

Strengthening Government Schools Through Local Action

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Abstract:

Government schools are an essential part of an equitable education system. However, many government schools face interconnected challenges such as school closures and mergers, shortages of teachers, inadequate classrooms and sanitation facilities, limited teaching-learning resources, and changing community perceptions. This action research focuses on identifying school-level challenges that affect teaching-learning and developing practical, low-cost interventions that can be implemented by teachers, the school and the community. The study follows the action-research cycle of Plan → Act → Observe → Reflect → Improve. The purpose is not merely to describe problems, but to test manageable actions and document changes in student participation, attendance, learning opportunities and use of available resources.

Keywords— Government schools, action research, teaching-learning, student participation, attendance, infrastructure, teaching-learning resources, parent participation, community involvement, low-cost interventions

1. INTRODUCTION

A strong government-school system supports access, inclusion and equal educational opportunity. When schools are merged or closed, when teacher availability is insufficient, or when basic facilities are inadequate, the quality and continuity of learning may be affected. At the classroom level, teachers often need to respond creatively to limited resources, varied learning levels and administrative responsibilities. This action research therefore adopts a practical school-based approach: understand the local situation, identify priority issues, introduce feasible interventions, collect evidence, and revise the approach based on findings.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

“How can a government primary school strengthen teaching-learning conditions and student participation through practical school-level actions despite challenges related to teacher availability, infrastructure and wider pressures on government schools?”

3. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant because classroom-level action can complement broader policy measures. A teacher may not be able to directly control staffing patterns, school mergers or major infrastructure budgets, but can document their effects and improve the learning environment through systematic planning. The study may help teachers to identify immediate priorities, use available resources effectively, involve parents and the community, and build evidence for requesting additional support from appropriate authorities.

4. OBJECTIVES

1. To identify major school-level challenges affecting teaching and learning.
2. To examine how teacher availability and workload influence classroom support.
3. To identify gaps in basic infrastructure and teaching-learning resources.

4. To improve student attendance, participation and engagement through practical interventions.

5. To develop low-cost and sustainable classroom practices using available resources.

6. To involve parents and the local community in supporting regular schooling.

7. To document changes and reflect on the effectiveness of the interventions.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the major challenges affecting the functioning of the school and classroom?

2. Which challenges have the greatest immediate effect on students' learning opportunities?

3. Which low-cost interventions can be implemented by the teacher and school?

4. What changes can be observed in attendance, participation and classroom engagement after intervention?

5. What further support is required from school authorities and the community?

6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is designed for a primary-school setting and focuses on school-level and classroom-level actions. It may cover attendance, student participation, classroom organization, use of teaching-learning materials, reading and foundational learning support, basic facility-related observations, parent communication and community participation. Major policy decisions such as school closure/merger or sanctioned teacher posts are treated as contextual factors rather than variables that the teacher can directly control.

7. METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Action Research.

Approach: Mixed evidence using simple quantitative records and qualitative observations.

Participants: A selected primary class/class group and relevant school stakeholders, as appropriate.

Duration: Approximately 8–12 weeks, adaptable to the school calendar.

Tools: Attendance record, classroom observation checklist, student participation

checklist, short student feedback form, parent interaction record, infrastructure/resource checklist and teacher reflection diary.

8. BASELINE DATA COLLECTION

Before intervention, the teacher will record a baseline for selected indicators. Suggested indicators include: average attendance, number of students participating in oral/written activities, completion of classwork, reading practice, availability and use of learning materials, basic classroom facilities, and frequency of parent communication. Baseline data should be collected for at least two weeks where feasible. The teacher should use actual school records rather than estimates.

9. PROPOSED ACTION PLAN

Action 1 – Classroom Resource Bank: Prepare reusable flashcards, number cards, word cards, worksheets, local-context examples and simple activity materials from low-cost/recycled resources.

Action 2 – Peer and Group Learning: Use structured small-group activities so students can support one another while the teacher gives targeted support to learners who need it.

Action 3 – Attendance Follow-up: Maintain a simple attendance-monitoring sheet and communicate with parents/guardians when repeated absence is observed, following school procedures.

Action 4 – Learning Corners: Organize accessible reading, mathematics and activity resources within the classroom.

Action 5 – Infrastructure Improvement Requests: Document priority facility gaps with dates and photographs where permitted, and submit a concise requirement list through the appropriate school/department process.

Action 6 – Community/Parent Participation: Conduct short, purposeful interactions explaining how families can support regular attendance, reading and homework without requiring costly resources.

Action 7 – Teacher Reflection: Maintain a weekly reflection note on what worked, what did not work and what should be modified.

10. INTERVENTION SCHEDULE

Week 1–2: Baseline assessment, observation and identification of priority problems.

Week 3–4: Introduce classroom resource bank, group learning and learning corners.

Week 5–6: Strengthen attendance follow-up, reading practice and targeted support.

Week 7–8: Parent/community interaction and documentation of infrastructure/resource needs.

Week 9–10: Review evidence, compare with baseline and modify interventions.

Week 11–12: Final observation, reflection, conclusions and recommendations.

11. DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

Quantitative indicators may be summarized using totals, percentages and simple pre-intervention/post-intervention comparisons. For example, average attendance percentage can be compared across the baseline and intervention periods. Participation can be recorded using a consistent checklist. Qualitative evidence from observations and teacher reflections can be grouped into themes such as participation, confidence, resource use, attendance barriers and classroom management. Because this is a small school-based action research project, findings should be interpreted as local evidence and not generalized to all government schools.

12. SUGGESTED OBSERVATION INDICATORS

- Students attend school regularly.
- Students participate in oral and written activities.
- Students use classroom learning resources independently.
- Students cooperate during group tasks.
- Students complete assigned learning activities.
- Teacher is able to provide targeted support to learners.
- Parents respond to attendance/learning communication.
- Available infrastructure and learning materials are used effectively.

13. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The intervention is expected to produce measurable improvement in selected classroom indicators, such as increased student participation, more consistent use of learning resources, improved follow-up of absenteeism, stronger parent communication and better organization of available materials. It may also help the teacher identify which challenges require classroom solutions and which require support from school or education authorities. The expected outcome is therefore both improved practice and better documentation for future planning.

14. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The study may be affected by school timetable changes, teacher workload, student mobility, attendance fluctuations, limited resources, examination schedules and factors outside the school's control. A short action-research period cannot establish long-term effects. The findings should therefore be treated as evidence for improving local practice rather than as proof of a statewide or national trend.

15. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Student information should be handled confidentially. Names and personally identifiable information should not be included in the report unless required and appropriately authorized. Parent communication should be respectful and non-stigmatizing. Photographs or other records should be collected only according to applicable school rules and permissions. The purpose of the research should be explained to relevant participants where appropriate.

16. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conduct regular school-level reviews of attendance, staffing needs, infrastructure and learning resources.
2. Prioritize essential repairs and basic facilities through documented requirement lists.
3. Strengthen teacher availability and reduce avoidable disruption to classroom teaching where administratively possible.

4. Promote low-cost teaching-learning materials and resource sharing.

5. Encourage structured peer learning and differentiated classroom support.

6. Build regular, constructive parent-school communication.

7. Continue teacher reflection and small cycles of action research to solve specific classroom problems.

8. Use evidence from school records and classroom observations when communicating needs to education authorities.

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17. CONCLUSION

Government schools operate within a wider system shaped by staffing, infrastructure, enrolment patterns, administrative decisions and community context. Action research provides teachers with a practical way to respond to the challenges that are within their sphere of influence while documenting issues that require higher-level support. Through systematic observation, small interventions, evidence collection and reflection, the school can strengthen everyday teaching-learning practices and identify priorities for continued improvement.

18. SUGGESTED EVIDENCE ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Baseline and endline attendance table.

Annexure B: Student participation checklist.

Annexure C: Classroom infrastructure/resource checklist.

Annexure D: Parent interaction record.

Annexure E: Weekly teacher reflection sheet.

Annexure F: Photographic/documentary evidence, where permitted.

Annexure G: Sample worksheets and teaching-learning materials used during intervention.

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