students’ classroom participation and factors that are helping or hindering teachers shift to new pedagogical practices, besides other general hindrances.

7.1 Understanding teachers’ pedagogical practices in elementary classrooms in Srinagar

In chapter 3, I understood pedagogy based on Watkins & Mortimore’s (1999) definition as: an act or art of teaching and learning in which a ‘teacher’ is a person who designs, plans and devises any conscious activity to implement learning in the ‘learner,’ who is central to the learning process. Teachers’ ‘conscious activity’ in the schools in Srinagar, Kashmir mostly includes teaching the textbook lessons each day with the main aim of having students understand the concept and the whole lesson clearly. Teaching activities are more often limited to prescribed textbook lessons that typically involve direct instruction to the whole class, and arguably it is the main pedagogical method used by the teachers. Direct
instruction or didactics involves explanation, demonstration and interaction with students (Good, as quoted in Woolfolk, 2006). As such, within classrooms in Srinagar, teaching activities specifically comprise of explaining the contents of the lesson, ensuring that the meanings are clear and using examples to allow students to comprehend meanings. These highly didactic teaching and learning processes closely correspond with traditional transmission approaches of teaching where teachers do most of the talking during direct instruction as they keep repeating the information, meanings, or examples over and over again until they have determined that the students have learned. Teachers exhibit authority over students in a friendly and non-coercive way, as they provide directions during and after the instruction, which students are expected to follow. In addition, when checking for students' comprehension of the content, teachers appear to conform to a more behaviourist view of learning as they look for observed behaviour (responses) by repeatedly asking them questions verbally in order to elicit the correct answers.

All the teachers who participated in this study acknowledged that in the last three to four years, their teaching practices have shifted away from lecture and rote memorization, as they have been asked to change their teaching practices and use the new play-way method, learning-by-doing and the activity-based method. The play-way method entails making learning fun, joyful, and interesting for learners, while activity-based method is engaging students in an activity designed to bring about learning. Learning-by-doing involves students in the activity and students enhance their understanding of the lesson by actually seeing or feeling the examples of things or doing it for themselves; for example, doing experiments or using teaching and learning materials (TLMs). Teachers in this study understand these play-way methods as teaching while playing, teaching in a fun manner, not being strict, and providing classroom conditions where students feel safe. For these teachers, play-way
practices imply the use of rhyming to teach multiplication tables, singing, role-playing or actions, and so on. This is because of the teachers’ understanding that such actions help their students retain information better. These play-way or activity-based pedagogical practices (It is important to know that participant teachers interchangeably used the play-way method and activity-based method to mean the same) mostly makes use of the activities designed in the textbooks with the teachers leading the activity through guided practice, for example, teaching students to draw a circle using a thread and a compass in mathematics or employing learning-by-doing (demonstrate to students by showing the objects) particularly when teaching science. In doing so, the teachers have realized that the learner is important and that learning is derived through deliberate, active engagement of their students via classroom talk that consists of clarification of facts and ideas either by asking simple, low-order questions (what, how many, who) that mostly have yes or no answers, and/or by discussion of the lesson, (e.g., discussing the various cultural festivals that people celebrate or different types of health care centers available). In these cases, classroom talk is quite repetitive as some of the teachers believe that repeating helps retain information and for some teachers it helps in ‘cross-checking’ which they use as an assessment of learning. There is some use of scaffolded dialogue, mostly by clarifying or conveying specific facts. During such scaffolded dialogues, however, there appeared to be no indication that the teachers were facilitating students’ thinking from low to high order, using a model such as Bloom’s taxonomy. During textbook activities, students generally employed the ‘remember’, ‘understand’ and ‘apply’ categories of the cognitive process dimension of Bloom’s taxonomy, which is restricted to low-order processes only. The preceding incidences of teaching and learning bear striking resemblance to the already available literature on the Gurukul system (as mentioned in chapter 3) and the classroom practices in India as discussed by Clarke (2001) and Dewan
(2009), where teaching methods consist mostly of verbal teaching, chalk-and-talk, recitation, repetition, or memorization, are indicative of the classic traditional approach of teaching. Nonetheless, this interpretation of study results is not meant to find replications of the available literature, but its purpose is to find if and how teaching practices have shifted since the implementation of the NCF (2005).

One of the guiding principles of the NCF (2005) emphasizes that teaching and learning practices shift away from the abovementioned transmission oriented, traditional approaches. However, in the classrooms in Srinagar that I observed and talked with teachers about, there seems to be only a meager shift towards student-centered pedagogy. Even though the teachers in this study encouraged guided active participation of the students during direct instruction, teaching predominantly remains very much teacher directed and structured according to the lesson and not the student. Students read the text and complete all the exercises of any given lesson at the instructions of the teacher, respectfully abiding by what is being asked of them. Students are even provided answers to the questions by the teachers which renders them ‘empty receptacles’ with the teachers as the ‘depositors’ of knowledge as suggested in Freire’s (1970) banking model of education. In these classrooms there was very little or no evidence of students writing answers to questions in their own words and/or making use of personal experiences (construction of knowledge) as desired by the NCF (2005, p. 35). Current pedagogical practices in government-run elementary classrooms that I observed appeared to be mostly similar to classrooms that were existent prior to the introduction of the NCF (2005). With a few exceptions confirmed during my observations (e.g., guided, individual participation during teacher-directed instruction in mathematics, taking turns reading out the lessons in science), students were not usually engaged in varied activities (learning through role-play and some form of group work) within
the classroom. This is contrary to the central goal of the NCF (2005), which recommends that, “Schools must provide opportunities to question, debate, enquire, reflect, and arrive at concepts or create new ideas” (p.18) to enhance student engagement in the classroom.

An important observation was made about individualized subject teaching and the use of TLMs indicating little deviation from traditional transmission oriented practices. All subjects are taught as separate units by subject teachers, with no connection or harmonization between the subjects, despite specific recommendations in the NCF (2005). During classroom observations, each participant teacher presented subject knowledge for mathematics, science, physical education or English separately and there was no integration across subject areas. Teachers could have thought about integration of knowledge in subject areas, such as, science/mathematics and English to enhance application of knowledge across different subjects. Contrarily, the NCF (2005) recognizes the limitations of this subject-based approach pointing out that information presented for each subject area is fragmented and isolated like ‘watertight compartments’ (p.40), and concepts across subject areas are not integrated. Teachers appeared to lack knowledge and expertise in identifying similar concepts across subjects as they don’t have proper curriculum resources. Similarly, even though participant teachers acknowledge that they make use of TLMs, only one school actually indicated their use as they has displayed them as posters. Teachers get ₹500 each for TLMs and they have begun to make use of these resources, though not consistently. The Cluster Resource Centers have developed many low cost TLMs, but apparently not all teachers are aware of them. Trainings have been imparted at the Cluster Resource Centers to make TLM’s from simple day to day materials, however, it appears the trainings are not uniform across different blocks or CRCs as some teachers have received training while others have not. The above stated observations hence point out that the shift to new
pedagogical practices is not remarkable.

The NCF (2005) provides a platform for teachers to use critical pedagogy to provide a safe space for students to express themselves and cultivate in students the habit of appreciating the subtle differences in their surrounding environments, interactions, and relationships. While teachers in Srinagar reinforce student learning by linking topics to real-world examples, engaging learners in critical thinking and making them conscious of their surroundings through critical thinking challenges was not evident to great extent in the classrooms that I observed. In contrast, teacher-student interactions mostly comprised of teachers checking for understanding or students seeking clarification of the lesson from teachers. The mandated framework stresses that critical pedagogy form an important aspect of classroom pedagogical practices where teachers provide opportunities for students to be critical observers of their own conditions and are also engaged in problem solving, reasoning and thinking processes. Allowing students to engage in critical pedagogy through true dialogue promotes critical thinking as according to Freire (2000), critical thinking is based in the existence of dialogue. Also, Moon (2008) describes critical thinking as a form of thinking activity during which new knowledge is generated by processing existing knowledge.

During my observations in elementary classrooms, the nature of dialogues was simple and many aspects of critical thinking, for example, inferring, analysis, reflection, evaluation or synthesis, were absent.

Another guiding principle of the NCF (2005) is making examinations more flexible, formative, and integrating them into the classroom life. In the elementary classrooms in Srinagar assessment of learning is either informal (e.g., verbal evaluation of comprehension) or formal (e.g., class tests, unit tests and term examinations). Informal assessments used by the participant teachers are usually of diagnostic nature, such as checking for understanding
of information. Formal assessments, for example, term examinations, are lengthy and the students are asked questions that have descriptive answers which comprise of about 65-70% of the total mark. Students have to answer every question and there is no choice provided to students. Questions test simple computation skills or facts, but not problem solving or interpretation skills as outlined in the guidelines for examination reform.

Specific measures include changing the typology of the question paper so that reasoning and creative abilities replace memorization as the basis of evaluation, and integration of examinations with classroom life by encouraging transparency and internal assessment. (NCF, 2005 –Executive Summary, xi)

Participant teachers did not use assessment in a formative way to modify their teaching and learning practices to improve student achievement and there was little evidence of the use of more progressive pedagogies, constructivist approaches to teaching and learning, and/or critical pedagogy.

7.2 Understanding the shifting role of elementary teachers in Srinagar

In this study, teachers’ respective roles were explored through their own understandings about teaching and learning, as well as by their actions inside the classrooms and the school. First and foremost, their understandings conveyed a broad sense of responsibility towards their students: the idea that teaching students good things and distinguishing between what is right or wrong will prepare them to be better individuals within the Kashmiri society; creating positive learning experiences for students in order that they focus on learning; treating students equally irrespective of their diversity and background; and teaching students effectively and imparting perfect knowledge. Teachers’ understandings signified the importance of learners within the authoritative teacher-controlled classroom locales.
Participating teachers in Srinagar were also conscious of pedagogical principles such as punctuality, dedication to work, organizing meaningful learning, two-way communication between the teacher and the student, student involvement and engagement and organizing classroom materials as attributes of effective teachers. As well, they emphasized the essence of their motivation towards teaching, the importance of student motivation during learning and the effects of a positive, stress-free learning environment on student learning. As elementary teachers, they also supported the notion that strong foundation years make further levels of learning easier.

The teachers’ understanding of the shifting pedagogical practices appeared rudimentary in that they were aware that they can’t teach by way of the old lecture methods or teaching by telling, but by using the new play-way practices, learning-by-doing, the activity-based practices, or other co-operative teaching and learning practices, though this was much less evident in their daily classroom practices. During interviews and classroom observations, teachers demonstrated limited understandings of different approaches to teaching and learning. Beyond their traditional authoritative and dominant role during classroom instruction, they only occasionally facilitated more play-way and/or activity-based teaching and learning practices. As such, there appears to have been little shift in these teachers’ understandings about their role as facilitators, discussion leaders or co-constructors of knowledge. The reasons for this are unclear, but may be attributed to a lack of exposure to constructivist views of learning and/or an array of teaching methods during their Bachelor of Education programs and in-service trainings, or because they hold fast to their goal of making students understand and impart ‘perfect knowledge’ by doing all the telling during direct instruction.
It was also noted that teachers’ actions showed limited initiative for collaboration or for the exploration of different ways of teaching, despite having very reasonable working conditions that provide ample time for such opportunities (usual instruction time per day peaks at about 3-3.5 hours). It was apparent that teachers directed a good deal of time towards personal activities or idling as opposed to some of the professional development and planning outlined above. While teachers acknowledged that the classrooms should be conducive to student learning and that they need to be responsible for creating such a learning environment, observations of their classes revealed a certain lack of responsibility and little concern for finding useful materials for the classroom.

7.3 Understanding student participation in elementary classrooms in Srinagar

Student participation during each teaching and learning activity helped understand whether teachers’ pedagogical practices have truly shifted and reflect the student-centered pedagogical approach. In the elementary classrooms in Srinagar teachers directly control all the teaching and learning processes during each lesson. Hence students are directed to participate either during whole class participation or through individual, one-on-one interactions when checking for understanding. During such interactions, students exhibit attributes that are characteristic of learners in traditional teacher-centered settings; seated in rows with their bags in front of them, the students show respect to teachers, maintain discipline, stay focused and don’t disrupt the classroom processes. They show enthusiasm for learning by paying attention to what their teachers tell them and most of them readily participate in their learning as they volunteer to answer questions, read from the textbook or solve mathematical operations. For them, the teacher is all-knowing; they often clarify information from the teacher and, moreover, they strictly adhere to do-as-directed rules as
they follow the instructions diligently. During my classroom observations and interview conversations with the participant teachers, it was clear that students’ roles were not very much indicative of learners in constructivist settings. Although they were actively involved during an activity, their actions (except for a few students in each classroom) didn’t reveal them as being active challengers, thinkers, inquirers, or communicators of deep and insightful knowledge – traits of students in progressive constructivist settings.

Student participation in the classrooms in Srinagar is dependent on the teacher as students need teachers’ help in understanding the texts due to their limited proficiency in English. Students have been directly influenced by the restrictiveness of textbooks, as there is a major discrepancy between English as the medium of instruction and the linguistic competence of the students in English. Textbooks are all written in English, but the students’ linguistic acquisition is below grade level, resulting in challenges in reading and understanding the texts. At school, teachers may help them with comprehension of the texts, but at home the students often have no support from parents or guardians because their literacy level as well as English linguistic competency may be low. Students’ linguistic ability may limit their participation in constructivist informed teaching practices as they may not be able to take personal responsibility of their learning during such activities.

7.4 Factors that are helping teachers shift their understandings

Resource support from the educational authorities is the most important factor that is helping teachers in Srinagar helping teachers transition to new pedagogical practices as was obvious through my interview conversations with the teachers and the DIET official. Teachers openly commended the efforts of the Education Department of Srinagar District, and the SSA in improving the quality of education by providing in-service training in particular, money for teaching and learning materials, midday meals for students, and funds
for school maintenance and development. As defined in the NCF (2005), training institutions like the DIET, BRCs and CRCs provide in-school support to teachers regarding quality improvements and the use of teaching and learning material for different subject areas. These training institutions have been set up in almost all the states in India. In Srinagar, the DIET has established itself as an institution that is responsible for imparting different types of training to teachers, both pre-service and in-service for the elementary as well as secondary levels, preparation of instructional material, preparation of low-cost teaching aids and the monitoring of SSA programs. Recently, teachers have begun to be trained in specific subject areas as well as general areas (all subjects) using student-centered approaches where teachers are taught student friendly approaches to teaching. In the year 2011, DIET conducted 59 varied training programs for head teachers, in-service teachers, master teachers at the elementary and the secondary levels, Resource Persons, Zonal Resource Persons and Cluster Resource Persons, Field Teachers, District Resource Groups and DEED student teachers (DIET digest, 2012).

The efforts of the government agencies like the DIET are notable; however, these efforts are taking place at a slow pace and are not uniform across different CRCs. The timings of the trainings during winter months doesn’t appear to be ideal for teachers and present hurdles as many teachers miss such opportunities due to personal reasons or for weather-related reasons. While teachers’ actions may be justified in some cases, it appears that some teachers are not taking these trainings seriously, as the trainings didn’t appear to be mandatory. On the bright side, the recently introduced Cluster Resource Training is benefitting teachers as they are able to meet together as a group at CRCs, and undeniably, it is an important step. On the down side, during this recent training the role of CRPs was somewhat unclear as they were not directly involved or helping teachers with discussions.
The ambiguity of CRPs roles is even mentioned in the NCF (2005) document which cautions that the roles of these organizations are ambiguous as they are not defined with “clarity and overlap of the functions” exist (NCF, 2005, p. 125).

Textbooks depict the change and are the main resources that the teachers use to deliver instruction and they have been revised to reflect curriculum changes as indicated by the NCF (2005). However, textbook revisions are not very satisfactory because some teachers think that the activities are very descriptive, harder for students to read themselves due to their limited English language proficiency, and even convey multiple concepts in one lesson. Even then teachers exactly follow the activities outlined in the textbooks to engage children through activity-based method, thus helping teachers implement new pedagogical practices with the help of suggested TLMs. Some of the participant teachers believe that the textbooks have been simplified and they are now easier for students to follow.

Obviously teacher training, both pre-service and in-service, and also the revision of the textbooks (to some extent) in alignment with NCF (2005) ascertain the central role of the education authorities, especially the DIET, Srinagar, Kashmir, and affiliated resource centers in supporting the changes in pedagogical practices. Nonetheless, they also point out the need to understand the desired changes in the curriculum, especially the shift in pedagogical practices in entirety with specific involvement of the key stakeholders, the teachers.

7.5 Factors that are hindering teachers shift their understandings

Teachers’ inadequate knowledge about the NCF (2005) document appeared to be a hindering factor for their shifting pedagogical practices. Following initial conversations with the participant teachers and the subsequent interviews, it was construed that teachers had bare minimum knowledge of the document as they had never heard of this framework, nor were they informed about it by the education department. The National Curriculum Framework
(2005) is essentially the document teachers and other stakeholders in education should be acquainted with. Knowledge of this elaborate document is significant to teachers as in it there are directions not only for changing pedagogical practices, but also for a paradigm shift – directives for changing the mindset about teaching and learning. It is incomprehensible why teachers have no directions in this regard, and one of the obvious reasons may be teachers’ status within the education milieus of Srinagar as perhaps the authorities are not aware that teachers are the agents of change.

*Difficult classroom and school conditions* were obvious from the multiple observations of teaching and learning processes inside the classrooms, while the participant teachers of this research study admitted the importance of a positive learning environment to teaching and learning. With the exception of one school, co-shared classrooms, classrooms in the vicinity of noisy staff rooms or those close to main roads resulted in children being subject to constant distractions and the loss of valuable instruction time. Classrooms have inadequate supplies of chalk and dusters, and the blackboards are very small. Moreover, textbooks, chalk and blackboards are the only resources for teachers to deliver instruction. Physical space of the classrooms is also insufficient to manage group work, designate different learning corners in a classroom or create space for self access learning materials. In the classrooms pertaining to this study, there was not enough space for each student to sit and place his/her bag in front in the case of co-shared classrooms or other small size classrooms. Most of the classrooms at the research sites in Srinagar were not even equipped with light bulbs to provide sufficient lighting for students to see clearly when there was low visibility outside. Such conditions are especially disheartening to observe when schools across the globe have already begun learning twenty-first century skills including the infusion of technology. In the NCF (2005) document, chapter 4 discusses in detail the school and
classroom environment, for example, acknowledging that the classrooms are dull, boring and so on. At the same time, the document makes references to maximum use of existing classroom resources, for example painting the walls of the classroom black, “so that they serve as a free slate and drawing board for children” (p. 81). These are low-cost quick-fixes, but the issue again is that neither the teacher nor the school administrators know what is actually outlined in the NCF (2005). Elementary classrooms at the participant schools had few or no displays of student work. With regard to making classrooms attractive and using displays in the form of posters that enhance learning which students can use as a quick reference during learning or students’ work that reflects student effort and participation, the schools showed vast inconsistency.

*Lack of parental involvement* is another important hindrance that teachers face every day. The support of learning at home is also negligible because a majority of the parents belong to low socio-economic groups and/or don’t have time (due to work) and thus don’t show interest in their child’s learning. Parents’ inaction can also be attributed to students’ occasional long-term absence from school as parents prioritize social engagements or other work over school. Considering the above challenges that the regular students face, the problems are even more complex for students with special needs because at local schools they don’t get proper support as the teachers are not trained and don’t have resources to make accommodations and differentiate instruction for such students. Teachers often send notes to parents to look into the matters concerning their child or show up at school, but such notes are often disregarded. In the participant schools, teachers and the principal or the headmaster of the school did not seem to have thought about alternate ways to build a rapport with parents or raise awareness about parental involvement at a purposefully planned event at school.
Lack of a state level curriculum framework is apparent as no such documents were available for reference. An analysis of the syllabi for different classes indicated that the syllabus for each subject outlines the chapters of the textbook that are intended to be taught over (e.g., Unit I, Unit II, Term I, Unit III, and Term II). For example, Syllabus for “Environmental Studies for class 4,” indicates the study of chapter 3, ‘Ear to Ear’ and chapter 10, ‘Abdul in the Garden,’ for Unit I. This validates Kumar’s (cited in Clarke 2001) reference to textbooks as the de facto curriculum. A syllabus specifies what units will be taught, and in the case of syllabi in elementary schools in Srinagar, it is prescribed and simultaneously aligned with the respective textbook. While textbooks are prepared by the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education and they are distributed free of charge to students, they are vague and don’t have clear objectives about what concept the students are going to learn. Teaching multiple concepts in one lesson might be confusing for students and frustrating for the teachers in constructivist teaching and learning settings, but the teachers in government-run elementary schools in Srinagar still dutifully teach the topic in a ritualized manner, reading the text, conveying the meanings and completing the comprehension exercises and or activities with or without the use of TLMs at the end of each lesson. In the textbooks that I reviewed, the learning objectives are not clearly defined which would otherwise help teachers to teach the concepts more clearly and without repetition.

Teacher status in Srinagar, Kashmir, helped understand the shift in pedagogy. Teachers are at the bottom of the hierarchical ladder in the educational delivery system, similar to what has been pointed out by Sharma (2009) about teachers generally in the education system in India. The existence of top-down policies, where teachers are not part of such policies, keeps the teachers disconnected from actualities, which can be seen as a major issue here when teachers say that they have been told the curriculum has changed. It is ironic
that a key stakeholder in the education system - the teacher- does not get first hand information about policy changes as they were found to be un-informed about the desired changes in teaching and learning as mandated by the NCF (2005).

*Social and political circumstances* have an effect on teachers, but more directly students are disadvantaged by frequent general strikes that are often called by pro-freedom organizations, political groups, or unions (of any type). As a result of these decisions of others, students in government-run schools (as private schools remain open) are instantly affected either due to long-term closure of their schools or due to decisions made by parents to keep them at home on days when there is a general strike. The extended strikes during the summer of 2010 and the punctuated, short-term strikes of 2012 are a testament to these facts. During the research period, from May 18th, 2012 to June 30th, 2012 the schools were interrupted by 11 days of strikes: 5 related to government employee strikes, 1 for no reason specified whatsoever, 1 related to transporters due to a hike in gasoline prices, and 4 related to the fire that burned down the Shrine of “Hazrat Gousal Azam Dastgeer”. As a result of these 11 days of intermittent strikes called for by different groups, students, especially those studying in government-run schools, were affected the most. It was not obvious during my time there that teachers or the school authorities had thought about using or even did use alternate ways to make up for the time lost. More importantly, it was observed that people are accustomed to making good excuses in the name of these strikes. As mentioned in chapter 6, teachers consider strikes as the fundamental hindrance to teaching and learning, and interestingly the NCF (2005) urges the primacy of the learner; in this elaborate prescriptive document, teaching of critical pedagogy is explicitly endorsed. In spite of this, inside the classrooms or at home, students are not engaged to think about these perplexing issues that face them on a daily basis which will shape their lives in later years.
**System inefficiencies**, such as the mid-term transfer of teachers to preferred schools as a result of favouritism on part of the administrative authority demonstrates a lack of consciousness of the consequences of such actions on students, which results in the loss of valuable instruction time. Coupled with these transfers, in some cases there is a lack of proper training given to temporary teachers (Rehbar-i-taleem, teachers recruited on local basis), who are asked to teach different grade levels in a non-specific manner.

The above discussed factors directly or indirectly present hindrances to teachers’ shifting pedagogical practices because of the following reasons: First, teachers’ understanding of what is expected of them within the education system of Srinagar is inadequate because their knowledge of changes mandated by the NCF (2005) is insignificant. Teachers’ knowledge of the NCF (2005) would have given them a clear direction about their changing role, the students and their diversity, and a broad selection of constructivists informed approaches to teaching and learning. Second, the absence of state level curriculum and provision of resources other than textbooks for the teachers, to support student-centered practices, leads them to rely solely on the textbooks. The use of textbooks to impart instruction through reading, explaining and checking for understanding procedures make their teaching repetitive, leaving no room for improvement. In addition, the lack of parental support presents personal hindrance in a way that students’ individual learning is not being supported at home. Classroom and school conditions present physical hindrances with regard to space, hence an impediment to teachers’ shifting pedagogical practices. Lastly, due to socio-political conditions in Srinagar valuable time is lost when teachers could attend in-service trainings as scheduled and enhance their pedagogical practices accordingly. Consequently, the educational administrative authorities would be able to implement plans in a timely manner and, inside the schools, students could gain more time for learning.
Concluding comments

To sum up and interpret the nature of pedagogy in the elementary classrooms in Srinagar that I investigated, it is obvious in light of the above interpretations that pedagogy, the teaching and learning processes, have begun a subtle shift towards being more student-centered. While the core practices of teaching and learning are still largely teacher-directed, there is an increasing acknowledgement among teachers and the educational authorities that changes are gradually being introduced, yet there are some factors being viewed as hindrances and some factors being viewed as supports. Teachers portray the new change as play-way method, learning-by-doing or the activity-based method. However, one important step to this effect is the centrality of the learner in this process as teachers are thoughtful of actively engaging students in their learning process by participation, thus working towards a paradigm shift, the student-centered pedagogy as desired by the NCF (2005). Another essential step to carry out this progressive pedagogy is mobilization of the administrative workforce using resources from the SSA to train teachers to deliver instruction within the directives of the NCF (2005). Moreover, with regard to the execution of the new pedagogy, authorities are moving at a slow pace, attempting themselves to understand the paradigm shift and what a coherent plan might look like. It is imperative to realize that in the current state of affairs, teachers are further from the starting line, but at least starting. In the next chapter, next-steps that delineated from the above discussion will be discussed.
The concluding chapter of this research study discusses the implications of the findings which were derived as a result of an interpretive inquiry of the pedagogical contexts, the teachers, students and the education system in Srinagar, Kashmir. In light of the results of this study, I suggest some concluding reflections and recommendations. This study cannot lead to specific and explicit suggestions for action as the sample was not chosen to be reflective of the population as a whole and the issues are too complex for any simple and straightforward assertions.

Before I outline my closing reflections and thoughts about recommendations for future research, it is imperative to mention the significance of the NCF document (2005) to the education system in Jammu and Kashmir. The NCF (2005) is an elaborate, self-critical and very prescriptive document that was introduced seven years ago at the national level, signifying a clear departure from the traditional teacher-centered pedagogy to the new student-centered pedagogy. This document explicitly sanctions primacy to the learner, asking teachers to engage them not only through activities or play-way learning, but also to extend their learning to complex levels of understanding through critical thinking and critical pedagogy. What does this mean for the stakeholders of the school system in Srinagar? In particular, this document, calls for a paradigm shift in teaching and learning practices – definitely an enormous one-from the traditional to the progressive pedagogy. For the educational authorities in J and K (where hierarchical systems with top-down policy programs are dominant), to implement this curriculum change in its entirety would mean action at the top level first, working its way through the different systems toward the bottom,
that is, to the teacher. For the teachers in Srinagar, it would mean a departure from the prevalent and predominant method of direct instruction to the whole class that makes use of one textbook to teaching and learning approaches that foreground group-work, one-on-one instruction, and other forms of constructivist-informed strategies. It is relevant here to make reference to the hierarchical work culture that is predominant in government departments in Srinagar, which is akin to the hierarchical administrative systems elsewhere in India as noted by Sharma (2009), where a clear distinction between the top authority and the subordinate authority exists. The top officials issue orders according to government policies, which are hence respected and executed by the subordinate officials. School principals or headmasters hold positions towards the bottom of the hierarchical ladder while the teachers, being at the very bottom, are the last ones to know about what is happening at the top.

In these case studies in Srinagar, Kashmir, it was found that teachers have limited understanding of the NCF (2005) which has significant ramifications for their own classrooms. The current scenario in Srinagar as is evident from the study reflects that slow-paced yet appropriate measures have been taken by the government authorities in order to implement new pedagogical practices in schools, as suggested in the framework. Notably, the teachers’ training aspect of the measures is the most positive and direct step towards the pedagogical shift mandated by the NCF (2005). However, one of the major obstacles is that it hasn’t traversed into classrooms and the obvious reason is the lack of teachers’ and school administrators’ complete awareness of the framework and its comprehensive guidelines. The absence of explicit guidance and support for teachers in this study has hindered them from understanding their shifting role and the shifting nature of teaching and learning practices that focuses on ‘student-centered pedagogy’ across the curriculum. Such an approach to implementation appears to have created ambiguity more generally for the primary
stakeholders, that is the teachers, across the system to actually deliver their instruction within the expectations of the framework. Turner-Bisset (2001) describes that good curriculum knowledge is crucial for teachers because it keeps the teachers well informed about the wide range of curriculum materials from which they can select to teach the “concepts, skills, processes, attitudes, and values embedded in each subject” (p.148). In addition, knowledge of the curriculum as differentiated or integrated subjects facilitates the teachers’ “understanding of the whole curriculum and how different subjects relate to each other” (ibid., p.148). Knowledge of the curriculum allows teachers to have a critical understanding of the curriculum as it helps them to be familiar with the aims of education, and how these aims shift overtime. This knowledge is also essential for those who design pre-service and in-service training programs. Therefore teachers’ awareness is critical, as are other stakeholders’ familiarity with the NCF (2005) document.

8.1 Concluding reflections and recommendations for future research

This research study involving four teachers in Srinagar, Kashmir, represented a very small sample which may or may not be true of all elementary classrooms. However, the results of this study raise some concerns that are consistent with the findings of other studies of teaching and learning practices in schools elsewhere in India. Results of this study suggest that a great deal of work is still to be done in educating the various stakeholders in education in Srinagar about the NCF (2005) document. Understanding the document at first, followed by measures created and implemented, would allow all the stakeholders to have a uniform awareness about what is expected of them towards the paradigm shift that has been mandated by this extensive document. Subsequent to this or in association with the above, the following concluding reflections and recommendations for future research are outlined:
State curriculum reform

The NCF (2005) provides comprehensive framework covering all major areas required by the schools to function, some of which include quality education, curricular reforms, knowledge of the teacher and the student, learning activities, types of knowledge, examination reform and teacher education concerning the development of a progressive system of education. It appears that additional work on the development of state curriculum documents in ways that more clearly specify the curriculum objectives, both broad and specific (relevant to the contexts in Srinagar and in close alignment with the NCF, 2005), would be helpful. Schools in my study continue to promote a single textbook-centered curriculum, thus endorsing traditional pedagogy by allowing teachers to rely solely on static chapters of the textbook. It is recommended that the syllabi for K-12 classes thoughtfully consider the details of concepts (in relevance to the contexts), the forms of assessment, and the subject integration in a balanced manner. Using the NCF (2005) as the basis for this curricular reform, teachers and administrators can be engaged in creating contextually suitable and innovative programs as suggested by the NCF (2005).

Revising textbooks in line with the goals of the new curriculum

Although it is evident from the analysis of the textbooks that teachers, senior teachers, and other experienced members of the educational community are involved in designing and writing the textbooks, as stated in chapter 7, there exists a level of incoherence in the textbook chapters with the goals outlined in the NFC (2005) in relation to the repetition of topics or the transmission of simple facts. The textbook topics and chapters should instill knowledge of a topic not only through basic facts, but also convey enhanced understanding of specific concepts through application across different subject areas and through critical thinking and critical pedagogy. Within the mandate of the NCF (2005), it may be preferable for the textbook committee to consist of experienced personnel who have a thorough
understanding of the framework, knowledge of theories of teaching and learning, varied pedagogical practices, students, teachers, their varied learning contexts, and all the available resources. This committee may write subject textbooks for all grades, keeping in mind that the knowledge that is to be imparted, investigated, and/or constructed at the lower level is subsequently augmented as it moves to higher levels. In this manner, students can comprehend new knowledge while making use of existing fundamental knowledge base. Similarly, it would benefit teachers to plan lessons taking into consideration the prior knowledge of the students.

**Teacher education reform**

In the district of Srinagar, the College of Education has been in existence since the year 1948 as the primary institution concerned with the education of teachers. There are about 16 private colleges of education in the district, in addition to the College of Education (according to University of Kashmir, website). Currently, the teacher education curriculum that is followed by the Government College of Education, Srinagar, includes the Philosophy, Psychology, and Sociology of Education, Development of the Education System in India, Essentials of Instructional Technology, Specialization papers (Alternative Education, Creativity and Education, Guidance and Counseling, etc.) and Methodology of teaching (languages, social science, and science). Educational philosophies are discussed with reference to the ‘aims, curriculum, and role of teacher & concept of discipline’ (B.Ed syllabus, College of Education, Srinagar, Kashmir). Constructivist, informed theories of learning are not emphasized adequately in this syllabus, and there is no evidence of teachers being taught instructional strategies for the construction of knowledge, which is the fundamental approach to teaching and learning as directed by the NCF (2005). The theories of constructivist learning put forth by Vygotsky and Piaget, which are rooted in social
interactions, are not included in the syllabus. Moreover, the duration of the practice of teaching and internship is minimal, and the authentic situations where student-teachers can apply what they have learned are the practice of teaching and the internship which only take place for the duration of, respectively, 15 and 6 working days. Consideration needs to be given to the reform of the curriculum and pedagogical practices of teacher education programs in relation to its alignment with the guidelines of the NCF document (2005). The B.Ed program offered by the College of Education is general for all levels of teaching from K-12 and there is no distinction of training curriculum for primary, middle, high or higher secondary school levels. The DIET Srinagar has a specific program for elementary education and it is suggested that similar specific programs should be created not only for the elementary level, but for all levels of education. As the teachers and heads of the schools have begun meaning making of the shift to pedagogy, one solution may lie in initiating school level professional development strategies involving the head of the school, all the teachers, and Zonal Resource/Cluster Resource Persons who will provide guidance to respective schools. Such in-service training programs targeting specifically experienced teachers may be getting the heads of the schools and teachers to proactively participate and devise teaching and learning strategies taking into consideration the students and their background, the teachers and their professional experience, infrastructure and classroom conditions and resources. This initiative may be incentive based where schools working towards implementing best pedagogical practices are rewarded accordingly. This might also mean teachers stepping out of their old and daily routines and think about collaborative and peer learning practices.
Provisions for proper classrooms and classroom resources

In the classrooms in Srinagar the lack of infrastructure is one of the critical hindrances to learning. It is essential that classrooms are not co-shared with other classes and have sufficient seating space to make students feel comfortable during learning activities. Co-shared classrooms interrupt instruction unnecessarily causing intermingling of noises and distractions due to two teachers instructing two groups of students simultaneously and loudly calling/directing students to participate. In addition, co-shared classrooms cause space limitations for students especially when all students are present. While the Department of School Education boasts opening new schools, the conditions of the many existing schools are highly unsatisfactory. Quality teaching and learning demands that a learning environment be inviting and supportive of learning, thus demanding a sense of responsibility from all. Within a school, teachers and school heads need to take more responsibility and step out of their prescribed roles and take into account what resources they have and how they can improve any kind of sub-standard condition. This might include asking authorities to provide necessary support or making small changes inside the classroom (e.g., thinking about ways to keep classrooms clean, arranging places where material for learning can be responsibly kept or keeping a stock of daily supplies like chalk, dusters, etc.). Building a shared classroom community is desired where each member has a small role and is responsible for making the classroom inviting and using available resources. The DIET and the College of Education, Srinagar both stress the use of low-cost teaching and learning materials. Teachers could work in teams at their respective schools and develop low cost TLMs, considering minimal learning spaces, to be utilized for constructivist informed teaching and learning activities.

Attention to implementation and carefully planned capacity-building professional learning

The findings of this research study highlighted the capacity-building measures that have been launched by DIET, Srinagar. It is evident that capacity-building professional
learning trainings do not take place uniformly across the district because of issues concerning timing, scheduling and notifying teachers in advance. Secondly the exact role of the administrative resources, such as the CRCs, with reference to the nature of support they are to provide is not properly defined. As a result, capacity building is a basic concern. Harris & Muijs (2005) mention, “capacity building is concerned with developing conditions, skills and abilities to manage and facilitate productive change at school level” (p.55). In Srinagar and the rest of the state of J and K, capacity-building in the educational system must be understood and carefully planned by the individuals in the administration. For capacity-building, it is essential to clarify the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, taking into consideration:

1. What skills and abilities do they have?
2. What do they need to know and be able to do?
3. What short and long term professional learning strategies can be used to support professional capacity building that aligns with the NCF’s (2005) goals?

   A bottom-up and top-down strategy, where the issues at all levels (concerning teachers) are understood in totality would be helpful in designing a suitable plan of action to achieve the intended point, which in the case of the elementary schools in Srinagar, Kashmir, is implementation of student-centered pedagogy. Such actions will take into consideration the timings, scheduling and notification issues. Planning is critical and could assist with governance questions, professional learning strategies, and resource support in all the school zones within the district.

*Strategies for promoting constructivist approaches to teaching and learning*

In reality the teachers in the elementary schools in Srinagar are in a dilemma for many reasons. For some time now, they have been employing whole-class direct instruction
as the core method of instruction and their understanding of the constructivist approach is very limited because of their inadequate exposure to constructivist informed theory and pedagogy, among other factors. Yet, the NCF (2005) recognizes teachers as direct agents of change in its desired paradigm shift towards student-centered pedagogy, asking teachers to engage students through constructivist knowledge-building activities and critical pedagogy. It is vital for the administrative personnel involved in creating professional learning modules for teachers to first assist teachers in becoming aware of the discernible distinctions between the traditional, constructive and critical pedagogy (theory and practices). The teachers must be provided support to use simple teaching strategies that make use of the constructivist approach. Accordingly, teachers will choose from a range of instructional strategies when planning for a lesson. Teachers could make use of different practices such as think-pair-share, peer dialogue, Dialogic inquiry, Instructional Conversations, Cognitive Apprenticeship, Critical thinking, Inquiry learning or Problem based learning (a comprehensive list of strategies will be provided along with the recommendations to the Department of Education, Srinagar, Kashmir; please refer to chapter 3 for an explanation of each strategy). The teachers may not use all the strategies at one time; it is recommended that teachers use their discretion in selecting various activities depending on the topic of the lesson. It is also advised that teachers not think direct instruction is meaningless and thus reject such a method. It is essential that the teachers think about all the students, their learning styles and then decide on the strategy (traditional, constructivist, or critical) that best fits the lesson’s learning goals/outcomes and present it in a creative way.

Redefining roles and work culture

By endorsing critical pedagogy, the NCF (2005) validates a participatory approach in classrooms, between a teacher and a student or between a teacher and a teacher. When the
discourse is about developing understanding through critical analysis regarding what knowledge is valid and whose knowledge is valued, it will bring about a shift in thinking followed by a shift in the ways one would like to define their role within the educational milieu. A participatory approach would mean engaging in open discussion where everyone’s view is respected, as noted in the NCF (2005): “Critical pedagogy facilitates collective decision making through open discussion and by encouraging and recognizing multiple views” (p. 42). In Srinagar, this would also mean redefining the existing hierarchical structures within the Department of Education. Using critical self-reflection as a medium, all stakeholders may want to think about what their existing roles are and how they are going to make valuable contributions in implementing the framework. This might also mean defining explicit goals for each hierarchical position and working together as a unit towards achieving those goals.

Addressing language dissonance

Language is considered an essential tool of communication for learning. Language dissonance may hinder learning of any pedagogical practice chosen by a teacher to impart learning. Language dissonance may be an impediment in implementing new student-centered pedagogical practices in Srinagar, Kashmir when students cannot actively participate or interact with peers and teachers, or engage in independent learning where language serves as an important communication tool. Urdu is the official language of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, and Kashmiri is the language spoken by the majority of people in the Kashmir valley, while English is the language of communication in mid and higher levels of administration. Recently, English has been introduced as the medium of instruction in government-run schools and the teachers have also been advised to use the local Kashmiri language during instruction, as needed. Thus, it is hard for one to comprehend the language
barriers that students in government-run schools in Srinagar, Kashmir must face when (noted during observation in classrooms) teachers help them with basic decoding and comprehension skills. Indeed a serious issue, and for any pedagogy to support learning, language is the most essential tool. While the Department of Education has taken appropriate measures to promote the Kashmiri language as a compulsory subject in schools, it is extremely essential that they think about devising a contextually suitable English language program for all grade levels and in it include all components such as reading, writing, speaking and listening in the syllabus uniformly. Accordingly, with regard to the basic language competence of elementary students in Srinagar, Kashmir, reading and writing should generally receive more focus. Research suggests that reading and writing are the essential tools for enduring knowledge and skills required for further education and employment (McREL, 2001). Reading of all genres may perhaps be made compulsory in English language courses as well as in other subject areas. The reading program may focus on phonetics, word making, word identification, decoding, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Likewise, the writing program may engage students in writing activities where students can develop their own ideas. Students could be provided with meaningful opportunities to generate and organize ideas making connections with the contexts. When the students are linguistically competent, teachers will have enough time to engage their students in activities which make use of critical thinking in order for the students to apply their knowledge to a range of situations which is conducive to the goals of new constructivist informed pedagogy. The educational authorities may seek help from some outside source to eradicate the language barriers that the students face. To this effect, the Department of Education, Srinagar, Kashmir, may think about initiating a state-wide authentic and tangible literacy program.
In the following paragraphs, I discuss areas for future research which were revealed as a result of this study but are not directly related to the core question of this study, that is, the shifting nature of pedagogy in the elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir.

*Educational inequality*

The following argument may be relevant when there are clear directives from the NCF (2005) to engage in critical pedagogy: From a critical perspective it may be pointed out that the students of government-run schools, when compared to the private schools in the same neighbourhood, are often victims of educational inequality due to a number of reasons, for example, poor infrastructure, poor availability of educational resources, marginal classroom conditions, poor parental support and no exposure to computer-aided literacy. As a result these students may not reach their full potential and achieve what other students from private schools may have. In addition, this arrangement of private schooling for the middle class and public schooling for the disadvantaged is creating a deliberate socio-economic gap between these social classes. Some teachers in the research classrooms mentioned this divide between the private and government schools and attributed the failure of government schools to mushrooming growth of private schools and parents’ perceptions that private schools prepare students better. If the curriculum mandates empowering students through critical pedagogy, the students may sooner question the status quo (although students never demonstrated critical inquiry skills). Hence, what is required is bridging the gaps between the government and private schools by making the government schools equally competitive. One might think that this is unlikely given the cultural beliefs that private schools better prepare children for their future endeavors, and one option may lie in the following suggestion.
**Public-private partnership**

In order to effectively align the pedagogy of elementary classrooms in Srinagar with the NCF (2005) guidelines, it would be advantageous to think about public-private partnerships. Such public-private partnerships could influence the implementation of a new curriculum in a number of ways: for example, drafting state curriculum guidelines, training resources for teachers, writing textbooks and varied teaching-learning resources to suit the learning contexts, and conducting in-service professional development and capacity building workshops in all districts until the administrative machinery develops skills and capabilities to provide support in the area of quality learning to full capacity. In addition, within the district of Srinagar the status of the government schools could be uplifted by allowing a merger of public and private educational institutions by making use of availability based public-private partnerships in needed areas. The timely merger of public and private educational institutions could help encourage the educational success of socially disadvantaged students.

**Libraries in schools**

In elementary schools in Srinagar, the libraries—where present—have minimal resources or some are only now being developed now. Libraries are defined as intellectual spaces by the NCF (2005) where students can deepen their understanding, and it calls for equipping libraries with computers. The educational authorities may think about developing plans to set up libraries in schools and may begin the ground work sooner in a phased manner in all schools. In schools where there are no libraries, the teachers might buy book(s) for the class and read to the students on a daily basis. Teachers may also ask parents to buy one or two short story books for their children, if they have the means to do so. Teachers could also exchange books of the same reading level with other classes. Consequently, students will
develop a habit of reading which will help them understand the text and make connections, encouraging their participation within a constructivist setting.

**8.2 Thesis concluding remarks**

The core question of this research study was to determine the nature of pedagogy [teaching and learning] in four elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir, and to what extent and why it has shifted since the introduction of the National Curriculum Framework (2005). The key findings of this study point out that pedagogy, the teaching and learning practice, has begun a subtle shift towards being more student-centered as teachers employ play-way, learning-by-doing or the activity-based practices. However, teacher-directed, guided instruction making use of the textbook remains the core pedagogical practice utilized by the teachers in the elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir. Teachers’ pedagogical understandings also demonstrate their shifting awareness of actively engaging students in the learning process by participation—a paradigm shift towards student-centered pedagogy as desired by the NCF (2005). Although teachers and school administrators lack complete awareness of the NCF (2005) and its comprehensive guidelines, slow-paced and appropriate measures, notably teacher education (in-service-trainings), have been taken by the government authorities in order to implement new pedagogical practices as suggested in the framework. As indicated from the results of this study, undertaking teacher education initiatives (trainings of varied nature) is a positive and direct measure that is helping teachers employ student-centered pedagogical practices and, contrarily, the absence of explicit guidance and support for the teachers in the elementary classrooms in Srinagar has hindered them from understanding their shifting role and the shifting nature of teaching and learning practices.
The above suggestions are simple propositions derived as a result of the findings of this research study and my own interpretations of these findings with reference to the NCF (2005). As indicated elsewhere in the study, a paradigm shift towards a student-centered pedagogy has begun, which will eventually bear consequence on the way individuals define their roles within the various social groups in Srinagar, Kashmir. The desired change may be uncomfortable to some, but this change will bring about transformation of thoughts and eventually culture in broader terms. More directly, the use of student-centered pedagogical practices by teachers will engage learners in meaningful learning and empower learners with skills, values, attitudes and knowledge to function as contributing members of the society.
References

Books


*Reports*


Journals & Articles


Yadav, S.K. (2011). National Study on Ten Year School Curriculum Implementation, Department of Teacher Education and Extension .NCERT


Dissertation


Newspaper articles


Manuals & Websites


Dear Teacher Participant,

I am writing this letter to obtain your consent to participate in the thesis research study which is part of my Master of Education degree in Education, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the University of Toronto, Canada. This research study has been approved by the University of Toronto as well as the Commissioner Secretary, Department of Education Srinagar, Kashmir.

The title and purpose of this study are as stated:

**Title:** “What is my Pedagogy? Shifting understandings and practices of teachers in Government schools in Kashmir, India”

**Purpose:** The aim of this research study is to examine the nature of pedagogy and how teachers’ practices are shifting in elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir with reference to the National Curriculum Framework (2005). **It is important to note that this study is not intended to evaluate or judge your teaching abilities.**

**Selection criteria:** For this research study you have been identified as an ideal candidate because your qualification, years of experience and your profession as an elementary teacher match the criteria required for this study. **Please note that other teachers (about 4-6) with similar qualifications will also be part of this research study.**

**Procedure:** If you agree to participate, I, the researcher, will observe your classroom twice a week for a period of 6 weeks. During this course, I will observe your classroom activities in a grade level of your choice (if teaching multiple grades) for a minimum of **2 hours** each day. I intend to interact with you and your students through direct and participant observation. In the beginning my aim is to be a direct observer; later, as you and your students get to know me better, I will be a participant observer in your classroom. That means, at your discretion, I will participate in classroom activities. During observations, I intend to record rich descriptions in the form of field notes of the teaching and learning sessions taking
place inside your classroom, your interactions with the students, as well as student to student interactions.

In addition to participant observation, I will also conduct three interviews with you that will focus specifically on the teaching & learning processes and the ways you are incorporating the recent National Curriculum Framework (2005) changes in your classroom. The three interview sessions will be conducted at different times: 1. before beginning participant observation 2. at mid-point 3. at the end of the participant observation session. In order to capture all details, I am hoping to audio tape all the interviews, provided there are no objections on your part.

Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw, refuse to participate, or decline to answer any question or partake in any parts of the procedures/tasks at any time without any reason or penalty.

Risks & Benefits: There are no potential risks to you in participating in this research study. Also, there is no personal or monetary benefit to you; however, this research study will better inform teaching practice, professional understanding, and produce ultimate benefits for better education in Jammu & Kashmir. In addition, I would be willing to provide one-on-one support to you, the participant, and give a presentation to teachers regarding different teaching strategies for elementary classrooms.

Significance of this study with regard to Kashmir:
This study will provide actual portrayals of teaching and learning from the classrooms of Srinagar, Kashmir, the roles of teachers and learners, and the challenges of being a teacher or a learner, to name a few. The findings of this study will be of significance to the teaching and learning practices in Jammu & Kashmir; besides informing teachers of the effective teaching strategies (from a constructivist point of view as deemed necessary within the directives of NCF, 2005), it will outline specific classroom participation strategies for students. Suggestions regarding “contextually suitable” teacher-centered as well as student-centered constructivist informed teaching and learning strategies will be generated in an earnest desire to benefit the children of Jammu & Kashmir.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality is of utmost importance; as such, your name will remain anonymous to the extent possible in the interview transcripts, field notes and the actual thesis. You will be given a pseudonym during the first interview which will be used, thereafter to protect your identity.

Handling & publishing of data: The demographic sheet will not identify you, as you will not be asked to write your real name on it. The audio-tapes will only be used for creating interview-transcripts. All the electronic data will be encrypted consistent with University of Toronto’s data security and encryption standards. After transcribing, the interview transcripts and field notes will remain in a locker. Only the members of the thesis committee and I will have access to this research material.
You will have an opportunity to read the draft analysis and provide any relevant comments that you may have about the accuracy of the data. Any disagreement that we cannot compromise on will be mentioned in the research study. The pertinent data generated will be published in the thesis or subsequent research articles that I may write.

If you have any questions about your rights as the participant, you may direct them to the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or (416) 946-3273. Alternatively, you may contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Mark Evans, at (416) 978-2612 for any further questions you may have.

If you agree to be part of this study, please complete the attached consent form and return it to me at your earliest convenience.

Thanking you,

Sincerely,

Consent form

I _____________________________ hereby agree to participate in the research thesis titled, “What is my pedagogy?“: Case-study Perspectives from Government Schools in Kashmir, India”, as described in the above letter.

I hereby authorize the researcher, Gulshan Mir to use the data collected through participant observation or through the interviews for the published thesis or any other subsequent research articles or studies. I also give her permission to audio-tape our conversations and utilize the transcripts from the interviews in the research study.

I understand that the intent and nature of this study has been explained clearly to me by the researcher, Gulshan Mir, verbally and through ‘letter of informed consent’. I know that I have the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

_________________________ ___________________________
Signature of the participant Date

_________________________
Name of the participant
Dear Sir/Madam,

Subject: Permission to conduct research in primary classrooms in government schools in Srinagar, Kashmir

I am writing this letter to you to obtain permission for conducting research in government primary schools, preferably, grades 4 or 5 (tentative), in Srinagar, Kashmir. I am a graduate student at the department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE), the University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. This research study is intended for completing my thesis that has been approved by the University of Toronto. The aim of this research study is to examine the nature of pedagogy and how teachers’ practices are shifting in elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir with reference to the National Curriculum Framework (2005).

The following research summary will explain the details of this study:

**Research Proposal Summary**

**Title:** “What is my Pedagogy? Shifting understandings and practices of teachers in Government schools in Kashmir, India”

**Purpose:**

This purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the nature of pedagogy in government elementary schools in Srinagar, Kashmir and understand its shifting nature with reference to the National Curriculum Framework (2005). This study aims to focus on teachers’ pedagogical understanding, pedagogical practices used by teachers, the specific ways teachers encourage and manage student participation in their respective classrooms and different levels of support and training that is
available to the teachers from the education department and its agencies. **It is important to note that this study is not intended to evaluate the teachers or judge their teaching abilities.**

**Rationale:**

1. It has been over five years since National Curriculum Framework (2005) came into being and it has triggered an impetus towards improving the ways teaching and learning is delivered in the classrooms in Jammu and Kashmir. As indicated in many government of India documents that the paradigm shift towards child-centered learning is taking place all over India and activity based learning a program that has proven fruitful in Kerala, India, is being implemented in classrooms in Kashmir. As such, an insight into how classroom processes function, the current trends and suggestions about the ways to improve the classroom practice would be a timely endeavor.

2. There have been renewed calls from different research groups and also indicated in numerous Govt. of India documents that research is needed to achieve the goal of improving quality of education. For example, Aggarwal and Chugh (2003), after looking at classroom processes in primary schools in Delhi, report that a lack of research into classroom teaching-learning situations is a major handicap towards building models of teacher-interaction in the classroom and the outcome in the achievement tests. The knowledge of classroom teaching-learning styles provides “meaningful insights” (p. 43) into teacher training requirements, and thus, classroom practices. Therefore, an inspection of classrooms solely for the sake of improving the practice is essential to help teachers understand the child centered pedagogy and various ways to implement the same in classrooms.

3. The data for this research thesis will add to the research that is currently taking place inside the valley of Kashmir. It will open spaces for different areas of research, teacher’s pedagogical understanding, teacher’s role, student’s role, student participation, the teacher education programs, the type of schools, just to name a few.

**Research design:**

**Strategy of inquiry:** Case study

**Methods:**

The qualitative data collection methods that I am hoping to use for this research study are: observation (participant observation or direct observation), interviews, and review of documents (curriculum documents, lesson plans, examination papers, textbooks or resource guides).

**Duration of study:** 6 weeks

**Procedure:** During this course, I will observe classroom activities in 4-6 different elementary classrooms, preferably grade level 3, 4 or 5, twice per week for a
minimum of 2 hours each day. I intend to engage both as a direct observer and a participant observer. In the beginning my aim is to be a direct observer; later, as I get to know the teacher and the students, I will be a participant observer in their classroom. That means, at the teacher’s discretion, I will participate in classroom activities. During observations, I intend to record rich descriptions in the form of field notes of the teaching and learning sessions taking place inside the classroom, teacher’s interactions with the students, as well as student to student interactions. I will also look at records of student work (student notebooks or journals (if any) or other student artifacts) and student achievement records.

In addition, to participant observation, I will also conduct three interviews with both the teachers separately that will focus specifically on the teaching & learning processes and the ways they are incorporating the recent National Curriculum Framework (2005) changes in their classroom. The three interview sessions will be conducted at different times: 1. before beginning participant observation 2. at mid-point 3. at the end of the participant observation session. In order to capture all details, I am hoping to audio tape all the interviews, provided there are no objections on part of the participants.

Participants: The intended participants will be 4-6 elementary government school teachers, who have similar teaching qualifications, similar years of experience working in schools that have identical infrastructural capabilities and resources, all indicative of a homogenous sample.

Sampling strategy: Purposeful sampling strategy will be used to identify information rich cases in a hope to gather rich data from such samples.

Although teachers are the main participants in this research study, I might again seek permission from your department to allow me to interview District Institute for Education and Training - DIET or, Block Resource Center - BRC or Cluster Resource Center CRC officials, if during the course of study it becomes apparent that more data could be generated from them.

Sample classroom: The sample might be any primary classroom of about 15-17 students aged between 7-12 years, either single teacher or multiple teachers teaching different subjects in two different government schools. The native language of most of the students will be Kashmiri, while the medium of instruction will be English or Urdu or Kashmiri.

Participation: The participation of the participants in this study is completely voluntary. They may choose to withdraw, refuse to participate, or decline to answer any question or partake in any parts of the procedures/tasks any time without any reason or penalty.

Risks & Benefits to participants: There are no potential risks to any of the participants in this research study. It is very important to note that this case study is not designed to evaluate the teachers or judge their abilities within the context of the classroom. At any time during the course of this study, I ensure you that I will be
vigilant about the safety of all the participants. It is not my intention to cause any type of physical, psychological/emotional, social or legal risks to any of the participants of this study.

Although there is no personal or monetary benefit to the participants, I would be willing to provide one-on-one support to the participant teachers regarding different teaching strategies. In addition, I will do a presentation for all teachers at the research site, wherein, I will discuss effective teaching and learning strategies for elementary classroom.

**Significance of this study with regard to Kashmir:**
This research study will aim to provide actual portrayals of teaching and learning from the classrooms of Srinagar, Kashmir, the roles of teachers and learners, identify roles of teachers and students likewise, and the challenges of being a teacher or a learner, to name a few. The findings of this study will be of significance to the teaching and learning practices in Jammu & Kashmir; besides informing teachers of the effective teaching strategies (from a constructivist point of view as deemed necessary within the directives of NCF, 2005), it will outline specific classroom participation strategies for students. Suggestions regarding “contextually suitable” teacher-centered as well as student-centered constructivist informed teaching and learning strategies will be generated in an earnest desire to benefit the children of Jammu & Kashmir.

**Confidentiality of all the participants:** Confidentiality of all the participants is of utmost importance; as such, their names will remain anonymous to the extent possible in the interview transcripts, field notes and the actual thesis. They will be given a pseudonym which will be used to protect their identity.

**Handling & publishing of data:** The Demographic sheet will identify participants through pseudonyms. The audio-tapes will only be used for creating interview-transcripts. All the electronic data will be encrypted consistent with University of Toronto’s data security and encryption standards. After transcribing, the interview transcripts and field notes will remain in a locker. Only the members of thesis committee and I will have access to this research material. The participants will have an opportunity to read the draft analysis and provide any relevant comments that they may have about the accuracy of the data. Any disagreement that we cannot compromise on will be mentioned in the research study. The pertinent data generated will be published in the thesis or subsequent research articles that I may write.

**Personal benefit to the researcher:**
The only personal benefit of choosing primary classrooms of Srinagar, Kashmir, India as the context of this research study is to complete the thesis that is required for completion of graduation.
This research study has been designed in accordance with the guiding principles of the Ethics Protocol of the University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The matters, such as, preventing the rights of the subjects involved in this research study are highly important. Therefore, working within the directives of the department of education, its ethical protocols and additionally maintaining the confidentiality of each subject involved will be a priority.

With regard to what has been stated above, I request you to please grant me permission to conduct the research at your earliest. If you have any questions about this research study, you may direct them to the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or (416) 946-3273. Alternatively, you may contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Mark Evans, at (416) 978-2612 for any further questions you may have.

Thanking you,

Sincerely,
Dear Participant,
Thank you for your willingness to participate in the research study titled, “What is my Pedagogy? Shifting understandings and practices of teachers in Government schools in Kashmir, India”. The aim of this research study is to examine the nature of pedagogy and how teachers’ pedagogical practices are shifting in elementary classrooms in Srinagar, Kashmir with reference to the National Curriculum Framework (2005). This research study thesis which is primarily a requirement for my Master of Education degree in Education, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the University of Toronto, Canada will have implications for both teachers and students, and the practice of teaching in Srinagar, Kashmir.

During the course of this research study, you will be interviewed three times: one informal interview, one semi-structured towards the middle of the research time period, and one structured interview towards the end of the study.

The first interview will be informal or unstructured in nature designed with an aim to establish a rapport with you, the participant (interviewee) and gather as much basic information about who you are with some insights into your teaching profession. The second interview will be semi-structured. You will have an opportunity to respond to open ended questions. In the third interview you will be asked some specific questions that were not covered during the first two interviews and provide clarifications or add more details regarding any previous topics.

**Interview Schedule**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Type</th>
<th>Day &amp; Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1 hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview 3</td>
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<td>1 hour</td>
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</table>
General guidelines for all interviews scheduled for this research study:

1. Each interview will be of one hour duration.
2. In order to accurately document the information that you are going to provide me, I intend to use an audio recorder to record our conversation.
3. I will be taking notes during our conversation.
4. Your valuable and honest responses will have implications on the outcome of this study. As such, please be as specific as possible about what you want to convey. I will not compel you to reveal any information that you feel you don’t want to share or might lead you into trouble.
5. The questions that I will pose will be mostly open-ended. Please ensure to provide all the relevant details. I will be seeking clarifications, for example, asking you to elaborate on a point, provide examples or answer another related question.
6. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to let me know before the interview.
7. Before proceeding with the interview process, it is important to mention that you have signed a written consent to participate in the study and you have expressed your willingness to contribute to this study through your expertise and fair responses.
8. Thank you again for your willingness and cooperation to be part of this study. Please sign below to acknowledge that you have read and understood interview 1 protocol.

Date: __________________________  Place: Srinagar, Kashmir

Interviewer: ____________________  Interviewee: ________________

______________________________  __________________________
Signature  Signature
Interview 1 protocol

Today you will be participating in the first interview. This informal interview is aimed at establishing a rapport with you and getting to know as a person and as a teacher. Through this interview you will have an opportunity to tell me about yourself and your teaching profession in your own words.

During the interview process we will follow general guidelines that are described in the general interview protocol. In addition we will adhere to the following procedure:

- I will introduce myself, my background and the research study.
- After I have introduced myself, you will be asked to respond.
- The following question will provide initial prompt for our conversation: Tell me about yourself and your teaching profession?
  
Next, think about following questions and talk to me about them in any order you want to:

- What is your understanding of teaching and learning? What do you understand by pedagogy?
- What did your teaching look like a decade ago, five years ago and now?
- Have you made any changes to your teaching style recently or in the past? If yes, why?
- What has changed? What has not changed?
- What is your understanding of National Curriculum Framework, 2005?
- Before you begin your response, please be sure to fill in the attached demographic sheet about yourself, your school, number of years of teaching experience and subjects taught. This information will remain absolutely anonymous as pseudonyms (provided to you) will be used.
Interview 2 protocol

Today you will be participating in the second interview. In this semi-structured interview we will take our discussion further by focusing on different aspects of teaching and learning. During the interview process we will follow general guidelines as described in the general interview protocol. The following list of questions is aimed to guide our conversation.

Questions:

NOTE: For each question, response will be written on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What is your preferred way of teaching? Why
2. What different teaching strategies do you employ?
3. What goals do you have for your students?
4. What are your views about student engagement?
   a. How do you manage student participation?
   b. How do you encourage student learning?
5. Describe your regular school day?
6. How do you (1) plan your day? (2) plan your lesson?
   a. What things do you bear in mind when planning for any given lesson?
7. Tell me about your students? (regular and special need students)
8. What factors affect teaching? (Think about both factors inside and factors outside school for example, relating to you and others).
9. What are your daily challenges? In your view, are there any barriers that disrupt your teaching (prompts: resources, training, general working conditions, infrastructure ….)? What is helping you?
10. What curriculum (syllabus) do you follow when teaching?
    a. Who develops the curriculum?
    b. What role does any teacher have in curriculum planning?
    c. Are you required to follow the curriculum?
    d. What can you tell me about National Curriculum Framework?
11. Describe the nature of trainings that you have undertaken in your teaching career.
a. What in-service training have you received so far?

b. In general how do the education department and its agencies support teachers (prompts: subject specific training, resources, in class help etc.)

12. What does assessment mean for you?
   a. What criteria do you use for assessment?
   b. Describe various assessment methods that you are using currently.
   c. How do you assess student progress?
   d. How do you know a student is learning?

13. What in your opinion is an effective way to teach? What are its effects on students?

14. Do you have any other details to add or share?
Interview 3 protocol

This final interview will be structured; you will be asked some specific questions related to the questions (designed for this research study) that were not covered during the first two interactions. In this session you will also have an opportunity to add further details to the topics that have been discussed earlier. In addition, I will seek clarifications from you for any observation related topics in order to get an in-depth understanding of all the topics covered.
Demographic sheet

Name (Please use your pseudonym): ..............................................................

School: ..............................................................

Qualifications: ..................................................

Certification(s): ..................................................

Number of years teaching: ..............................................................

Subjects taught:

   Currently: ..................................................

   In the past: ..................................................

Grade(s) taught:

   Currently: ..................................................

   In the past: ..................................................

Are you a class teacher? ..............................................................

How many hours do you teach for per week? ..............................................................

What is the total number of students in your class? Total ..............................................................

Boys ....................... girls.......................

Their socioeconomic status of students: ..............................................................

(upper middle-class, lower middle-class, rich, poor)
Interview Notes

First Interview with Teacher …..

Date: TBD

Interviewer’s comments:

Interviewer:  *Tell me about yourself and your teaching profession?*

Teacher ….: …………………………………………………………………………………...