Historical Perspectives of Classroom Learning Environment (1920-Present)

Partha Ghosh | Research scholar, dept. of education, (K.U) West Bengal

ABSTRACT

A classroom learning environment (CLE) is a combination of social and physical qualities that create the classroom experience. Classroom learning environment comes under the broad heading of classroom management. From 1920 to present many research had already been done in this field. The present paper aims to investigate the historical background of this classroom learning environment (CLE) and try to realize the trends of change from ancient to modern.

KEYWORDS

Introduction: Over the past 95 years, the study of classroom environments has received increased attention by researchers, teachers, school administrators and administrators of school systems. Vivid descriptions and images of schools through powerful movies (for example, *To Sir with Love, Up the Down Staircase, Dead Poets Society*) and less powerful dramatizations (*Glenview High, Class of 75, Beverly Hills 90210, Boston Public*) all attest to the centrality of environment to the defining character of schools and classrooms. The concept of environment, as applied to educational settings, refers to the atmosphere, ambience, tone, or climate that pervades the particular setting. It is noteworthy from the outset to recognize that classroom environments are human environments. Accordingly, research in this field has focused historically on the psychosocial dimensions of the environment - those aspects of the environment that focus on human behaviour in origin or outcome (Boy & Pine 1988).

Objectives of the study:
The present study aimed at investigating the following objectives:
(1) Historical background of the classroom learning environment (CLE)
(2) What changes are taken place in the field of CLE?

Methodology:
Ancient era of classroom Learning environment: Learning environment research has its roots in the work of early social psychologists. The earliest recorded classroom climate research was conducted by Thomas in the 1920s in the United States (see Chavez 1984).In line with much early research in classroom, Thomas's work focused on the observation and recording of explicit classroom phenomena rather that the psychological meaning of events. This early work was improved by Lewin's (1936) field theory which defined behaviour as a function of person and environment (that is,B=f {P,E}). For Lewin,-this meant that the field with which the scientist must deal is the "life space" of the individual. this life space consists of the person and the psychological environment as it exists for him. (Cartwright 1975, p. 11)Murray (1938), Stern, Stein, and Bloom (1956) and Pace and Stern (1958) extended Lewin's work to develop a need press theory in which persons are conceptualized in terms of its press. Needs are the important determinants of behaviour within the individual (Genn 1984). According to Murray (1938), 'the press of an object is what it can do to the subject - the power it has to affect the well-being of the subject in one way or another' (p. 121). Pace (1963) suggested that an environment's crucial aspects are 'its overall atmosphere or characteristics, the kinds of things that are rewarded, encouraged, emphasised, the style of life which is valued in the community and is most visibly expressed and felt' (p. 73). Within this theory, needs and press interact to produce and guide behaviour. In a school, an individual stu-

dent or teacher has particular needs and the school's press either satisfies of frustrates these needs.

Stern (1970) extended need-press theory to develop a theory in which the degree of person-environment congruence is related to student outcomes (Fraser 1986). This theory has been the basis for person-environment fit studies in which the congruence between actual and preferred environments is assessed and related to student outcomes (see Fraser 1994).

Modern era of classroom learning environment : The modern era of learning 1960s when Rudolf Moos and Herbert Walberg began independent lines of research on the conceptualize environment research commenced in the late 1960s and assessment of psychosocial environments. Moos's (1987) suite of social climate scales provided the impetus for studies in a diverse range of human environments including hospitals, prisons, workplaces (including schools), university residences, groups and classrooms. The main theoretical legacy of Moos's work at Stanford University has been the enduring acceptance of his three dimensions of human environments: Relationship (the nature and intensity of personal relationships within the environment), Personal Development (basic directions along which personal growth and self-enhancement tend to occur) and System Maintenance and System Change (the extent to which the environment is orderly, clear in expectations, maintains control and is responsive to change). Few genuine learning environment researchers of the past 30 years have departed from this general framework for conceptualizing environments.

Walberg's involvement in Harvard Project Physics (HPP) required the evaluation of the learning environment (see Walberg & Anderson 1968). HPP was an experimentally-based physics course for secondary school students in the United States in the 1960s. Did this new approach to the teaching and learning of physics in American classrooms make a difference to classroom climate? In contrast to the 1960's behaviorism and the use of observers in classrooms (see Dunkin & Biddle 1974), Walberg's research employed students' perceptual data collected by questionnaire. Additionally, these perceptions focused on summary judgments based on months of immersion in classrooms taught by HPP or conventional knowledge-transmission methods. Walberg's work showed that students could make valid summary judgments about their classrooms and that these perceptions should be used in learning environment research. From the 1970s research on the conceptualization and assessment of classroom environments has developed rapidly. Much of this work has been due to the academic leadership of the Australian Barry Fraser. His substantive research agenda in this field has led to Australia being recognized as a leading country for classroom environment research. Methodological issues have been the subject

of lengthy consideration by classroom environment researchers and the following section discusses important developments in this area. Several literature reviews (Fraser, 1986, 1994, 1998; Fraser and Walberg, 1991) place these developments into historical perspective and show that learning environment assessments have been used as a source of dependent and independent variables in a rich variety of research applications spanning many countries. The assessment of learning environments and research applications have involved a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods, and an important accomplishment within the field has been the productive combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods (Tobin and Fraser, 1998).

To appreciate the concept of environment and its subtle effects, it is useful to consider a metaphor. In 1991, Walberg used Tolstoy's *War and Peace* to refer to the strength of an army as the product of its mass and that unknown X, or the spirit of the army. Observable inputs like the number of combatants, guns and so on are insufficient: the esprit de corps is critical in determining outcomes. So it is in human environments like classrooms. Without a consideration of the crucial role of the psychosocial environment of classrooms, educational productivity cannot be optimized.

In Queensland, recent research commissioned by Education Queensland - the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS 2001) - makes specific reference to *supportive classroom environments* as one of four general dimensions of its Productive Pedagogies framework. Table shows the five elements of this key dimension. While not all learning environment researchers would accept that *Explicit Quality Performance Criteria* is a bona fide psychosocial construct, the QSRLS shows that learning environment is a focus of contemporary thinking on school reform. Clearly the concept of environment is important and powerful. Teachers relate to the concept - it is not an esoteric abstraction created by researchers for researchers. Reviews of classroom environment research by Fraser (1998b), Dorman (2002), Goh and Khine (2002) and Khine and Fisher (2003) have delineated at least 10 areas of classroom environment research including: associations between classroom environment and outcomes,etc.

FINDINGS:

(1) Over the past 95 years, the study of classroom environments has received increased attention   by researchers, teachers, school administrators and administrators of school systems.

(2) The earliest recorded classroom climate research was conducted by Thomas in the 1920s in the United States.

(3) This early work was improved by Lewin's (1936).

(4) Murray (1938), Stern, Stein, and Bloom (1956) and Pace and Stern (1958) extended Lewin's work to develop a *need-press* theory.

(5) The modern era of learning environment research commenced in the late 1960s when Rudolf Moos and Herbert Walberg began independent lines of research on the conceptualization and assessment of psychosocial environments.

(6) From the 1970s research on the conceptualization and assessment of classroom environments has developed rapidly.

Much of this work has been due to the academic leadership of the Australian Barry Fraser.

(7) Australia being recognized as a leading country for classroom environment research.

(8) Another approach to studying educational environments involves application of the techniques of naturalistic inquiry, ethnography, case study or interpretive research (Erickson, 1998).

(9) In Queensland, recent research commissioned by Education Queensland - the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS 2001) - makes specific reference to *supportive classroom environments* as one of four general dimensions of its Productive Pedagogies framework.

(10) Goh and Khine (2002) and Khine and Fisher (2003) have delineated at least 10 areas of classroom environment research.

(11) Much rah (2003) investigated the environment in social science classrooms using technology.

(12) Rickards, den Brok and Fisher (2005) built upon this Dutch research to develop similar profiles for teacher communication styles in Australian schools.

(13) Wan and Ma (2006) investigated the use of wireless laptops in college classrooms that purportedly had a constructivist learning environment.

(14) John Seely Brown (2008) reported a study on the changing CLE in the 21st century continues to increase.

(15) Veronica Diaz, Joann Golas, Susan Gautsch(2010) Alongside the rapid growth of e-learning, higher education has witnessed the explosion of Web 2.0 tools and other emerging technologies (Sclater 2008).

Conclusion:

After a brief discussion about the historical perspectives of classroom Learning Environment, it is concluded that though the research on CLE was started in the 1920 with the research work of Thomas in the United States but the modern era of classroom learning environment research was developed in the 1960s when Rudolf Moos and Herbert Walberg began independent lines of research on the conceptualization and assessment of psychosocial environments. In this field Australian researcher Barry Fraser is an famous personality for his work on the conceptualization and assessment of classroom environments. After 1960 to till the research on CLE has growing on. In this perspectives the country like Australia, USA, newzealand, South Korea, Japan, and India are taking the baton of leadership. Most of research is conducted by this country. But one thinks is needed to be mentioned that is the researcher on the field of CLE, are follow the principles of Rudolf Moos and Herbert Walberg, when conducted the research work.

REFERENCES

(1) Winthrop, R., & Smith, M. S. (2012). A New Face of Education: Bringing Technology into | The Classroom in the Developing World. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution. | (2) Light, D., & Rockman, C. (2008). The emerging paradigm of teaching and learning in | Discovery Schools, evaluation of the Jordan Education Initiative (pp. 57). | Washington, DC: Education Development Center, Inc. | (3) Padron, Y.N., Waxman, H.C. & Lee, Y.H. (2014). Classroom Learning Environment | Differences between Resilient, Average and Nonresident Middle School | Students . In Reading..Education and Urban Society, 46(2) 264 -283. | (4) Fraser, B.J.(1998). Classroom environment instrument: Development, Validity and | Applications. Learning Environment Resarch.1. 7-33. | (5) Light, D. (2013). Growing Changes: An Indian case study of transforming classroom learning | With technology. | (6) Doman, J.P., Aldridge, J.M. & Fraser, B.J.(2006). Using students' assessment of classroom | environment to develop a typology of secondary school classroom. 7(7), | 906-915. | | (7) Walberg, H.J., Fraser, B.J. & Welch, W.W. (1986). A test of a model of educational | . Productivity among senior high school students. Journal of Educational | Research, 79, 133–139. | (8) Wong, A.F.L. & Fraser, B.J. (1995). Cross-validation in Singapore of the Science Laboratory | Environment Inventory. Psychological Reports, 76, 907–911. | (9) Wong, A.L.F. & Fraser, B.J. (1996). Environment-attitude associations in the chemistry | Laboratory classroom. Research in Science and Technological Education, 14, | 91– 102.