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**Active Teaching and Learning in Indian Primary Education**

*A Qualitative Study of Teachers' Perceptions and Practices Towards*

*Active Teaching and Learning (ATL) in the World Teacher Program of Edukans and*

*STAR-school Program of YCDA.*

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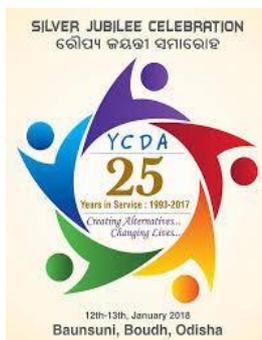
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### **Summary**

The general aim of this research was to gain insight in the working elements of the WTP and the STAR-school program with regard to ATL in Indian primary schools. Research questions were formulated towards teachers' practices, perceptions, and experienced environmental factors towards ATL. In total 10 in-depth interviews with teachers, and 11 observations in different classes were conducted. Overall, it can be said that teachers scored quite positive on providing children with active learning activities during their lessons. Nevertheless, it can be questioned if teachers are always teaching in this active manner. Concerning perceptions, it was found that attitudes were mainly positive, social influences were not always supportive, and it was difficult to reflect on their own skills. When talking about barriers, teachers only focused on external conditions. This study has led to some working elements and implications for the further development of the WTP for both Edukans and the YCDA. The main focus is on increasing knowledge, supportive environment and fitting into the Indian cultural values and beliefs.

*Key words:* Active Teaching and Learning, child-centered education, India, World Teacher Program

### **Samenvatting**

Doel van deze studie was om inzicht te verkrijgen in de werkende elementen van het WTP en het STER-school programma met betrekking tot ATL op Indiase basisscholen. Onderzoeksvragen zijn geformuleerd naar de praktijken, percepties en ervaren omgevingsfactoren van leraren met betrekking tot ATL. In totaal zijn 10 diepte interviews met leraren en 11 observaties in verschillende klassen uitgevoerd. Over het algemeen scoorden leraren redelijk positief op het aanbieden van ATL. Wat betreft percepties is er gebleken dat de houding van leraren voornamelijk positief was, de sociale invloeden niet altijd ondersteunend en eigen-effectiviteit lastig was te beantwoorden. Wanneer gesproken werd over barrières focusten leraren zich enkel op externe condities. Dit onderzoek heeft geleid tot werkende elementen en aanbevelingen voor zowel Edukans als de YCDA. De focus ligt hierbij op het verhogen van kennis, ondersteunende omgeving en aansluiten bij de culturele waarden en normen van India.

*Sleutelwoorden:* Activerende didactiek, kind-gericht onderwijs, India, World Teacher Programma

### **Active teaching and learning in Indian primary education**

The agreement that every child has the right to be educated was established in 1990 in almost every country, including India (Ansell, 2005). However, there are problems in the poorest districts in India related to low school enrolment, high dropout rates, and low learning outcomes. Other fundamental issues are inadequate school infrastructure and materials, no link between education and employment opportunities, gender inequity, non-availability of teachers, high teacher absenteeism, and corruption (Accountability Initiative, 2013; Agarwal, 2017; Azam & Kingdon, 2013; Pandey, 2006). Although many challenges exist in Indian education, there was also quality improvement in the past few years related to more children entering and completing primary school, and improved learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2015). Teachers are seen as the most crucial aspect influencing the quality of education by the Indian Education Commission and the National Policy on Education (Pandey, 2006). The quality improvement of teachers can be a result of teacher training programs about effective educational approaches (UNESCO, 2015).

An educational approach that can improve the quality of education is often associated with the learner-centered approach (De Kock, Slegers, & Voeten, 2004). This approach is the opposite of the teacher-dominated and lecture-driven practices that are common in India (UNESCO, 2015), and can create a more child-friendly and democratic learning environment and promote democracy, civic engagement, and economic development (Sriprakash, 2010; UNESCO, 2015). Since 1990, these child-centered ideas have been utilized in teacher training programs and school reforms in for example India (Sriprakash, 2010; UNESCO, 2015). One of these child-centered methods is Active Teaching and Learning (ATL), whereby children have an active influence on their learning process and obtain knowledge in interaction with others (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Niemi, 2002; Prince, 2004; Stephen, Ellis, & Martlew, 2010). Teachers and teacher education are seen as crucial factors in promoting ATL (Niemi, 2002). The empirical support for ATL is extensive, as research suggests that it is associated with improved learning outcomes (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Hattie, 2009; Prince, 2004; Stephen et al., 2010). Eventually, this might have a positive impact on the improvement of education quality (Kamal, 2015), and in turn on creating economic opportunities, health and social justice (Drackner & Subrahmanyam, 2010; Hannum & Buckmann, 2005).

ATL is developed and mainly implemented in Western educational systems (Niemi, 2002). It is important to take culture into account when transferring educational concepts from one cultural context to another (Ansell, 2005) and to get understanding of the inside world of the participants (Abubakar, 2015). Nsamenang (2008) states that implementing developmental initiatives is only sustainable when it does not intend to replace the “new” culture, but to enhance their un-Western approaches. Furthermore, local knowledge can be a valuable addition to Western knowledge on ATL (Ansell, 2005).

An NGO that is trying to implement developmental initiatives in un-Western contexts is Edukans. Edukans attempts to improve the quality of education in developing countries with a focus on child-centered and value-driven education, and parental involvement (Edukans, 2012). One of their initiatives that aims to offer quality education is the World Teacher Program (WTP), which connects teachers from the Netherlands to teachers from the visiting countries for mutual exchange of knowledge and experiences, and mutual learning (Edukans, 2012). This research will be conducted in India, where the WTP has been implemented once in 2017 in Odisha (Boudh district). The main goal for the WTP in Odisha is changing the teacher-centered education towards a more child-centered education by exchanging knowledge and practice on ATL methods (Edukans, 2017b).

In Odisha there are several concerns related to education (Edukans, 2017a), like high school dropout, lack of teacher motivation, high teacher absenteeism, and lack of community- and parental involvement because of low literacy and high poverty. Furthermore, teachers face difficulties like multiclass teaching and lack of Teaching and Learning Materials (TLM). In recent years, the education quality has got attention of the state, central governments and policymakers, whereby several committees were formed to reduce these problems (Kamal, 2015).

One committee that works to reduce these problems in Odisha is the NGO Youth Council for Development Alternatives (YCDA). NGOs in India have been influential in improving education quality (ASER, 2011). Since 2016, YCDA started with the “STAR-school” program, which is implemented in 50 schools in Boudh district and is designed and supported by Edukans. The “STAR-school” program is focused on improving school performances of students and the quality of education, based on five dimensions: 1) safe learning environment, 2) active student participation in learning, 3) well trained and motivated teachers, 4) well-functioning school

management, and 5) involvement of parents and community (Edukans, 2017c). The WTP in Odisha is part of this STAR-school program by focusing on the second and third dimension.

The general aim of this research was to gain insight in the working elements of the WTP and the STAR-school program with regard to ATL in Indian primary schools. Working elements can be described as factors that could make an intervention like WTP more effective (Be, 2015). Various working elements for an effective intervention will be identified in four phases (Novins, Green, Legha, & Aarons, 2013): distribution, adoption, implementation and assurance. These working elements could display some implications for further development of the WTP and could tailor it more to the STAR-school program.

If Edukans wants to make real changes in Indian education with the WTP, it is necessary to understand cultural differences between how to determine what children should learn and how they should behave. This is culturally and historically specific and can never simply be imported from the Western world (Ansell, 2005). If initiatives like WTP are not supportive to cultural values and needs, it will give teachers the feeling they are not doing it right (Evans, Matola, & Nyeko, 2008). Therefore, three research questions are formulated: (1) What are the practices of Indian primary school teachers towards ATL? (2) What are the perceptions of Indian primary school teachers towards ATL? (3) What are the barriers and protective factors that Indian primary school teachers experience to actually implement ATL?

### **Practices**

The first research question is: *What are the practices of Indian primary school teachers towards ATL?* ATL involves two aspects: teaching and learning. The aspect of “teaching” can be examined by the following determinants of the EDU-Q Card School Assessment of Edukans (Edukans, 2017d): attention drawn to real life practice, questioning and answering, assessing students’ work in classroom, encouraging learners’ confidence, and classroom management. It is expected that teachers will use one or two ATL methods during their lessons, because since 1994 the Indian education is shifting from the dominant modes of textbook-based, authoritarian instruction to the more child-friendly, democratic learning environment with child-centered and activity-based strategies (Sriprakash, 2010), and because there was an intervention (WTP) focused on this child-centered approach. Additionally, it is expected that practices like asking questions and using local

examples will be seen in a higher extent because these child-friendly practices correlated positively with student achievement in rural India (Bhattacharjea, Banerjee, & Wadhwa, 2013). On the other hand, it is expected that the actual practices do not completely match with the things they are saying. Research shows that many teachers claim they use ATL but in reality they are not (Lea, Stephenson & Troy, 2003), and that teachers' practices are not always synchronous with their perceptions (Winsler & Carlton, 2003). This was also the case in earlier Edukans studies (Heijker, 2012; Van der Wal, 2017). The aspect of "learning" will be examined by the following determinants: how many student activities in one lesson, students involved in active learning, active use of textbooks during the lesson, participation of learners 'work in groups', learners' critical and creative thinking, learners asking questions, learners' responses and learner independence (Edukans, 2017d). It is expected that 'group learning' will be seen in a higher extent because this correlated positively with student achievement in rural India (Bhattacharjea et al., 2013).

Working elements concerning teachers' practices towards ATL are related to the phases of distribution and implementation. The distribution phase is focused on the familiarity with ATL, and working elements could be: reliable source of information, interesting content, clear description of benefits, and face-to-face information (Novins et al., 2013). An important working element of the implementation phase could be an 'adaption process', in which teachers have the room to adapt ATL to their own teaching methods (Colby et al., 2013). As ATL fits the Western educational practices and values of choice and democracy, it may not necessarily transfer to their practices where there are limited resources and different values of discipline and obeying orders (Agarwal, 2017; O'Neill & McMahon, 2005; O'Sullivan, 2004).

### **Perceptions**

The shift towards ATL means that teachers need to change their practices as well as their perceptions (Sablonière, Taylor, & Sadykova, 2009). Therefore, the second research question is formulated: *What are the perceptions of Indian primary school teachers towards ATL?* The ASE-model of De Vries, Dijkstra, and Kuhlma (1988) states that teaching practices can be influenced by teachers' perceptions towards ATL (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Baar, Wubbels, & Vermande, 2007; Brug, van Assema, & Lechner, 2012). It includes the following determinants of behavior: attitude, perceived social influence and perceived self-efficacy (De Vries, 1993).

These aspects can predict the intention towards ATL or the extent to which the teacher plans to implement ATL. Even though a positive intention is an important condition in the change of behavior, it will not guarantee that the change in behavior will succeed (Fishbein & Yzer, 2003).

Firstly, attitude contains of the following measurable characteristics: knowledge, earlier experiences, judgments about pros and cons, and outcome expectations (Brug et al., 2012; Lechner, Kremers, Meertens, & de Vries, 2012). In general it is expected that this individualistic child-centered view does not completely fit the collectivistic attitude of the Indian teachers, because their values and outcome-expectations like discipline and obeying orders are of greater importance than autonomy and psychological development of children (Agarwal, 2017). This is also related to the view of Indian teachers towards quality education, which will possibly be different from the view of Edukans due to the fact that indicators of educational quality are context-related (Heijker, 2012). A negative attitude can also be caused by the expected insufficient knowledge about ATL methods, because the WTP is only implemented once. However, a positive attitude is also possible because of the positive experience with the WTP.

Secondly, perceived social influence can be explained by the direct or indirect influences that others have on behavior by social support or pressure (Brug et al., 2012). In Boudh district in Odisha, community- and parental support is poor (Edukans, 2017a), probably caused by the low amount of literacy. Therefore, it is expected that teachers do not get enough support from their environment (i.e. parents or head-teachers), which can discourage them to implement ATL methods. This was also the case in earlier Edukans studies (Heijker, 2012; Pluijmen, 2017; Van der Wal, 2017). Nevertheless, it is expected that support from the Indian government is high, since over the last two decades there has been significant planning aimed at universalizing elementary education whereby child-centered pedagogy have become an important aspect in the quality development of education (Sriprakash, 2009).

Lastly, the experienced self-efficacy is the capability that someone feels to act in certain ways (Van Es, Nagelkerke, Colland, Scholten, & Bouter, 2001). It is expected that some teachers do not have enough confidence or do not feel mentally ready, because the WTP is only implemented once and it asks for a big change to implement a new instructional method. Teachers must acquire new knowledge about it and combine this with the demands of the curriculum, classroom management, and

already existing instructional methods. Teachers need help from professionals or teacher educators to manage this change successfully (Ertmer, Lehman, Park, Cramer, & Grove, 2003).

Working elements with regard to teachers' perceptions are related to the adoption and assurance phase. In the adoption phase teachers can develop a positive attitude towards ATL, which is mostly formed by the perceived social norm (Overstreet, Cegielski, & Hall, 2013). Teachers are more likely to use ATL when it is not complicated, accepted within and outside the school, and when they can practice or observe an ATL user. This gives them sufficient time to adapt ATL to their own work approach (Berwick, 2003; Van Yperen, 2003). Secondly, working elements for the assurance phase could be regular monitoring of the progress of teachers, and structural support (Novins et al., 2013).

### **Barriers and protective factors**

Besides determinants of behavior, there are also factors outside the teacher that can influence the behavior (Baar et al., 2007). These environmental factors can prevent (barriers) or contribute (protective factors) to the actual implementation of ATL (Lechner et al., 2012). Therefore, the third research question is formulated: *What are the barriers and protective factors that Indian primary school teachers experience to actually implement ATL?* It is expected that many environmental factors in the local context serve as a barrier in the use of ATL, because barriers are mentioned more often in literature than protective factors. Additionally, it can be expected that teachers will attribute any failure regarding ATL to these external barriers, which makes it difficult to change their teaching methods. This can be described as a high external locus of control (Ajzen, 2002). Lastly, ATL does not match with the testing practices in India, as this is merely focused on reproducing knowledge and obeying orders (Agarwal, 2017). Because of the requirements of their tests and exams, it is expected that teachers feel enforced to fall back on the inefficient traditional teacher-dominated learning (Van 't Rood, 2015).

Examples of barriers in rural India are a lack of supportive environment, teacher training, preparation time, class time, teaching materials, and furniture (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Saigal, 2012; Schweisfurth, 2011; UNESCO, 2015). Furthermore, the powerful influence of education tradition, difference in social class and caste between teachers and students can also be seen as barriers (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Saigal, 2012). Factors that could serve as protective factors are a

sustainable and consistent support and involvement of different stakeholders, systematic trainings for teachers, and availability of materials, buildings, and furnishings (Ansell, 2005; UNESCO, 2015).

## **Method**

### **Type of research**

The form of this study was evaluative, because information was needed about the WTP and the STAR-school program, which were already implemented. This study is conducted in India after one program session of WTP. This study has a qualitative approach, because good cross-cultural research should involve a researcher who is familiar with the culture that is studied (Niblo & Jackson, 2004), and to get understanding of the inside world of the participants (Abubakar, 2015). To work culturally sensitive, the researcher made use of “bracketing”, which is known as placing your own perspective in brackets (Boeije, 2014; Evers, 2015). Additionally, unstructured methods like open interviews are used (Baarda, de Goede & Teunissen, 2013), and there was a focus on sensemaking. It was important to be this cultural sensitive, as the participants came from a different culture than the researcher.

### **Participants**

Six primary schools in Boudh district who have participated in the WTP in 2017 took part in this study: Kamira, Khamaripada, Balakira, Tainjan, Jaloï and Palaspat. Participants of this research were ten teachers of these primary schools. A non-probability sample was used, wherein characteristics of the population are used as basis of selection (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). This sample was chosen in cooperation with the YCDA, because they have knowledge and experience with these schools and teachers. Although a small sample is used, efforts have been taken to reach substantive generalizability in which the participants of this study are representative for the total population of Indian primary school teachers who participated in the WTP (Baarda et al., 2013). Namely, a diverse sample was used with teachers from different genders, ages, teaching experience and grades. There were six male and four female teachers and their age varied from 25 to 52 years. Their years of experience as a teacher varied from four to 25 years. After being informed about the general aim of this study, all participants agreed to participate.

### **Measuring instruments**

**Observations.** The observations took place during the teachers’ lessons, and on every school there were one or two observations. The observations focused on the

first research question: *What are the practices of teachers towards ATL?* Observations can be useful in a study whereby behavioral consequences of events are being studied (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). A semi-structured observation was used, based on the EDU-Q Card School Assessment of Edukans (Edukans, 2017d). Only the key-indicators teaching (for example “encouraging learners’ confidence”) and learning (for example “learners’ critical and creative thinking”) were examined by giving a score from 1 (weak) to 4 (excellent). The EDU-Q card is recently developed by Edukans, which makes it difficult to say something about reliability and internal validity. Additionally, after every observation a descriptive report was written by the researcher.

**In-depth interviews.** A topic list was used to interview teachers, which included the following topics: A) teachers’ practices towards ATL B) teachers’ perceptions towards ATL C) teachers’ experienced environmental factors. The validity and reliability was taken into account by guaranteeing the anonymity of the participants, summarizing and making notes during the interviews, and by being present with two researchers (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). By using both observations and interviews to examine teachers’ practices, the internal validity was increased (Celestin-Westreich & Celestin, 2012).

The interview started with an explanation of the content and research objectives. The first topic about teachers’ practices was only focused on aspects that were not clear after the observation, like outcome expectations. The second part of the interview focused on teachers’ perceptions by asking about the behavioral determinants of the ASE-model. Examples of questions were: ‘What is your experience with ATL?’ (Attitude), ‘Does the ATL approach matches with the demands of the school management? Why or why not?’ (Social influence), ‘Are these ATL methods easy or difficult for you to acquire? Why or why not?’ (Self-efficacy). Open-ended questions were used for the first two topics to understand underlying values and norms concerning ATL, without directing their answers too much. The third part focused on experienced environmental factors, which included showing cards with possible barriers and protective factors. Teachers chose the cards that were applicable to their situation. An example of a barrier was: “not enough TLM”, and an example of a protective factor: “supportive environment”.

### **Procedure**

The data collection took place in Boudh District (India) in a period of five weeks. Each school was visited for two days, whereby each day started with an

observation and afterwards the interview was carried out. A translator from YCDA joined the researcher to the schools. Firstly, conversations with YCDA staff were held in order to get more insight in the local context and to give feedback to the interview questions. This feedback helped with making the questions as culturally sensitive as possible. Secondly, the researcher traveled to the primary schools where observations took place, which lasted the duration of one class, on average 30 to 40 minutes. Lastly, in-depth interviews were carried out with the same teachers from the observations and took on average 30 minutes. All interviews were recorded by formal consent of all teachers.

According to the reliability, several aspects were taken into account. The observations took place before the interviews as the Indian people are used to give social desirable answers (Edukans, 2017a), which increased the likelihood that the researcher would know the actual behavior and experiences (Baarda et al., 2013). Concerning the interviews, the reliability was taken into account by using different techniques, such as summarizing, making notes, asking for more explanation, and by recording all interviews (Baarda et al., 2013). Furthermore, participants were informed in advance that the researchers were independent from Edukans. Because both observations and in-depth interviews were used, there was triangulation and a holistic approach in this research (Baarda et al., 2013).

### **Data analysis**

The data was analyzed with an inductive approach and the qualitative methods of Baar (2002) and Baarda et al. (2013). The first phase of the data analysis was open labelling and scripting. The labels were formulated as close to the original words of the participants, to guarantee the internal validity (Baar & Wubbels, 2013). The second and third phase was focused on reducing the labels into categories, and on relating and integrating the categories (Baar et al., 2007). Others can repeat this method, which will improve the reliability of the study (Baar, 2002). Eventually, the analyzed and collected data was processed anonymously and not distributed to third parties, besides Edukans and YCDA.

### **Results**

This section of the research describes the most important results for each research question. Firstly, teachers' practices concerning ATL that were observed and interviewed will be described. Secondly, teachers' perceptions towards ATL and the environmental factors that teachers faced to actually implement ATL. Categories from

the qualitative analysis are displayed in italic and citations stand between quotation marks and are also displayed in italic. Please note that teachers are often referred to as he/she by the translator. The observational notes were also part of the analysis and will be displayed by using ‘[.]’ brackets. Behind every quote or observational note the respondent’s number will be stated between brackets. Because there were only a small amount of interviews, no attention is paid to the specific amount of participants that belong to the statements or categories, unless it is meaningful.

### **Practices**

Teachers’ practices towards ATL will be discussed by the determinants “teaching” and “learning” of the EDU-Q Card School Assessment (Edukans, 2017d). The average score on all aspects of both determinants was two (moderate) out of four (excellent).

**Teaching.** Firstly, some teachers made an occasional *connection to the real life* of the students, by giving examples of their daily life: “*She is connecting the content of the lesson to the real life. Like today she was talking about (...) and fruits, which is necessary for the children in their daily life* (R5)”. During the majority of the lessons, the main subject was connected to the students’ real life, for example not destroying trees, recognizing traffic signs, and nutritious foods: [The children are asked to write down what they ate yesterday and fit it into the categories of protein, fat and minerals which are named at the blackboard] (R9).

According to *questioning and answering*, the majority of teachers were frequently asking closed and open questions. The questions were asked both individually as to the whole class. However, some teachers were only asking questions to the fast learners: [The teacher is asking his questions to the same two children, one boy and one girl. They always give the right answer. He once asked the question to another student, but she could not answer, so he stopped asking questions to other students] (R7).

When asked about *encouraging students’ confidence*, teachers mentioned several methods. One method that was mentioned by almost half of the teachers was *praising the children and giving prizes*: “*Like she praises the children and she gives examples to the well children, so he or she can improve the knowledge. And she also gives some prizes like chocolates*” (R7). During the observations this method of giving prizes was not seen. In most of the lessons the teacher was using *verbal*

*compliments* like “*Good job!*” or applause, and *physical compliments* like a pat on the shoulder.

Lastly, the majority was having a moderate *classroom management*, because most of the times they had an organized classroom with student- and group tasks. On the other hand, some teachers were lacking in their organizational skills because they were putting the children in groups but not providing them with any group work:

[Children are sitting in groups but the teacher is giving them their own leaves or sticks to count, so they are working on their own without discussing with each other. They could also sit alone during this type of work] (R11).

**Learning.** Firstly, almost all teachers were providing one or two, and sometimes even three, *active learning activities that involved students* in one lesson. Only one teacher did not use any ATL method and was using the teacher-dominated and lecture-driven practices. The ATL methods that seen the most were group work and singing, namely during seven out of eleven observed lessons. The observed *average time on task* was sometimes not sufficient. This was due to the fact that the teacher was talking more than the students, and because sometimes only a few students were *participating during working in groups*: [It is seen that only a few students are doing the work during the group assignment. The children who are not involved are also not paying any attention and are just looking around] (R5).

According to *manipulation of materials*, only one teacher was making use of (improvisational) TLM: [The smaller children are getting some sticks and the bigger children are getting some leaves which they have to count] (R11). Furthermore, during almost all lessons students did not *use text or reference books*. In some lessons, books were present in the classroom but they were not actively used. Teachers were mainly using the blackboard or self-made papers with questions or tasks. In some lessons books were used to read a poem or a song, but there were not enough books for all students.

Lastly, *critical and creative thinking* was moderate, because it was mostly teacher-directed activities. This caused a low *learners' independence* because the students followed the teacher's instruction. Even though teachers put a lot of emphasis on active participation in their interviews, there was sometimes insufficient participation of students in practice. Especially, there was a lack of *questions asked by children*.

Overall, it can be said that teachers scored quite positive on providing children with active learning activities during their lessons and they used different ATL working methods. Nevertheless, it can be questioned if teachers are always teaching in this active manner or that it was already rehearsed before, which is not the best representation of reality.

### **Perceptions**

**Attitudes towards ATL are mostly positive.** 90% of the teachers had a *positive experience with ATL* and a lot of advantages of ATL were mentioned. The advantages were just like the mentioned outcome expectations linked to *more active involvement* and *improved learning outcomes*: “*more quick capturing of information*” (R1), “*their knowledge will be more concrete*” (R3), and “*they will remember forever*” (R4). Advantages and outcome expectations were also related to *joyful learning*: “*The students are enjoying. They are enthusiastic*” (R6), “*ATL is positive because in activity way we teach the children, than they can easily capture these things in a joyful way. Otherwise they will feel bored*” (R7), and “*learning it freely, not a burden*” (R8).

On the other hand, there was a big difference between the Indian teachers' and the Western definition of quality of education, which could cause a negative attitude towards ATL. The aspects that were mentioned the most were related to *school surroundings and environment*, such as plantation, boundaries and midday meal sitting arrangement, instead of quality of teachers. Furthermore, some teachers did not have a positive attitude towards ATL because they were *not mentally ready*: “*She is happy with ATL but she is not mentally ready*” (R10) or because of different disadvantages that hindered their use, like *multiclass teaching* and *more preparation time*: “*but it takes more time for preparation, all those things. And she is teaching all those classes all together. So it is very difficult for her*” (R8).

**Experienced support and pressure from government and school management.** Teachers mostly experienced social influences from the government and the school management, like colleagues and the head teacher. Teachers mentioned they felt normative beliefs of the government and school management were both supporting and pressuring. All teachers experienced support by government in form of them *providing TLM and teacher trainings about ATL*: “*Government is giving lots of training to teachers, and they are providing TLM like books also*” (R4). On the other hand, some teachers experienced both support and pressure from

government. The pressure was the result of making ATL *mandatory for all teachers* in India. “*Pressure from government. It is compulsory, the ATL. So there is a little pressure. He has to do it*” (R4). Besides the government, the majority of the teachers also experienced support by the school management. Reasons of support were not mentioned. Some teachers mentioned that the school management was struggling because of *traditions* but are now managing: “*They were in their traditional way. Suddenly they were not able to receive such type of activity learning. So from the beginning they were objecting us, but now they support us*” (R3). However, two teachers also said they were not getting support by the school management because the ATL approach *does not match with the exams*:

“*Actually the exam is on six months yearly basis. If six months is coming and exam is nearer, teachers are not able to teach in activity way those lessons. So sometimes they skip that part and do not do that in an active way*” (R9).

**Lack of parental support.** Most teachers said they were experiencing support by parents for implementing ATL, but eventually they were mentioning the *lack of support by parents* more often. The reasons why they were not getting (enough) support by parents were: *parents are illiterate, involved much in the agriculture, parents are not aware of the ATL*. One teacher explains he gets support because parents send their children to school, but they are not concerned about what happens at school:

“*If there was no support, they would not send their children here. But they are not actively involved in these types of ATL things. They are only aware about if their child is going to school. They do not care about the way the teacher is teaching. They are least concerned if their child is learning or not. Only if their child is going to school*” (R10).

Some teachers mentioned the importance of parents because they were *collecting their TLM in the nature*, like seeds and leaves, and because it could improve the quality the quality of education: “*If parents are more supporting, than the quality of education will be improved*” (R5).

**Teachers feel able to use ATL, but mention external factors that make it difficult.** There were little comments made on the experienced self-efficacy of teachers with regard to magnitude, generality and strength towards ATL. The majority of teachers mentioned they thought implementing ATL in their lessons was easy. They mentioned that this was due to the fact that children will do the work:

*“He is saying it is easy because in the past whole effort was spent by the teachers. And students will kept sitting. But now the children will spend pure effort. Everything will be done by the children themselves. So this is why it is easy”* (R4).

When talking about the consideration of the difficulty, teachers stated that ATL can be challenging when teaching multiple classes and especially during language classes:

*“He is saying, ATL is like using all the TLM is very beneficial if they are doing it for science, mathematics, social studies. But they are finding it difficult during language classes like English or Hindi”* (R4).

Regarding teachers' perceptions towards ATL, it can be questioned why they have such a positive attitude towards ATL, but mention several difficulties to implement it? Additionally, why are teachers giving priority to the school surroundings and environment instead of the quality of teachers?

### **Environmental factors**

**External factors hinder the implementation of ATL.** There are several external factors that make the use of ATL in Indian primary schools in Odisha difficult. First of all, an important barrier that was mentioned by all teachers was that there are *not enough TLM*. Another barrier that was stated by almost every teacher was the fact that ATL is difficult because of the *multiclass teaching*. Multiclass teaching can be explained by the fact that one teacher is responsible for multiple classes: *“She has to take care of many classes. That is why she sometimes cannot teach properly active”* (R8). The researcher also noticed these difficult aspects in the environment during the observations. The teachers are most of the times *absent due to other work or trainings provided by government*. It can be questioned why are there not enough teachers and why are teachers so often absent? Another barrier that was experienced by the majority of teachers was that the *preparation time of an ATL lesson*: *“She feels pressure but it is more pressure because of the preparation”* (R7).

There were less protective factors for ATL named by teachers. Protective factors that were stated by all teachers were *more TLM, more teachers, and more supportive and involved environment*: *“If parents are not supporting and teachers are not supporting than ATL will be difficult”* (R7). A few teachers already mentioned a solution for the insufficient TLM and lack of support by parents: *“Parents also support us. Sometimes they collect some types of seed which I can use during my*

*lessons*” (R3) and “*Financially parents do not support me but I get some parents to collect some TLM*” (R6).

### **Discussion**

The general aim of this research was to gain insight in the working elements of the WTP and the STAR-school program with regard to ATL in Indian primary schools. These working elements could display some implications for further development and could tailor the WTP more to the STAR-school program. It needs to be stated that it is difficult to tailor the WTP to the STAR-school program, because it is not clear what the YCDA exactly does concerning ATL in their STAR-school program. It is known that they provide teacher trainings on ATL and what the results are, but information about content, frequency, and trainers is unclear. This can be seen as an implication for Edukans to gain more insight in the STAR-school program of YCDA. Therefore, the working elements will be used to tailor the WTP to the local Indian context, but also to give implications to the STAR-school program in Odisha about aspects they can integrate in their program.

The first research question focused on teachers’ practices towards ATL. Consistent with the expectations, teachers used one or two ATL methods per lesson, mostly group work, and the aspects of “multiple active learning activities during one lesson” and “connection of the content of the lesson to the real life of the students” were seen in a higher extent (Bhattacharjea et al., 2013). However, in accordance to the expectation teachers stated they implemented ATL to a bigger extent than they actually showed in the observation (Heijker, 2012; Lea et al., 2003; Winsler & Carlton, 2003; Van der Wal, 2017). It can be questioned why all teachers are using the same ATL method of group work. Additionally, group work was sometimes not even carried out properly. Maybe they are just repeating the “tricks” they learned from the Word Teachers, but they did not adapt this to their own teaching style. Their own teaching style might still be focused on the knowledge testing practices (Van ‘t Rood, 2015). Anyhow, it seemed that teachers are willing and trying to change their teaching methods to more ATL, but do not have enough knowledge about different ATL methods, or they do not use ATL in the right way.

The second research question focused on teachers’ perceptions towards ATL. Against the expectation that teachers would have a negative attitude towards ATL because of different (collectivistic) beliefs and values (Agarwal, 2017), teachers had a very positive attitude and pointed out the importance of ATL in the same extent as

Edukans does. Their positive attitude could firstly be explained by their positive experience with the WTP. The researcher felt that teachers attached great value to the World Teachers who visited their schools. Secondly, it is possible that these child-centered ideas are already present in their culture, because the YCDA and the Indian government already started with teacher trainings on ATL since a few years (Sriprakash, 2009). Nevertheless, social desirability should always be taken into account (Baarda, 2009), as this was mentioned in earlier Edukans studies (Heijker, 2012; Pluijmen, 2017; Van der Wal, 2017). Furthermore, the view of Indian teachers on quality of education was, as expected, different from the view of Edukans (Heijker, 2012). Teachers mentioned mainly aspects concerning school surroundings. For this reason it can also be questioned if they understand the importance of ATL, as this can improve the quality of teaching, learning, and eventually the quality of their education (De Kock et al., 2004).

Secondly, in accordance with the expectation, teachers experienced the most support from the government as they provide TLM and teacher trainings (Sriprakash, 2009), and experienced a lack of parental support (Edukans, 2017a). In the parallel study of ... (2018) implications are given on how to improve parental support in Boudh district. In contradiction to the expectation, some teachers felt pressure by government as they made the use of ATL mandatory, and support by their school management. It needs to be taken into account that reasons for this support were not mentioned.

According self-efficacy and in contradiction to the expectation, almost all teachers stated they had the necessary skills for implementing ATL and they thought ATL was easy. However, they did not expand in detail on their self-efficacy. The reason for their positive self-efficacy can be explained by the fact that teachers from collectivistic cultures would find it difficult to reflect on their own skills, because more value is attached to interpersonal coherency than reflection on individual competences (Hofstede, 1986), or by already attended trainings by government or YCDA. Social desirability should also be taken into account (Baarda, 2009).

Coherent to the expectation, teachers pointed out more barriers than protective factors and they attributed any failure regarding ATL to external barriers, which means a low internal locus of control (Ajzen, 2002). This was also found in previous Edukans studies (Heijker, 2012; Otten, 2012; Pluijmen, 2017; Van der Wal, 2017) and should therefore be given considerable notice in the next WTP, because literature

states that barriers like the lack of materials can lead to teacher-directed methods that take away pupils' responsibility (Ackers & Hardman, 2001).

In sum, the intention to behave in a certain way is supposed to predict behavior when sufficient determinants are positively related to that behavior (Fishbein & Yzer, 2003). Whereas teachers had a positive attitude towards ATL, the experienced social influences were both positive (government and school management) and negative (government and parents). Although self-efficacy was not measured adequately as teachers were extremely positive about their own skills, there is a higher possibility that teachers do not feel mentally ready to use ATL. Furthermore, their low internal locus of control and working in an environment with limitations like a lack of TLM and teachers should be taken into account. Teachers show willingness to use ATL, but the findings suggest that teachers are maybe not completely ready for the implementation of ATL. Another critical note that needs to be made is about ATL being a form of idealism. Despite teachers are being enthusiastic and willing to change towards more constructivist learning, they might feel enforced to fall back on the inefficient traditional teacher-dominated learning, because of the rote-learning requirements of tests and exams. This is applicable to all contexts, also to the Western world (Van 't Rood, 2015).

### **Limitations**

Several limitations might have influenced the obtained results of this study. Firstly, it is possible that the observations are not the best representation of the reality, because there was only a one-day observation. For further research it can be recommended to carry out classroom observations for several days. Furthermore, sometimes it seemed that teachers knew the researchers were coming and prepared a lesson that they thought the researcher wanted to see. The same was found in earlier studies (Blanckstein & Bos, 2014; Heijker, 2012; Otten, 2012; Van der Wal, 2017). This limitation is covered by the fact that also an in-depth interview is used to examine teachers' practices, which increased the reliability.

Concerning interviews, teachers might have given socially desirable answers, which will not create a representation of reality. This limitation is covered by the fact that the researchers stated that they were independent from Edukans. However, they still associated the researchers with Edukans, as questions were asked about the WTP and the researchers were also from the Netherlands. The respondents possibly only gave answers about what they remembered from the WTP, because they thought the

researcher wanted to hear that. Additionally, it is also possible that teachers are not positive about ATL but just not that critical. This can be explained by the different values that cultures attach importance to. In collectivistic cultures like in India, the value of obedience is generally very important. In these cultures, it is less common to have a critical attitude (Hofstede, 1986).

There is also a possibility that some questions are not understood in the way it was intended because of cultural differences and language barriers (Otten, 2012). It is more common in collectivistic cultures to focus on their role in the group instead of the individual development (Killen & Wainryb, 2000), and to attach more value interpersonal competencies instead of reflection on individual competences (Hofstede, 1986). It is therefore possible that teachers were not used to questions like “*do you think you have the right skills to use ATL?*”. As a consequence some teachers gave answers that were very positive or not related to the question. For further research it can be recommended to use tools for self-efficacy that are known as universally applicable, like the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Scholz, Doña, Sud, & Schwarzer, 2002). Concerning language barriers, the translator can be seen as a limitation because questions were asked in an uncomplicated way because otherwise the translator would not understand. Furthermore, the researcher was inexperienced in carrying out interviews in a different cultural setting. These factors might also be a reason for teachers’ answers to remain on the surface.

Further research is of utmost importance because the WTP will be implemented more often in Boudh District. It can be recommended to conduct a complementary research with a larger, and thus more representative, reference group. In that way the ecological validity can be made certain (Baarda et al., 2013). It would for example be valuable to also add schools that did not participate in the WTP. There can be examined if there are differences between the schools, due to their participation in the WTP. Additionally, Indian primary school students or parents can be added to get insight in their perceptions towards ATL.

### **Implications**

This study has led to some working elements and implications for further development of the WTP for both Edukans and YCDA. Working elements for an effective intervention were identified in four phases of implementation (Novins et al., 2013): distribution, adoption, implementation and assurance. Although the WTP is

highly appreciated and contributes positively to improving the quality of education in Boudh District, there is always room for improvement.

**Edukans.** In the distribution phase it is important that teachers think ATL is interesting, that they understand the benefits of ATL, and that they receive the information face-to-face. This can be related to the research question on teachers' perceptions towards ATL. It can be recommended to increase their knowledge on ATL and put more emphasis on the fact that ATL can be a solution for the problem of multiclass teaching they experience. As children learn in a more self-directed way, the teacher can provide one group or class with learning materials and then continue with the other group or class. When ATL is mastered by the teacher and children, the burden on the teacher will be reduced (Anandalakshmy, 2011). Furthermore, it is extremely valuable to continue with the workshops about making use of local environment to make TLM, as this will make teachers less dependent of their shortages in the classroom due to poverty (Van Monsjou & Metsemakers, 2012).

For the adoption phase it is valuable that teachers create a positive attitude towards ATL. This study showed that Indian primary school teachers have a very positive attitude towards ATL. However, it is questionable if this is really the case. Therefore it is recommended to teach them about ATL in an easy way, to let them practice with it, and to let them observe the World Teachers when they are using ATL (Berwick, 2003; Van Yperen, 2003). Another important aspect that will form a positive attitude is the perceived social norm (Novins et al., 2013). Teachers stated they sometimes felt pressure by government, which will make the teachers and students more passive (Freire, 1970), and they needed more support from parents. It seems of utmost importance that NGOs like Edukans help teachers analyze how these factors restrict them from teaching and encourage them to be part of the development of the school and to participate in it. Additionally, it is important that both teachers and community, including parents and school management, look at the same direction concerning education and that they all feel responsible for the development of students and the improvement of education (De Winter, 2012). This also fits the collectivistic culture of India. Another idea is to give parents trainings about ways of upbringing that fits to this child-centered education, which can decrease the gap between school culture and home culture as teachers and parents will be on the same line (De Winter, 2012).

Related to experienced self-efficacy and barriers, it is recommended from earlier studies from Edukans that instead of focusing on barriers, the focus could lay more on possibilities (Van Monsjou & Metsemakers, 2012) and pedagogical competencies of the teachers (Heijker, 2012). Teachers will learn that change will only occur when they focus on their intern abilities, instead of the external conditions. The WTP can help to increase their perceived self-efficacy by focusing on teachers' skills to learn and reflect on themselves.

Lastly, in the implementation phase the most important working element is an adaption process in which teachers have enough time to adapt ATL to their own teaching methods. It was seen during observations that teachers were just repeating the ATL methods the WTP taught them. It is important that it fits to their own (cultural) values and beliefs. It can be recommended to let the World Teachers discuss this with the Indian teachers, because educational initiatives in India, like the WTP, will only be sustainable if they fit the Indian way of upbringing (Nsamenang, 2008). It is also important that teachers understand that this change will take effort and it cannot happen immediately. To tackle this problem, measurable and attainable targets can be set with the Indian teachers, as this will enhance the effectivity of the program (Baar et al., 2007) but also the self-efficacy is more positively developed (Bandura, 1986).

**YCDA.** The YCDA can be mainly involved in the phase of assurance. The responsibility and power could be given to the YCDA for the continuation of child-centered teaching, as they know best what is needed in the specific context (Nsamenang, 2008). Therefore, there should be given more emphasis to the bottom-up approach, used by Edukans (Edukans, 2012) and recommended by Freire (1970), by giving the YCDA a more central role in the development and implementation of ATL on the STAR-schools. It is recommended that the regular monitoring of the progress and the structural support when the World Teachers are not there, will be the responsibility of YCDA, as teachers need help from professionals to manage this change successfully (Ertmer et al., 2003). While monitoring, it is important to use performance indicators that point out when a goal has been realized, for example: '75% of the teachers used more than two ATL activities in their lessons every day'. Literature says that someone, in this case the YCDA, should be responsible and have the power to control these indicators and to take action when needed (Van Yperen, De Wilde, & Keuzenkamp, 2014).

Secondly, it is possible that the WTP tries to set too many Western values with regard to ATL, which are not that universally applicable (Kay, 1975). It is recommended to let YCDA take a look at these values and adjust these values to cultural-specific perceptions and practices in the local context when needed. It is important to fit to the wishes and needs in the local context when thinking about quality of education (Ansell, 2005).

The last implication is focused on increasing teachers' supportive network, because YCDA could organize knowledge-exchange meetings for STAR-school teachers. This was also recommended by an earlier Edukans study, which was conducted in Africa (Van der Wal, 2017). Teachers can exchange their good practices, discuss their experienced barriers and maybe suggest how to overcome these barriers. Also schools that were not part of the WTP can participate to receive knowledge on ATL, which will increase further sustainability of the WTP. With regard to parental involvement, YCDA could create opportunities for parents to come together and discuss the (active) teaching and (active) learning of their child. This is also in line with Freire's pedagogy (1970) as parents can speak about this with their children. For suggestions on further parental involvement in Boudh District, the study of ... (2018) is recommended. However, it is important to note that a supportive and responsible environment can only be created when all different actors in the field of child development are involved (De Winter, 2012).

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