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Indian Primary Grade Teachers' Perceptions About Internal and External Barriers to Remote Instruction: A Phenomenological Inquiry

Jyotsna Pattnaik , Nibedita Nath & Sangeeta Nath

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of primary grade teachers in the Indian cities of Mumbai and Sambalpur about the barriers they faced in implementing remote

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Dr. Sangeeta Nath



Challenges to Remote Instruction During the Pandemic: A Qualitative Study with Primary Grade Teachers in India

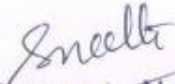
Jyotsna Pattnaik¹ · Nibedita Nath² · Sangeeta Nath³

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has profound implications for education of young children worldwide and especially for children in developing economies like India. This article presents a qualitative study that explored the challenges that private school teachers in low budget, mid-ranged, and high fee charging private schools faced in two cities in India. All the private schools in this study also followed the government mandate to reserve 25% of seats for children from low-income families. During the school closure, remote instruction was employed in schools where participating teachers taught. Teachers faced challenges related to parental involvement and children's participation in remote instruction. Parental involvement challenges included parental lack of access to technological devices and no or minimal access to internet for their children to participate in remote instruction activities. Parental lack of support due to their low technological literacy and literacy in general, lack of fluency in the English Language, as well as lack of time also contributed to their children's low participation in remote instruction. Teachers faced challenges in implementing remote instruction with children from different socio-economic backgrounds; however, the challenges were greater with families from low-income backgrounds. The study's findings suggest that governments around the world need to ensure children's access to digital tools and internet services which are essential elements in children's participation in remote instruction. For children in families where parents are unable to support their children's education at home, other support services may be instituted to take the pressure off of parents. Future studies may explore the 'learning loss' that may have resulted from the long school closure during the pandemic.


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Keywords Primary grade education · Teachers · Private schools · COVID-19 · Parental involvement · Remote instruction · India

The world has suffered from epidemics and pandemics in the twenty-first century (WHO, 2014). However, the scope and mortality rate of COVID-19 is unparalleled to any of the health outbreaks witnessed in this century. Based on the nature of the spread of the virus, it was necessary for

countries to implement a series of control and prevention measures including school closures. To prevent disruption in children's education, educational institutions around the world, if logistically possible, transitioned to virtual learning options. However, school administrators, teachers, and parents hardly had any time for preparing for this transition (Erlam et al., 2021). As a result, the process, and outcomes of remote instruction during the pandemic have been widely contested around the world (Malik & Tyagi, 2020). Overseeing the teaching and learning process as well as serving as mediators between the home and school, teachers are critical informants who can share their experiences and insights gained during the remote instruction process. Gaining insights from teachers' experiences during the pandemic is also necessary to guide policy and programming for implementing effective instructional practices in future crises (Liefshitz, 2020). Justifying teacher voice in the context of the pandemic, Garbe et al. (2020) rightly state,

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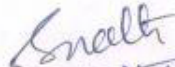
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This qualitative study explored the perceptions of primary grade teachers in the Indian cities of Mumbai and Sambalpur about the barriers they faced in implementing remote instruction effectively during the pandemic. Interviews were conducted over Zoom and via phone. The findings highlighted two sources of barriers. The external barriers included lack of device availability and internet data issues, professional development issues and teachers' own efforts, time commitment to prepare materials, and classroom

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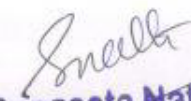
Research

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of primary grade teachers in the Indian cities of Mumbai and Sambalpur about the barriers they faced in implementing remote instruction effectively during the pandemic. Interviews were conducted over Zoom and via phone. The findings highlighted two sources of barriers. The external barriers included lack of device availability and internet data issues, professional development issues and teachers' own efforts, time commitment to prepare materials, and classroom management challenges. Teachers' lack of positive beliefs about remote instruction surfaced as an internal barrier. The findings are consistent with studies conducted by researchers globally and bear implications for early childhood teachers, parents, programs, and policymakers. While research findings have exposed global unpreparedness to implement remote instruction effectively during the pandemic, these findings have also made the field aware of the need for harnessing the potential of technology in enhancing teaching and learning processes and outcomes. Future researchers may design mixed-method studies to identify the extent of children's learning loss and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs offered by schools to help children achieve their current grade level competencies by the end of the academic year. Gathering teachers' and parents' voice is critical in this context.


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