

A Qualitative Study of Students' Interest, Learning Difficulty, and Teachers' Teaching Methods in Geography in Secondary Schools of Meghalaya

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Abstract

Geography is one of the core school subjects in India. As a school subject, it has also gained its due place in the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) syllabus, Meghalaya. There is a general notion that geography is a tough subject in the social sciences. This notion may exist due to several related factors that hamper geography learning in schools. In this connection, the present study was undertaken to explore the students' interests and learning difficulty in geography and to analyse the methods employed by teachers to teach geography. In this study, a qualitative research design was used and a self-developed semi-structured questionnaire was employed to collect data from fifty-seven secondary school students and twelve teachers in the South West Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya. The analysis was completed based on frequency, percentage, and content analysis. The findings showed that the majority of students (N=42, 73.68%) had an interest in geography. However, a significant proportion of the students (N=15, 26.32%) did not like the subject. Furthermore, the study rendered the grounds of students' interest and disinterest in the subject. Besides, different areas related to students' learning difficulty were identified. For better off, the study urged teachers to use innovative and ICT integrated methods and teaching aids in the classroom. Teachers' training and content mastery for teachers was emphasised as essential criteria for effective and interesting teaching at school levels.

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INTRODUCTION

Geography is an important subject for school students. It is the subject that represents both, human society and the physical environment. It reflects all the wonderful changes and activities that have been there since the time immemorial. According to F. Ratzel (1882), it is "the study of the relationship between man and the environment" (Hussain, 2011). Richard Hartshorne (1959) says geography subject is "concerned with the description and explanation of the areal differentiation of the earth's surface." Thus, the description of the spatial distribution of different phenomena on the earth's surface and the man-environment relationship remains a central theme of geography (Grossman, 1977; Köszegei *et al.*, 2015). Geography is different from other, Meghalaya, India disciplines in its subject contents and methodology but at the same time, it is closely related to other disciplines. Geography derives its contents from all the natural and social sciences and has a strong interface with the natural and social sciences (NCERT, Textbook XI, 2006). It is one of the social sciences which are heading toward a scientific form (Herbertson, 1910). By studying geography, students learn not only about their own country but also about countries around the world. They learn about the distribution of human landscapes such as population, human settlements, industrial zones, and physical landscapes such as

mountains, oceans, islands, lakes, volcanoes, winds, precipitations, and other interesting phenomena about the world and the universe. Among the important aspects that students learn in geography are the forest distribution, forest products, natural habitats, national parks, sanctuaries, biosphere reserves, variety of wildlife, plants, mammals, birds, and also learn about the major landforms such as mountains, tablelands, glaciers, volcanoes that exist around the world (NCERT, Textbook VI, 2006). The subject, geography helps students to explore and to understand these phenomena, which is fascinating and interesting for young learners. They learn about how the geographical landscapes and phenomena such as topography, climate, rainfall, natural vegetation, and wildlife habitats and human landscapes such as economic activities, habits, language, lifestyles, and religious beliefs of people differ from place to place (Khullar, 2011). Besides, geography equips students to understand and to investigate the cause and effect relationships over the changes that happened across different geographical space and time (Jones, 1956). It develops skills among students to read and interpret maps that help them to understand the globe through visual depictions of the earth's surface. The insights and the skills obtained through modern scientific techniques such as GIS and computer based cartography help students to improve their geography knowledge and map skills and to

meaningfully contribute to the national endeavour for development (Shin, 2006; Sarkar, 2009). Thus, geography, due to its width and variety, is one of the important and interesting subjects to study at the school level.

As a school subject, geography has gained its due place in the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) syllabus of Meghalaya. There is a general notion that geography is a tough subject in social sciences and has contents of both, arts as well as science. Being a subject related to both science and arts, it requires special skills from both students and teachers. In teaching geography, teachers play a very important role. They can teach children to be sensitive to nature and the environment. An understanding of nature and the environment will help them to become responsible citizens for the nation and the world. The teachers have to remember that students will be the leaders in the future. They can direct the children to the right path by imparting the lessons which make them interested. The National Curriculum Framework (2005) stated that “issues relating to geography should be taught keeping in mind the need to inculcate in the child a critical appreciation for conservation and environmental concerns” (NCERT, 2006). At the secondary stage, to make learning more interesting and effective, teachers must be familiar with all the skills required in teaching the subject. They must be

clear with the fundamental concepts of geography at the secondary stage. For developing the concept of geography, teachers must be clear about the objectives of teaching-learning and have content mastery. Besides, they are also supposed to develop a competency that is the skill for teaching geography to accomplish the objectives of the discipline. In this connection, the Kothari Commission (1964–66) stated that “the curriculum should be based on the interests and abilities of the students. It should include some core subjects common to all and certain optional subjects to suit the interests of the student. There should be provision for varied courses and maximum integration of subject matter”.

The subject, geography, is taught as an independent subject at the secondary level. By the time students reach the secondary level, they generally become adolescents. Their intelligence and mental development receive enough maturity. They are in a position to establish the cause and effect relationship properly (Piaget, 1976). Their psychological requirements are also different, it is, therefore, very necessary to employ teaching methods and techniques that should be apt and capable of developing the interest, imagination, reasoning, and creativity among students. The contents should meet the local relevance and the requirements of pupils. Besides, studies revealed concern over the geography contents, teachers’ quality,

and practiced pedagogy in geography (Gokce, 2009; Aydin, 2011; Alam, 2015; Kidman, 2018). The secondary level is the transitional stage, after which students have to move on to higher secondary level. Therefore, it becomes very essential for teachers to develop students' interest and proper understanding of the subject, which is deeply rooted and influenced by instructional design, effective teaching, and a good classroom learning environment. The learning requirements of students and the teaching skills required from teachers to teach geography creates a complex context for learning and teaching of geography at the school level. There are fewer studies in India that adequately address this specific context. Therefore, in the present study, the investigators try to study, analyse, and understand the teaching-learning context of geography. Following are the research questions, addressed in the present study;

1. If students are interested in geography as a school subject?
2. What are the contents liked by students the most?
3. Do students have any difficulty in learning the subject contents? If, yes then what kind of difficulty are they facing in specific areas?
4. Do the teachers address those difficulties faced by students? And, what kind of approach do the teachers adapt to teach the subject?
5. How can the difficulties and problems faced by students be minimised?

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the students' interests in geography at the secondary level.
2. To identify the learning difficulties faced by secondary school students in geography.
3. To study the teaching methods employed by teachers to teach geography.
4. To provide the suggestive remedies to minimise the learning difficulties faced by secondary school students in geography.

KEY CONCEPTS

The investigators have operationally defined three key concepts used in the present study. These are –

1. Geography: In the present study, geography refers to the geographical contents given in the social science curriculum of the MBOSE syllabus (Meghalaya Board of School Education), Meghalaya.
2. Secondary School Students: The students from secondary schools of Meghalaya affiliated to the Meghalaya Board of School Education have been considered as secondary school students in the present study.
3. Learning Difficulty: It refers to problems faced by secondary students in understanding the contents and concepts of geography.

METHODOLOGY

In the present study, a qualitative research design was used to collect relevant data from the target students in the schools (Creswell, 2009).

Population and Sampling

All secondary school students of Meghalaya were the target population in the present study. The investigators have purposively chosen a district named South West Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya for carrying out the present study. For the present study, ten schools were selected based on a random sampling technique. Then, a purposive sampling technique was used to select a total of fifty-seven secondary school students from the ninth class standard and twelve teachers in the selected schools. The following Table 1 showed the distribution of samples in public and private schools –

Table 1
Sample Description

School type	Students	Teachers
Public school	15	1
Private school	42	11
Total	57	12

Instrument Used for Data Collection

In the present study, the investigators have employed an open-ended questionnaire for data collection in selected schools. The questionnaire was prepared by the investigators for school students. The investigators

have checked the face validity of the developed questionnaire through experts' opinions in relevant subjects. The pilot testing of the questionnaire was done on twenty students. Based on the received feedback, minor changes pertaining to language were made to the questionnaire. The final draft of the questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section 'A' included the demographic profile of the students. Section 'B' of the questionnaire had ten open-ended questions for the students. It covered the aspects of students' interests, learning difficulty, and teachers' pedagogy. In addition to this, the demographic profile of teachers was also collected from the teachers, teaching in the sampled schools.

Instrument Administration

The investigators had administered the open-ended questionnaire for students in the selected schools. The investigators had administered the questionnaire to each of the selected participants individually to collect data on their interest, learning difficulty, and perception about teachers' pedagogy in the classroom and opinions about how to minimise learning difficulty in the subject. Instructions were given to the participants regarding the purpose of the interview and confidentiality was ensured. Thus, the whole process of data collection was completed in three weeks.

Data Analysis

In the present study, data were analysed qualitatively. The content analysis of the data was done and

the investigators have thematically categorised the responses. The frequency and percentage had been used in the analysis, along with quotes and narrations of the respondents.

Table 2
Mapping Students' Interests in Geography

Themes	Reasons for interest	N	%	Total N (%)
A. Interested	1. It deals with the earth and its physical features and its surroundings.	14	24.56	42 (73.68)
	2. It is correlated with other subjects and helps students to understand these subjects in a better way.	15	26.32	
	3. It deals with man-environment relationships and provides a description of different types of resources include natural and human resources and development.	7	12.28	
	4. It deals with the study of different types of maps and signs and symbols (map language).	4	7.02	
	5. It is a very scoring subject.	2	3.51	
B. Not-interested	1. It is difficult to remember and to locate the different places on maps.	15	26.32	15 (26.32)
Total		57	100	57 (100)

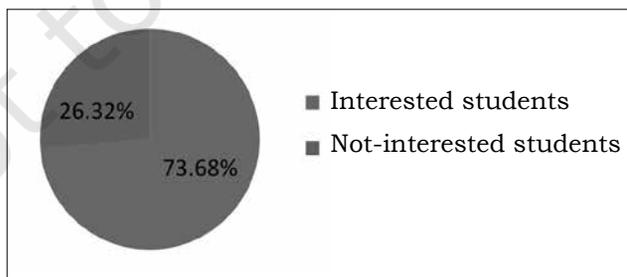


Figure 1: Showing Students' Interests in Geography

RESULT AND INTERPRETATION

Learning Interests

The Table 2 showed that the majority of the students (N=42, 73.68%) liked geography as a school subject. Out of 73.68 per cent of students who liked the subject reported different reasons for the same. It was found that the majority of students (N=26.32%) liked geography as it was related to other school subjects like science, environmental studies, economics, history, and mathematics and helped them to understand other subjects better.

The second majority of the students (N=14, 24.56%) reported that they liked the subject because it provided an in-depth description of the earth and its surroundings, including physical, biological, and human creatures. In further analysis, students expressed that they were interested in the subject because it provided the description of how the earth was formed and the physical features on the earth's surface such as continents, oceans, rivers, hills, mountains, plateaus, and valleys were formed. They liked the subject as it dealt with the natural vegetation and provided a description of the ecosystem, biomass, biodiversity, flora and fauna. They also had an interest in the subject as it facilitated an account on temperature, precipitation, humidity, types of winds, and cyclones across different geographical regions.

The third majority of the students (N=7, 12.28%) expressed their liking for the subject because it is the subject that dealt with the spatial distribution of natural resources and human settlements and helped them to understand man-environmental relationship as one of the respondents said: *"I like geography subject because it deals with man and environment relationship and it motivates me a lot to work hard"*. The students expressed their enthusiasm towards learning about the formation and distribution of mineral resources like coal, mica, gold, tin, uranium, petroleum, and natural resources like air, water, and land or soil resources, and man-made resources like means of transports and modes of communications. One of the students described that *"I like geography subject because it deals with different resources and respective development, for example, water resources; how water is important to us and how to conserve it, it tells us about the different type of industries classed on size, weight, ownership, and raw materials"*.

The fourth majority of the students (N=4, 7.02%) showed their interest in the subject as it informed them about different types of maps and convectional signs and symbols (map language). Some students expressed the liking of the subject because it teaches them about how to draw different types of maps, helps them in map reading and interpretation, and enables them to locate the different places or countries on a map. One of the students said

"I like geography subject because it teaches us how to draw a map, how to locate a place on a map and to read the latitude and longitude".

Furthermore, a few of the students (N=2, 3.51%) stated that they liked the subject as geography was a very scoring subject. One of the respondents described that *"It is the subject which I like the most and very interesting to study as it is a scoring subject"*

However, a significant proportion of the students (N=15, 26.32%) reported that they did not like geography because it was a subject that had many difficult and abstract concepts to study. They found it difficult as it dealt with facts and required the cramming of lots of facts, abstract concepts, dates,

years, lengths, and heights. Some of the students stated that they did not like the subject at all as it was a combination of social science, and has correlated with many other subjects that create complications in learning. Besides, students had also reported difficulty in map reading and interpretation and in operating different field survey related equipments. Excerpt of one of the students' anecdotes revealed this idea, *"geography is interesting, but it is difficult to remember some topics like length or height and location of different mountains, rivers, places, and rivers. Another respondent and it is very difficult in social sciences as it deals with all aspects of the earth and human society"*.

Table 3
Learning Difficulties Faced by Students

Themes	Topics and concepts	N	%	Total N (%)
A. Students with learning difficulty	1. Memorising different facts and structures.	22	38.60	47 (82.46)
	2. Abstract concepts and maps.	12	21.05	
	3. Understanding the physical features of the earth, the movement of plate tectonics, climatic conditions, and correlated or identical concepts with other subjects.	6	10.52	
	4. Project works.	7	12.28	
B. Students without learning difficulty		10	17.54	10 (17.54)
Total				57 (100)

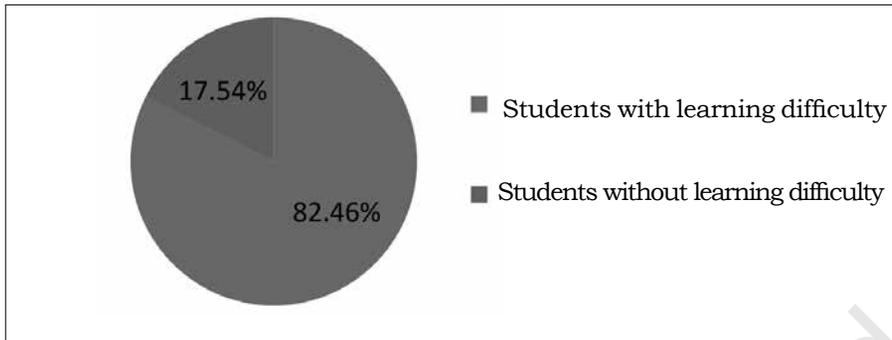


Figure 2: Learning Difficulties Faced by Students

Learning Difficulties

The Table 3 showed that the majority of students (N=47, 82.46%) had difficulty in learning geography, whereas few students (N=10, 17.54%) had no difficulty in learning geography. The study brought out the main areas where the students faced problems in geography. It was found that the majority of the student (N=22, 38.60%) had problems in rote-based contents. They faced problems in understanding and remembering factual information such as names of different geographical places, different topographic features, and facts related to years, height, length, and location of different geographical objects, i.e., mountain, rivers, natural vegetation, and minerals resources. The exception of one student reads that *“It is very difficult for me to remember the years, height of mountains, names of the places, international boundaries and names of different ports and water stations.”*

The second majority of the students (N=12, 21.05%) reported problems in understanding abstract concepts and map reading and interpretation. They

had a problem in understanding different cartographic concepts such as scales, conventional signs, and symbols, grid systems (latitudes and longitudes). They found difficulty in drawing maps according to scale and also had problems in locating and identifying different geographical places and objects on maps.

The third majority of the students (N=7, 12.28%) reported difficulty in completing the project work. They found it burdensome as they did not get proper guidance from the teachers. The finding of the present study revealed that the students find it difficult to finish or to submit a project work to the teachers due to the lack of required materials in schools and no proper guidance from the teachers. The statement made by one students, *“I find it very difficult to finish the project work given by teachers, especially in geography subject, because the subject has a wider concept and lack of materials.”*

The fourth majority of the students (N=6, 10.52%) had difficulty in understanding the physical

Table 4
Teaching Methods employed by Teachers in the Classroom

Theme	Sub-themes	Categories	N	%
Teaching methods used by teachers to explain difficult concepts	1. Lecture	Explanation and illustration.	19	33.33
	2. Use of text-book	Text book.	23	40.35
	3. Use of teaching aids	Maps, atlas, globes, and chalk blackboard.	15	26.32
Total			57	100

features of the earth, the movement of plate tectonics and the climatic condition that includes, rainfall distribution patterns, pressure belts, wind systems, ocean currents, the formation of volcanoes, soil formations, and to differentiate the types of rocks and understand their formation and distribution. The students also had difficulty in the subject contents bearing identical aspects with other subjects like science, mathematics, arts, and environmental studies. One student from a private school stated that *"I face difficulty in the study of the physical features of different continents, the theory of plate tectonic, to remember the major physiographic divisions of India, the location with latitude and longitude and different names of ocean and rivers and mountains."*

TEACHING METHODS

The Table 4 showed the teaching methods and aids employed by the teachers to explain the difficult concepts to students. It was found that the majority of the students (N=23, 40.35%) said that the teachers used text book as the most important material in the classroom. The teachers used text book and everything that the text book provided to explain the difficult concepts to the students. As one of the students said that *"The teachers just teach, explain, and tell us to read from the text book"*. A similar response was given by another respondent who said that *"Our teachers just read and explain from the text book."*

The second majority of the students (N=19, 33.33%) indicated

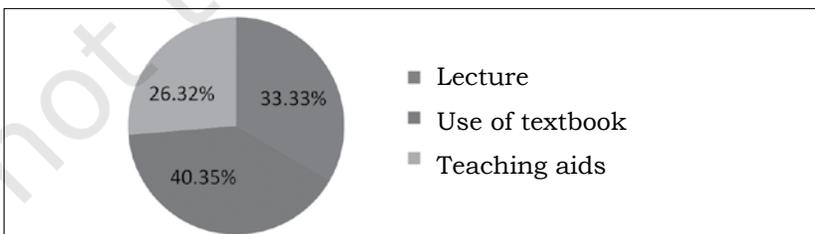


Figure 3: Teaching Methods Employed by Teachers in the Classroom

that the teachers explained the difficult concepts through lectures. As one of the respondents stated that “Our teachers explain the difficult concepts through lectures.”

The third majority of the students (N=15, 26.32%) revealed that teachers explained the difficult concepts with the help of maps, atlas, globes, and chalk blackboard. One respondent

said that “Teachers use different types of materials like maps, atlas, and globe, in teaching geography.”

From the above analysis, it can be said that lecture method with text book and traditional teaching materials, i.e., maps, atlas, globe, and chalk blackboard, were the most common practices used by teachers in teaching geography.

Table 5
Suggestions to minimise Students’ Learning Difficulties in Geography

Theme	Sub-themes	Categories	N	%
Students’ suggestions for teachers	1. Use of teaching aids and ICT	Use of teaching aids and new technology.	18	31.58
	2. Training for teachers	Teachers should be trained to become effective teachers.	15	26.32
	3. Mastery of contents and methods of teaching	Know the concepts and use of different methods of teaching.	14	24.56
	4. Understanding students	Teachers should understand the students’ interests and abilities.	10	17.54
Total			57	100

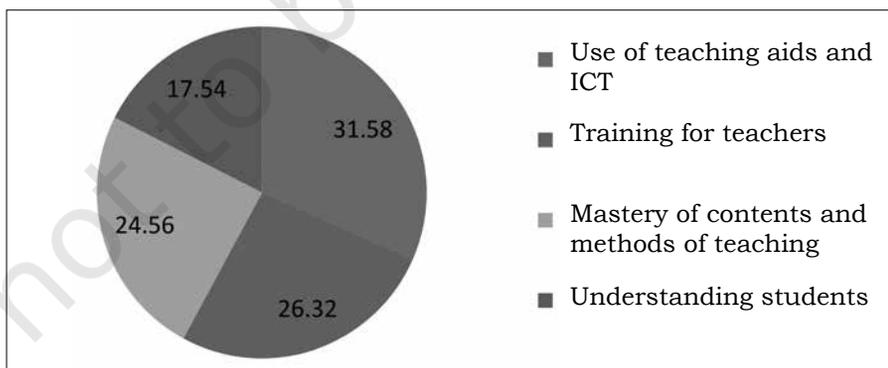


Figure 1. Suggestions to Minimise Learning Difficulty in Geography

SUGGESTIVE REMEDIES

The Table 5 showed the suggestions offered by students to minimise the learning difficulties faced by them in learning geography. It was found that the majority of the students (N=18, 32%) suggested that the teachers should use teaching aids and supplementary study-materials with the blend of educationally relevant new technology for teaching the subject. They reiterated that the teachers should make use of materials like pictures, diagrams, maps, atlas, specimens, and different instruments such as a barometer, thermometer, and instruments to make the lessons more effective in the classroom. Besides, the use of laboratory and library was also suggested by the students to develop practical insights and a deep understanding of the subject. One of the students stated that *“Teaching material is very important for the students to get a better and clear concept especially to those topics which are difficult to understand and if the teachers show us with picture or specimens then it will clear the doubt and will develop the thinking capacity.”*

The second majority of the students (N=15, 26.32%) suggested that teachers should be trained so that they will know about how to teach different topics effectively. As every teacher is not a born teacher so the teachers who are involved in the teaching process should get training for two years or one year, which will help teachers to teach different topics

of geography. One student stated that *“teachers should be trained and should have a habit of reading more books for teaching geography. They should bring different perspectives so that the students will not face any problem while learning the subject”*.

The third majority of the students (N=14, 25%) suggested that teachers should have mastery in contents and different methods of teaching. One student stated that *“the teacher should have good knowledge about the different concepts and teaching pedagogy, and they should know how to make a relation between the past, present, and the future.”* Teachers should have methodological knowledge about how to make use of different methods to teach difficult concepts and new ideas to students. They should use methods like discussion method, play-way method, observation, and field trip or excursion to promote creative learning among students. Besides, the students also suggested that the teachers should prepare well before coming to the class.

The fourth majority of the students (N=10, 17.54%) suggested that the teachers should understand the interests and abilities of the students, and they should have friendly interactions with the students for an effective teaching-learning process in the classroom. No individual is alike or the same rather different from one individual to another. So, the teachers should understand an individual student's capability

and encourage the weak students to perform well in the examination as one of the students stated that *“Teachers should treat every student equally and take interest in those students who perform poorly in the class.”*

DISCUSSIONS

The present study revealed that the majority of the students had an interest in geography as it provided in-depth descriptions about the earth and its physical and human features. They liked the subject as it deals with the spatial distribution of different types of natural and human resources. The students found the subject supportive as it helped them in learning other school subjects, i.e., science, environmental studies, history, and mathematics. The contents that dealt with the study of different types of maps and convectional signs and symbols (map language) were the most liked subject areas by the students. The students also preferred the subject as they saw it as a scoring subject. However, a smaller proportion of the students did not like the subject as they perceived the subject having many difficult and abstract concepts that required the cramming of lots of facts, abstract concepts, and dates. A similar study conducted by Aydin (2011) revealed the sides of geography lessons liked and disliked by the students. In the same study, memorisation of facts and mathematical aspects of geography was identified as barriers

for school students in geography learning.

The present study found that the majority of the students had difficulties in geography, whereas a comparatively smaller proportion of the students did not face any difficulty. The study rendered specific problems reported by the students in understanding and remembering fact-based information and abstract concepts. They had difficulty in understanding the geographical features and the distribution of natural resources in different regions across the world. Moreover, students also reported difficulty in cartographic tasks, i.e., map reading and interpretation, drawing a map, and locating different places on maps with accordance to the respective grid that is latitude and longitude. In the present study, learning difficulties faced by a majority of the students may be attributed to the lack of professional training among teachers, as only 60 per cent of the teachers were trained. The outdated traditional teaching methods may also be responsible for learning difficulty among students, as around 73 per cent of the students reported that most of the teachers primarily use lectures with a textbook for teaching difficult concepts. A similar observation was made by Yeung (2010), wherein it was reported that learning activities, such as analysis, information collection and oral presentation on various geographical themes were helpful for students

in learning abstract and difficult concepts in geography. Besides, the students also revealed the problem in completing project works because of the lack of required materials in schools and no proper guidance from the teachers. A study conducted by Maduane (2016) found that the textbook to second language English learners is a learning barrier for students. Overall, the present study brought out an intriguing finding wherein a majority of the students were facing learning difficulties, though they were interested in the subject.

Regarding methods of teaching, in the present study, it was found that lecture methods with textbook and traditional teaching-learning materials were mainly used by the teachers for teaching geography. The textbook was used during the lecture to explain the difficult concepts to the students. Also, teachers used teaching-learning materials such as maps, atlas, globes, and chalk blackboards as reported by the students. The use of the textbook during lectures may be due to the lack of content mastery among teachers. Suggestions received from the students also pointed out that teachers should have adequate knowledge about the contents. Another reason, as found in the present study, was lack of subject-specific trained teachers as 40 per cent of the teachers had no professional training and did not have graduation and post-graduation in geography. A similar

study was conducted by Alam (2015) on the status of geography teachers in schools where it was observed that the initiatives and efforts taken through different policies and programs were not equated to improve the quality of geography education in schools. There in the study, under-qualification of geography teachers was identified as the major problem at school level geography education in India. Likewise, a study conducted by Maduane (2016) also found the poor professional proficiency of teachers as a learning barrier for school students in geography. Besides, Gokce (2009) revealed the insufficient number of geography instructors, teachers' low motivation, and removal of some courses as negative factors, affecting students' motivation and learning outcome in the subject.

The investigators explored the means and ways to minimise the learning difficulties faced by students in geography. It was found that students were not satisfied with the existing methods of teaching. They put forward some suggestions for using teaching methods such as discussion method, play-way method, observation, and field trip or excursion to promote creative learning among students. The majority of the students suggested that teachers should use modernised teaching-learning materials in the classroom. Teachers' training and content mastery were also mentioned by the students, as essential attributes for

teachers. Students emphasised that with proper training and adequate content knowledge, teachers can teach more effectively and make the subject contents interesting. The students also recommended that a teacher should have the ability to understand students' interests and abilities and use a student-friendly teaching approach in the classroom. Besides, it was suggested that school administrators should provide adequate infrastructural support for facilitating the teaching-learning process, such as ICT enabled classroom and laboratory. A similar study conducted by Aydın (2011) had brought out students' suggestions that the teachers should use visual equipment and tool and encourage classroom activities for better learning outcomes in the subject. Lambert (1999) has emphasised on text books and printed resources, including various electronic media and internet-based materials to teach geography at the school level. Rickey and Bein (1996) investigated the students' learning difficulties in geography and brought out that the teachers' instructional interventions for improving learning outcomes in the subject as effective. Yasar and Seremet (2009) found that a constructive approach based on geography curriculum, student-centered active learning, and inquiry-based teaching help students to develop constructive knowledge and critical thinking at secondary schools. A similar study was conducted by

Yeung (2010) evidenced the positive consequences of a problem-based learning approach for teaching geography to pre-university students. Besides, a school-based support and training program and a collaborative inquiry-oriented atmosphere in the classroom were also expected and recommended to bring down learning difficulty in the subject.

DELIMITATION AND SUGGESTIONS

The present study was delimited to secondary school students in Mawkyrwat Block of South West Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya, North-East India. However, the study can be extended further to identify the learning difficulties faced by school students in geography or other relevant school subjects in different geographical locales of North-East India. A similar study can further be taken at higher secondary, college, and university levels to understand the prevalence of students' interests, learning difficulties, and teachers' practice instructional pedagogy in geography.

CONCLUSION

The present study provided empirical evidence about the status of students' learning difficulties in geography. It was found that the majority of the students had an interest in the subject because it deals with man-environmental relationships. And, it provides a description of the spatial distribution of different geographical phenomena on the earth's surface.

However, few students did not like the subject as it had abstract concepts and required cramming of lots of facts and dates. Overall, the present study brought out an intriguing finding wherein a majority of the students were facing learning difficulties, though they were interested in the subject. It was found that the instructional methods adopted by teachers of both professionally trained and untrained were not adequate to address the problems faced by the students. It was found that students were not satisfied with the existing methods of teaching. They put forward a number of suggestions regarding teachers and teaching methods. The majority of the students suggested that teachers should use modernised teaching-learning materials in the classroom such as ICT enabled instructional materials and activity-based e-learning materials. Teachers' training and content mastery were also mentioned by the students, as essential attributes for teachers.

The findings of the present study render some significant implications for all stakeholders in school education. Contextual teaching approach and ICT integral instructional design and pedagogy need to be employed for teaching the subject in schools. Since, both the trained and untrained teachers could not cater to the learning needs of students, the implication of the study goes to professional training programs. Teacher training program needs to focus on subject-specific pedagogy. Teachers should also motivate students to engage in group-based learning activities in and outside the classroom so that learning geography can be taking place through interaction, observation, and personal experience in natural settings. The school administration should provide necessary teaching and learning materials and technological support to both teachers and students to minimise the related factors that hamper geography learning in schools.

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