

Curriculum and instructional strategies in secondary education: Insights from teachers in Mizoram

¹Lalruattluangi Chhakchhuak, ²Dr. Lalmuanzuali

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Mizoram University

²Associate Professor, Department of Education, Mizoram University

Abstract: This study investigates the curriculum and instructional strategies employed by secondary school teachers in Mizoram, focusing on how teaching methods are systematically applied within classroom settings. Drawing on responses from 123 high school educators, 59 from government schools, and 64 from private schools across the state's two largest districts, the research utilizes a descriptive survey method, employing questionnaires for data collection. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage calculations to identify patterns and trends. The study explores teachers' dominant curriculum approaches, the instructional methodologies practiced, and the techniques used to enhance classroom engagement and learning outcomes. The findings offer meaningful insights into the current instructional landscape of Mizoram's secondary education, while identifying key areas for pedagogical improvement and future development.

Key words: Curriculum, instructional strategies, secondary education, and teachers.

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a dynamic and complex process that requires educators to employ a range of strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students. With so many teaching methods available, it can be challenging for teachers to identify the most suitable one for their classroom (Vietnam Teaching Jobs, 2024). The effectiveness of the teaching-learning process is heavily influenced by the chosen curriculum, instructional methods, and classroom procedures.

In secondary education, which acts as a bridge between primary and higher education, students need proper guidance and teaching approaches to equip them for future opportunities. Ensuring high-quality education at this stage is critical, as it forms the foundation for lifelong learning and career preparedness (GGI insights, 2024). Teachers, the primary facilitators of learning, play an essential role in this process. The pedagogical strategies they implement significantly impact learning outcomes, making their role crucial in shaping the educational experience (Rawat Educational Group, 2023).

Beyond academics, teachers also contribute to students' moral and ethical development, nurturing their holistic growth, and encompassing their social, emotional, and physical well-being. Educators must be adaptable in their teaching, willing to explore different methods, and adjust their strategies to meet the needs of their students (Guest Author, 2023). Using diverse pedagogical techniques can enhance student engagement, encourage critical thinking, and improve academic success, with each method offering unique benefits (Vijayalaskhmi, 2021).

II. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The selection of pedagogical strategies influences not only students' academic performance but also their critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and social-emotional skills (Main, 2021a). Given the wide range of available teaching methods, it is essential to determine which approaches are most effective in supporting student learning at the secondary level (Main, 2021b).

This study aims to explore the curriculum approaches, teaching methods, and instructional practices utilized by secondary education teachers. It will focus on how these strategies contribute to the overall success of teaching and learning. By examining these pedagogical methods, the research seeks to identify areas for growth and innovation, ensuring that educators are prepared to deliver high-quality education that addresses the changing needs of students. Gaining insight into teachers' pedagogical choices and their impact on student outcomes will offer valuable guidance for educational policies, curriculum development, and teacher training programs, ultimately improving secondary education.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To explore the curriculum approaches utilized by secondary school teachers.
2. To investigate the teaching strategies employed by secondary school teachers.
3. To analyze the techniques used by secondary school teachers to improve classroom instruction.

IV. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

The study is delimited to secondary school teachers in Aizawl and Lunglei Districts in Mizoram.

V. METHODOLOGY

Methods of the study: The present study adopts descriptive survey methods because its main objectives are to determine the curriculum strategies, teaching methods, and techniques used by secondary school teachers.

Population and Sample: The population includes all high school teachers in Mizoram. In this study, the researcher employed a simple random sampling technique. The sample consisted of 123 high school teachers, with 59 from government schools and 64 from private schools.

Data Collection Tools: A questionnaire designed by the researcher was used to gather the data.

VI. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

1. *Objective 1: To explore the curriculum approaches utilized by secondary school teachers.*

Table 1.0

The curriculum approaches utilized by secondary school teachers

Sl. No	Curriculum Approach	Government School teachers N= 59	Private Teachers N=64	school	Total N= 123
1	Subject-Centered	39 (66.10)	47 (73.43)		86 (69.91)
2	Learner-Centered	32 (62.71)	48 (75)		80 (65.04)
3	Activity- Centered	11	28		39

		(18.64)	(43.75)	(31.70)
4	Teacher-Centered	12	23	35
		(20.33)	(35.93)	(28.45)

Note: Numbers in parentheses represent the corresponding percentages

Table 1.0 reveals the different curriculum approaches utilized by secondary school teachers in Mizoram.

- Subject-Centered Approach:** A total of 69.91% of high school teachers reported using the subject-centered approach, with 66.10% from government schools and 73.43% from private schools. This indicates that the majority of teachers rely on the subject-centered approach in their teaching.
- Learner-Centered Approach:** Among government school teachers, 62.71% stated that they implemented a learner-centered curriculum approach, while 75% of private school teachers also reported using this approach in their school curriculum. Overall, 65.04% of high school teachers claimed to adopt a learner-centered approach in their teaching.
- Activity-Centered Approach:** Only 18.64% of government school teachers indicated that they applied an activity-centered curriculum, compared to 43.75% of private school teachers. In total, 31.70% of high school teachers reported using the activity-centered approach.
- Teacher-Centered Approach:** A small portion of teachers, 28.45%, stated that they used a teacher-centered approach, with 20.33% from government schools and 35.93% from private schools.

Discussion: It has been found that the majority of secondary school teachers rely on traditional teaching methods, placing more emphasis on subject matter and textbook learning rather than engaging in activity-based instruction. This may be due to the fact that in India, this model is deeply ingrained, with curriculum policies often reflecting a centralized system that focuses on content over student engagement (Chauhan, 2024). However, there is a positive trend, as over half of the secondary school teachers surveyed indicated that they are incorporating a learner-centered approach into the school curriculum, signaling a promising shift in teaching practices.

2. Objective 2: To investigate the teaching strategies employed by secondary school teachers.

Table 2.0
Teaching strategies employed by secondary school

Sl. No	Teaching strategies	Government School teachers N= 59	Private Teachers N=64	school	Total N= 123
1	Lecture	53 (89.83)	61 (95.31)		114 (92.68)
2	Interaction	31 (52.54)	52 (81.25)		82 (66.66)
3	Illustration	24 (40.67)	32 (50)		56 (45.52)
4	Inquiry-based method	39 (66.10)	52 (81.25)		91 (73.98)

Note: Numbers in parentheses represents the corresponding percentages

- Lecture Method:** The majority of teachers, 92.68%, employed the lecture method (a traditional teaching approach where the teacher delivers information to the students), with 89.83% of government school teachers and 95.31% of private school teachers using this strategy.
- Interaction Method:** A total of 66.66% of teachers utilized the interaction method (a teaching strategy that encourages discussion and active participation among students). Private school teachers, at 81.25%, were more likely to use this method compared to 52.54% of government school teachers.
- Illustration Method:** Only around 45.52% of teachers used the illustration method (which involves demonstrating or showing examples to clarify concepts). Specifically, 40.67% of government school teachers and 50% of private school teachers applied this method.
- Inquiry-Based Method:** A large portion of teachers, 73.98%, reported using the inquiry-based method (an approach that encourages students to ask questions, investigate, and explore ideas). Private school teachers adopted this method more frequently, with 81.25% compared to 66.10% of government school teachers.

Discussion: The study revealed that the lecture method is the most commonly used teaching approach among teachers. In this method, students take a passive role, remaining quiet while the teacher takes the lead. Although nearly all teachers reported using the lecture method, a significant number also claimed to incorporate interaction and inquiry-based methods. The results suggest that while teachers primarily rely on lecturing, they still create opportunities for student engagement by encouraging interaction and facilitating question-and-answer sessions. Less than half of the respondents admitted they did not use illustration methods, despite their importance in many high school subjects.

Since active learning tends to be more effective, it may be beneficial for teachers to encourage students to take a more active role in the classroom. This approach could foster critical thinking, boost confidence, and create a more enjoyable learning experience. The more interactive a lesson is, the more engaged and motivated students become, leading to improved learning outcomes (Munna & Kalam, 2021).

3. Objective 3: To analyze the techniques used by secondary school teachers to improve classroom instruction.

Table 3.0

Techniques to improve classroom instruction

Sl. No	Techniques	Government School teachers N= 59	Private Teachers N=64	school	Total N= 123
1	Lesson planning	42 (71.18)	56 (87.5)		98 (79.67)
2	Use of technologies	19 (32.20)	33 (51.56)		52 (42.27)
3	Incorporating teaching materials	28 (47.45)	30 (46.87)		58 (47.15)
4	Giving additional class	23 (38.98)	42 (65.62)		65 (52.84)

Note: Numbers in parentheses represents the corresponding percentages

Table 3.0 shows the techniques used by teachers in the classroom to enhance teaching

1. **Lesson Planning:** A majority of teachers, 79.67%, reported planning their lessons before teaching, with 71.18% from government schools and 87.5% from private schools doing so.
2. **Use of Technology:** Less than half of the teachers, 42.27%, incorporated technology to enhance their teaching. Only 32.20% of government school teachers used technology, compared to 51.56% of private school teachers.
3. **Teaching materials:** Among the teachers, 47.45% from government schools and 46.87% from private schools indicated that they used teaching aids. Overall, 47.15% of secondary school teachers employed teaching aids in their instruction.
4. **Additional Classes:** To support students' learning, 38.98% of government school teachers and 65.62% of private school teachers offered additional classes for weaker students. In total, 52.84% of teachers provided extra classes to make their teaching more effective.

Discussion:

It is encouraging that the majority of teachers plan their lessons, as this can significantly enhance both time management and learning outcomes. However, it is concerning that less than half of the teachers incorporate technology into their teaching, despite its potential to make lessons more engaging and effective. In today's world, technology can play a crucial role in enhancing the learning experience, as highlighted by Chikwaka et al. (2024), who found that technology-based learning fosters critical problem-solving skills in students.

The study also revealed that many teachers do not consistently use teaching aids in their classrooms. Proper use of teaching aids can make learning more impactful and meaningful for students. On a positive note, the finding that many teachers offer additional classes for weaker students is commendable and reflects the dedication and hard work of these teachers.

SUGGESTIONS:

Based on the findings of this research, the following suggestions have been made:

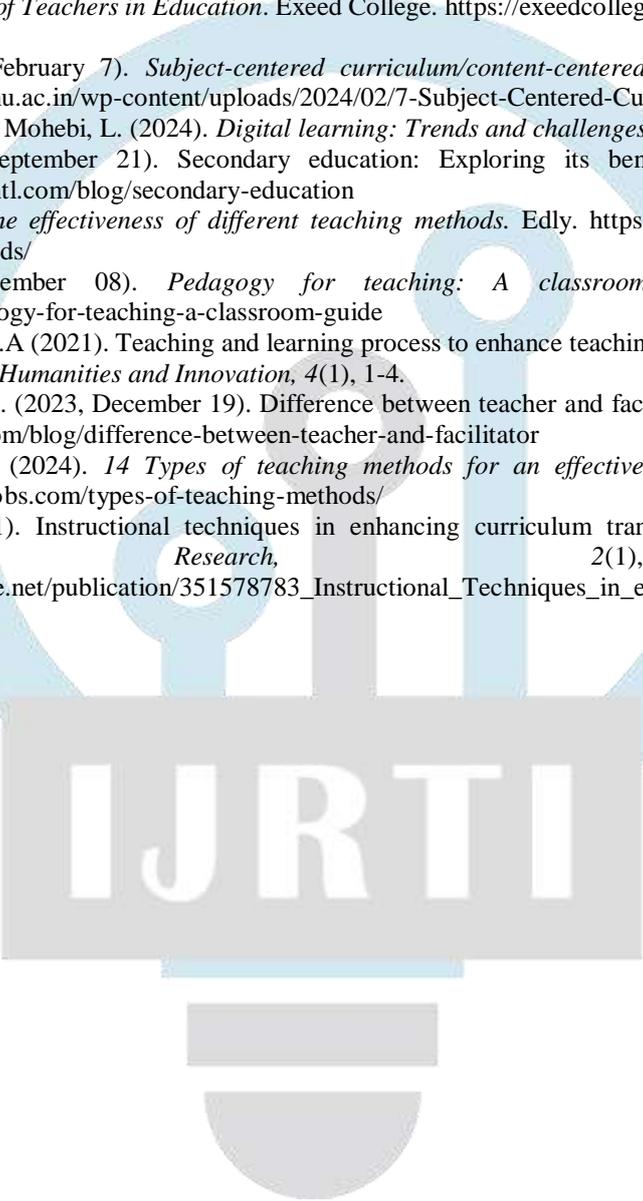
1. The curriculum should focus more on being activity-centered rather than solely relying on subject-centered and teacher-centered approaches.
2. To avoid students becoming passive listeners while teachers dominate the discussion, it is recommended to encourage more interaction and provide opportunities for questions and answers, helping students develop their critical thinking skills.
3. To improve the effectiveness of classroom teaching, teachers should use teaching aids more extensively and integrate technology into their lessons as much as possible.

CONCLUSION

The study on pedagogical approaches in secondary education in Mizoram demonstrates that teachers play a crucial role in ensuring the success of education. To achieve this, it is essential to transition the curriculum and teaching methods toward a more active and student-centered approach while incorporating appropriate teaching aids and materials.

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