

# Teacher Excessive Pedagogical Authority in Moroccan Primary Classroom

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**Abstract** This article presents an ethnographic study conducted in five Moroccan primary schools in Marrakech and region. This study uses cultural models theory as a tool of inquiry to investigate primary school teachers' conceptualizations of their role in the space of classroom and how they exercise their pedagogical authority. The intention is to develop awareness of the sociocultural embeddedness of teachers' beliefs and assumptions with regard to classroom practice. Classroom observations and interviews indicate that the exercise of authority is a routine feature of most teacher–student interactions. Classroom control and discipline seem to constitute an integral part of the pedagogical conceptualizations of most interviewed teachers. There is insistence on establishing teacher authoritative presence in class as a guaranty of exacting obedience and compliance from students. The teachers identify their functions mainly in terms of classroom control and knowledge transmission. Teacher-student relationship is governed and regulated by a well-defined system of hierarchical values and customs. The teachers' views seem to run counter official pronouncements on institutionalizing learner-centered approaches. This might explain the fact that after years of 'implementation', learner-centered approaches has done poorly in terms of being institutionalized and do not appear to have achieved their desiderata.

**Keywords:** *cultural models, primary school, reform, pedagogical authority*

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## 1. Introduction

In the wake of the economic crisis of 1990's Morocco recognized the compelling need to reform its educational system to expedite its economic recovery and to keep pace with swift social, political and economic challenges transpiring as a result of globalization. This culminated in a movement toward educational reform represented in the National Charter for Education and Training [1], and decentralization as parts of a strategic plan to economic recovery. In 2000, the Moroccan government adopted the Charter's project and declared 2000-2009 the National Decade for Education and Training with a conviction that the development of manpower and its rehabilitation is a type of investment in a nation's resources and at the meantime is a utilization of the future. Impelled by the urgency to enhance the quality of Moroccan education, the Charter placed a high premium on the interests of learners and situated them at the center of the educational enterprise. The Pedagogical Guideline for Primary Education reflects this tendency in its narrative by placing "the learner in general, and children in particular, at the heart of attention, thinking and acting in the process of education and training" [2]. Thus, providing children of Morocco with the conditions necessary for their awakening and their development by adopting "an active educational approach, beyond the passive reception and

individual work to the adoption of self-learning, and the ability to dialogue and to participate in collective endeavor" [2]. The reform meant to effect a paradigm shift from traditional teacher-dominated, knowledge-based transmission style of teaching to more student-centered, experience-based, problem solving approach of teaching, putting more emphasis on reflection and action learning, developing learners' cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and encouraging their cooperative and interactive abilities. Thus learner-centeredness has become the philosophy underlying the educational reform across all school subjects.

## 2. On Learner-centeredness

It has been widely recognized that when it comes to effective performance in the work environment and the capacity to adjust to a speedily changing economic environment, general competencies (such as imagination, originality, malleability, problem solving and novelty), attitudes (such as self-discipline, tolerance and joint effort) and interpersonal skills (such as assertiveness and conflict resolution) are decisive [3]. In line with that, learner-centeredness emphasizes the individual learner rather than the body of information in the teaching learning process. Learning activities in constructivist classrooms are characterized by active engagement, inquiry, reflective thinking, problem solving and collaborative work.

Learning is an active but not an absorptive process [4]. Rather than a dispenser of knowledge, the teacher is mainly a guide, a facilitator, a co-explorer and an initiator of activities, who encourages learners to question, to challenge and formulate their own ideas, opinions and conclusions [5].

Epistemologically, social construction of knowledge is at the heart of learner-centered paradigm. Knowledge is a human creation and is constructed by social and cultural means [6,7]. Constructivists argue that individuals construct meaning in the course of their interpretive interactions with and experiences in their social environments. They assume that prior knowledge and experiences greatly mold learning and shape the foundation for ensuing actions. Such an epistemology gives rise to views on the classroom roles of both the teacher and classroom organization that are different from those identified with banking education. The connotations of constructivism for the processes of teaching and learning are enormous. Teaching is longer basically about transmitting prearranged packages of knowledge detached from concrete situations. The teacher's basic role is to engage students in the exploration of knowledge and allow them favorable circumstances to meditate and verify theories during real-world utilization of knowledge. Following this view, the teacher does not operate as the principal font of knowledge and wisdom in the classroom; alternatively the teacher is seen as a facilitator, guide on the side, or 'coach' who renders assistance to learners, who are viewed as the primary engineers of their own learning learner-centered approaches accentuate a "perspective that couples a focus on individual learners . . . with a focus on learning" [8]. There is emphasis on quality teacher-student relationships. These relational practices consist of teachers' crediting students' views, encouraging learning, thinking, and having learner-centered beliefs. Learning within learner-centered approaches is conceived of as "non-linear, recursive, continuous, complex, relational, and natural in humans. . . . Learning is enhanced in contexts where learners have supportive relationships, have a sense of ownership and control over the learning process, and can learn with and from each other in safe and trusting learning environments" [9]. In keeping with that, it has been emphasized that "Students desire authentic relationships where they are trusted, given responsibility, spoken to honestly and warmly, and treated with dignity" [10]. Safe and mutual attachments are essential for learners to participate in their relationships with teachers, peers, and subject matter and build up healthy self-images and senses of wellbeing.

### 3. Rationale of the Study

In spite of emphasis on learn-centered approaches in the official discourse, classroom observations confirm that these approaches have done poorly in terms of being institutionalized [11,12]. The reality of classroom practice does not correspond to the highly advocated educational ideal set by the National Charter for Education and Training. A close look into the space of classrooms in some primary classrooms reveals the divide existing between official pronouncement on pedagogy and teacher actual classroom pedagogic practice. Teaching and

learning in the observed Moroccan primary classrooms continue to be characterized by traditional, teacher-dominated instruction. Teachers transmit knowledge to be regurgitated by learners who are expected to passively and unselectively copy and reproduce the conveyed information in its original, objective form. Horizontal information flow is quasi-absent under the pressure of teacher-fronted interaction. Teacher dominance supports the traditional power relationships of the classroom that sustain pedagogical practices geared towards transmitting pre-packaged knowledge.

This study utilizes cultural models theory as a tool of inquiry to illustrate primary school teachers' conceptualizations of their role in the space of classroom and how they exercise their pedagogical authority. It is also our intention to develop awareness of the social and cultural embeddedness of teachers' beliefs and assumptions. Considering teachers' interpretive framework is essential to demonstrate the cognitive process through which meaning is constructed and behavior is influenced and motivated in classroom context. The significance of scrutinizing teachers' interpretive framework lies in the fact that teachers' preexisting cultural models of pedagogy can avert the consideration of alternative understandings of pedagogical practice.

### 4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is anchored within the theory of cultural model. As used in cognitive anthropology, cultural models describe intersubjectively shared beliefs by groups of individuals around different subjects, objects, and areas of thought and behavior. These models, being implicit and explicit in the minds of individuals, provide guidelines for and motivate action [13]. Cultural models are seen to have a directive force for the individual in terms of the authority and persuasiveness invested in them [14]. Thus, cultural models serve as a general basis of guidance, direction, and point of reference for experiencing and acting in the world. As intersubjectively shared conceptions that are culturally and socially constituted, cultural models are anchored in experience and memory, particularly resilient, and deeply ingrained. Equally important, it should be noted that cultural models are not true or false, may or may not be logical or rationale, may not be realized or conscious, but are very real and instrumental in guiding thought and behavior. When individuals participate in a community, they learn, function within, and become indoctrinated to the cultural models of that community. When people take action and respond in convenient ways, given a community's expectations, they are executing a socially-constructed identity and are acting in response using what they know, intentionally or unintentionally, by means of an established cultural model [15]. Individuals and society are reciprocally produced and reproduce in the course of--the use and construction of--cultural tools accessible, the way in which participants construe it, the resources of knowledge, and the skills they utilize to resolve problems they stumble upon.

Cultural models within the context of this research hold two meanings, both of which are fundamental to this research. First, cultural models are viewed as the

researcher constructed representations that describe the knowledge held and shared by primary school teachers. Second, these models are perceived also as cognitive strategies the group of teachers studied actually use and believe in with reference to their daily classroom practice [16].

Investigating teachers' cultural models of pedagogy serves to illustrate how culture can frame and constitute many aspects of teachers' thinking and practice related to pedagogy. Furthermore, investigating teacher interpretive framework is essential to demonstrate the cognitive process through which meaning is constructed and behavior is influenced and motivated. The significance of scrutinizing teachers' interpretive framework lies in the fact that teachers' preexisting cultural models of pedagogy can avert the consideration of alternative understandings. Policy efforts, intended to result in behavioral change through educational mediums, should sincerely consider the worth of appealing to teacher compelling, preexisting cultural models. The introduction of new ideas and behaviors that are not reflective of teacher interpretive framework is often overridden and never fully considered. New knowledge is always incorporated, rejected, and remade in relation to and interaction with previous cultural models [17]. When these cultural models and schemas alter to comparatively stable ones over time, they are more liable to structure interpretations of succeeding experiences that activate them than to be influenced by alternative understandings [17]. Thus, when new experiences or understandings that are "under-schematized" are introduced (i.e., do not fully relate to existing cultural models and schemas), they are likely to set in motion durable preexisting cultural models and schemas with similar experiential features that result in interpretations that confirm original understandings and prevent new ones from surfacing [17].

## 5. Methodology

This paper is a part of an ongoing doctoral research project investigating Moroccan primary school teachers' cultural models of pedagogy and their manifestations in classroom practice. The working conceptual framework of this study is grounded within the interpretive paradigm with ethnography as a strategy of inquiry. Precedence is given to the participants' conceptualizations of their pedagogy and pedagogical practice. Ethnographic research prioritizes the cultural perspective of the group: description of behaviors and insights into why the behaviors occurred. Two ethnographic research methods, namely classroom observation and interviews, were used in the research. While classroom observations were carried out to describe the characteristics of classroom interaction and identify salient patterns of teachers' behavior in the classroom, the interviews were conducted to allow teachers' thinking on pedagogy to account for their classroom patterns of behavior. Therefore, my research integrated ethnographic methods to reconstruct the cultural models of pedagogy held by the participants. This reconstruction entailed the use of numerous interviews and interpretation of these interviews. My purpose in the analysis was to search for patterns across interviewees and interview passages that would be

indicative of shared beliefs and understandings of pedagogy and pedagogical practice.

Data were collected in five primary schools in Marrakech, including rural, urban, and suburban sites. All of them were public schools. They were selected to be as representative as possible – geographically, economically, and culturally. 25 teachers were observed and interviewed over 8 months. Data collection occurred in cycles which were guided by the analysis of the data and the emerging themes. The first cycle commenced with participant observation to document teachers' pedagogical practice and note emerging themes and cultural patterns. The second cycle focused on one-to-one interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to shed light on observations outcome and disclose teachers' cultural models shaping their pedagogical practice. The final cycle employed focus groups to verify the intersubjectively shared nature of teachers' cultural models of pedagogy.

For the analysis of my transcript data, I made use of some cultural analysis implements drawn on by renown anthropologists [13,14,18]. In general, I looked for explicit propositions and the taken-for-granted presuppositions found within them. I investigated the use and meaning of key words in context, over and above how informants reasoned about and integrated and related their understandings of particular topics and beliefs. Furthermore, I searched for shared understandings and patterns and investigated the relationships between these shared findings, particularly those between shared implicit and explicit understandings. My general purpose was to conclude whether my data and cultural analysis provided evidence of the existence of cultural models that primary school teachers shared and drew on to inform their understandings of, and guide and motivate their responses to classroom interactional practice. The overall results of the analysis and interpretation phases reveal that the teachers' cultural models of pedagogy are anchored in four cultural constructs: (i) teacher excessive pedagogical authority, (ii) teacher low expectations of students, (iii) knowledge as static and objective, and (iv) "Imported pedagogies ...can't work here". The focus in this article will be on teacher excessive pedagogical authority.

## 6. On Pedagogical Authority

Before exposing findings related to teacher classroom authority, the researcher deems it appropriate to shed some light on some theoretical conceptualizations of pedagogical authority. Authority can be conceptualized as the prospect of a person gaining voluntary obedience from others, and the right of that person to give commands largely depends on others' belief in his or her legitimacy [19]. Put differently, authority is a connection of command and consent predicated on the legitimacy of those who take over leadership and the voluntary obedience of those under leadership. Other sociologists have argued that this relationship serves and is warranted by a moral order that encompasses joint intentions and ends, values and beliefs, and norms [20,21]. Therefore, authentic authority does not hold once legitimacy, consent, or shared purposes and values are compromised. Authority is not to be confused with power. Power transpires in classrooms concurrently with authority as imposed on and

put into effect by both students and teachers [22]. Accordingly, power is a process that shapes and constructs relationships amongst people [23]. Authority, on the other hand, is more closely associated with a “value system which regulates behavior basically because of acceptance of it on the part of those who comply” [24]. Furthermore, there are two kinds of authority (i) *an* authority and (ii) *in* authority. *An* authority is coupled with knowledge expertise, while *in* authority involves “preservation of conditions for order” [24]. *In* authority recognizes the interactional processes of authority relationships in the classrooms. Building upon Peter’s conception of authority [24], the authority of the teacher consists of a “content dimension”, clarifying that the teacher is in command of the knowledge that students are to gain or construct in the classroom, thus specifying what amounts to true, valid and applicable information and a “process dimension” by means of which the teacher exercises control over the flow and course of interaction in the classroom, capitalizing on some ideas and discarding others, allocating turns and orienting interaction. [25]. The recognition of these two interlaced dimensions paves the ground for analysis that recognizes both the forms and functions of authority in the classroom. Granting students adequate support to share authority situate them in a better position to assume further responsibility in classroom interaction, in consecutive time they may also start to exercise certain level of control over the knowledge being constructed in the classroom. Expressed differently, by distributing “process authority”, teachers can support students to share “content authority” as well. The outcome is striking the right balance between teacher authority and student’s autonomy--student-led inquiries and student-initiated interaction patterns.

Classroom authority is perceived as a compound social relationship that unfolds in classrooms in the course of a range of interactions that contain diverse meanings for teachers and students [25]. Classroom pedagogical authority is structured and shaped throughout the interaction of teacher and student and in the character of their material presence, support, approval, responsibility and deference, and in the manner they both connect to the subject content, educational standard and norms. By the same token, classroom authority is socially constructed in the sense that it is jointly negotiated through the symbolic actions of teachers and students and is produced by confined contextual forces and wider social, political, and cultural factors [25].

Classroom authority is conceptualized in the following ways:

1. Classroom authority in its truest form depends on teachers’ legitimacy, students’ consent, and a moral order consisting of shared purposes, values, and norms.
2. Authority is multiple in its forms and types and the ways in which it is interpreted.
3. Authority is enacted through dynamic negotiations between teachers and students that often involve overt or subtle conflict.
4. Authority is situated in various arenas--such as curricula and classroom discourse--and is shaped by multiple interacting influences, including varying perspectives on educational purposes, values, and norms; school ethos and policy; teachers’ knowledge; institutional features of schooling; and historical context.

5. Authority is consequential for classroom life, students’ achievement, teachers’ work, and democracy [25].

There are fundamental constituents of authority: legitimacy, consent, and the moral order. Teachers hold authority as they are entrusted with the formal right and responsibility to take charge in the classroom and students are expected to comply. The actual enactment of authority materializes through complex negotiations between teachers and students. Classroom authority, as a relationship, is mutually established by teachers and students in the course of classroom practices that have social and cultural meanings. It is tied to the entrenched and historically situated contexts of schooling and society. Teachers’ authority relations with students are influenced by socio-cultural aspects that unfold within, yet extend well beyond, the classroom. Teachers’ authority is value-laden and culturally sensitive.

Pedagogical authority can be described from two perceptions. On the one hand, teachers hold an intellectual authority; on the other hand, they represent a societal authority [26]. Intellectual authority is founded on a teacher’s pedagogical knowledge and grasp of material over and above his/her personal attributes. Societal authority is predicated on the school regulations and supervision over teaching situations, together with the legitimacy of maintaining order.

The word ‘authority’ may stimulate negative images about teachers as disciplinarians and therefore authority may be considered authoritarianism [27]. An authoritarian educator is expected to control children’s behavior and attitudes in a firm way; awaiting the children’s will to be attuned to the educator’s will and punishing children for nonconformity. Authority, in this model, is something that some have and others do not have. Authority is seen as an element that is sedimented into the role of a teacher. In this state of affairs, educational work is fully managed and oriented by the teacher’s position of power, not by the quality of interaction or the fluidity of classroom negotiation [27].

Excessive pedagogical authority as a character of Moroccan primary school teachers refers to the disparity or the asymmetry in the roles of teacher and students in classrooms, and sometimes exceeds that to verge on authoritarianism; a coercive power, i.e., something that teachers possess, enforceable through top-down sanctions and punishment. Teacher authority is founded on power asymmetry in teacher-student relation that is legitimized and communicatively corroborated in a constant practice of instituting, challenging, negotiating and affirming expectations, demands, rules, and sanctions. However, the researcher believes that pedagogical authority should be shaped all the way through teachers’ relationship with students and based on their interest, responsibility and devotion to the students’ studying and learning, not heavily dependent on teachers’ power or domination.

## 7. Teacher Excessive Pedagogical Authority as a Cultural Model

The interpretive codes--extracted from interviews the researcher had with respondents--that led to the determination of this cultural model were like “control”,

“the teacher should be always in control of everything”, “grip”, “distance”, “order is everything”, “distance between the teacher and students”, “performance of tasks silently”, “kingdom”, “respect”, “discipline”, “silence”, “keep a tight grip over your class”, and “corporal punishment”. These codes disclose the nature of the teachers’ conceptualizations of their presence and function in the space of classroom.

When interviewed about their conceptions of their roles in the classroom, most participating teachers offered almost identical responses. The teachers indicated the centrality of their roles in orchestrating classroom instructional practice. They identified their functions in terms of class control and knowledge transmission. The outcome of interviews coupled with classroom observations concluded that Moroccan primary school teachers are figures of excessive pedagogical authority. The latter is naturalized into a taken-for-granted feature and employed to perform not only the function of the moral order through behavior control and discipline maintenance, but also holds an epistemic function, i.e., constituting identities of teachers as knowers and students as consumers of teachers’ knowledge. Excessive pedagogical authority seems to operate as more of an identity marker; a cultural model that relates to their identity as teachers than to the content and nature of their knowledge and instruction. For the interviewed teachers, a teacher’s quality can be gauged by the extent to which she/he can assert control over her/his classroom. Discipline is a fundamental component of the pedagogic exercise. The exercise of authority is a routine feature of most teacher–student interactions throughout classroom instruction.

Ethnographic interviews revealed an ‘obsession’ with order and discipline. The centrality attached to the role of the teacher in classroom setting can attest to that. The following quote demonstrates how teacher Youssef views his position in the classroom: “The classroom is the teacher’s kingdom. He is responsible for it. Nobody has the right to interfere with his job... He is the most cognizant of it... These are my students and nobody knows them better than I do. I know what works best for them... Sometimes the inspector tells you this and that, but as a teacher you decide what works for you. When you’ve taught for many long years, you know what to do.” This teacher appoints himself as a king in his classroom, kingdom, controlling every sphere of students’ lives in it. The teacher assumes a total dominance and independence over the world of his classroom. He believes that his extensive experience entitles him to specify what is feasible for himself and his students. Such an image of authority and complacency discourages reflective practice, pedagogical flexibility, and professional development.

In connection with the centrality of the teacher in the space of classroom expressed above, teacher Khalid maintains that “classroom control is pivotal to the teaching-learning process. If the teacher fails to control the class, I wonder how he would teach those kids, especially with these large sized classrooms containing more than forty students. Absence of classroom control leads to chaos, which benefits no one... As you have seen, establishing order starts outside the classroom. I insist that they stand in line in an orderly fashion. I also check cleanliness before entering the classroom. I send students

with dirty hands and faces to clean. They need to get used to that.” Classroom control is deemed a *sine qua non* for smooth classroom pedagogical practice. Maintaining control is also viewed as a managerial reaction to large classes. The teacher is of the view that teaching and classroom control hang together. Furthermore, classroom control is understood as children maintaining physical order and obeying classroom rules. Teacher Fatima seems to echo Khalid’s views. She maintains that “teaching and classroom control go hand in hand. In order to teach effectively you need to be in full control of your classroom. Students won’t be attentive if you don’t enforce order and discipline... They are just like cumin; they need to be crushed to release a strong aromatic odor. If you show leniency from the beginning, it becomes tough to bring them under control... Experience taught me that it’s essential that you keep a tight grip over your class especially during the first weeks then you can relax your grip as they get in line... still you need to scapegoat someone to make an example of him.” Insistence on order and control is also prioritized by teacher Khadija, who believes that “when pupils step into classroom, they need to learn classroom order. They need to learn to line up orderly and calmly, to sit upright, to cross hands, and to stand up when the teacher or a visitor comes in. We repeatedly remind them of these rules of conduct to get used to them. Order is everything.” This indicates the top priority the teachers attach to classroom order and discipline. Controlling children is central to the act of teaching. It is quite apparent that the culture of control and discipline is at the core of primary classroom life. Young learners are socialized into a certain type of classroom routine demanding compliance and order.

In keeping with previously cited preoccupations with learners’ control, teacher Fouad sees that “classroom control is a first-day thing. Pupils are trained to abide by a set of rules. Organizing pupils is very important at the outset. Pupils are seated according to height and sight to avoid seating problems every morning. They are taught cleanliness rules, copybook organization, textbook preservation and performance of tasks silently. In this way, the teacher might work comfortably.” Admittedly, the concurrent presence of a big number of young students can certainly make exacting demands on the teacher. At the very least, the teacher is required to make certain that conditions are contributive to learning for the students and to teaching for the teacher. For instance, managing seating arrangements is meant, in part, to ensure blackboard visibility to all children, to enforce order, and to provide an appropriate environment for the teacher to operate. It may be affirmed that the quest for physical order was partially the consequence of the large size of classes the teachers had to cope with. However, insistence on order was also observed in smaller class sizes.

Likewise, teacher Fatima believes that classroom control can be sustained by keeping children busy. She perceives that “classroom control is facilitated by avoiding inactivity. Children should be always kept busy. Time allotted to school subjects, half an hour and sometimes forty-five minutes for each subject, is not enough to slow the pace and give students enough time. It takes students more than ten minutes just to copy a lesson summary and the rest of the time is kept for introducing, explaining lessons and evaluating learning. This is not always

possible; the syllabus is overloaded and we are expected to cover it all." The urgent and immediate aim is to keep the class busy to retain control and transmit the load of prescribed knowledge. Goals of progressive pedagogy--offering young learners the opportunity to discover things for themselves and fueling this activity by inquiring and questioning the child effectively--take a backseat.

In response to a question related to her apparent resolve on maintaining order in her classroom, teacher Bochra states that "children at this stage [referring to grade 1 and 2] are very active and agitated unlike other children who are calmer and more attentive. That is why the teacher should be always in control of everything and walk across the room from time to time. Children just want to play especially in grades 1 and 2. They are still young. They are less mature mentally. When they get used to discipline and teachers' angry looks, you proceed unperturbed...The first two months determine the course of the whole year. At first you make an extra effort to make them used to your way of work and to understand what is expected of them." The teacher seeks to establish certain classroom routines of a disciplinary nature to ensure certain comfortable working conditions. Physical control of young learners takes precedence over other pedagogical concerns as it is thought of as the determinant of the quality of the realization of other instructional procedures and intentions.

In an attempt to clarify a comment made by the researcher on respondents' insistence on order and discipline, teacher Omar states that "the teacher embodies all roles. He is required to teach and to stand in for the role of parents... Many families have given up on their roles. We need to reeducate and correct many things that children bring to school from home and street. There are a lot of problems such as family disintegration, deprivation, poverty and the teacher is supposed to cope with all these social ills...Schools need to play a part in restoring and strengthening values of discipline and respect...The street has a damaging effect on children...It's getting worse...The teacher is supposed to do something to reinstitute those values we inherited from our ancestors." The teacher believes that his function goes beyond the space of classroom. He needs to contribute to the reestablishment of traditionally honored roles associated with the teacher. The school is supposed to rectify imperfections brought to school by children. The latter are supposed to imbibe the values of discipline and respect at school if familial and street environment fail to fulfill that.

Within the context of teacher multifunctionality alluded to above, some teachers often refer to the complementarity of family and school, and often appoint themselves as representatives of parents at school. As an illustration, teacher Mohamed emphasizes that "the teacher's role goes beyond teaching to compliment the family's role. The teacher is like a second father or mother to a student...Like a parent respecting the teacher is essential because respect towards a teacher is his capital. If there is no respect, nothing is left. The teacher needs to command/demand respect from students... The teacher isn't there just to teach...I think that educating children is the teacher's responsibility as well...The teacher needs to set a good example." The patriarchal and pyramidally hierarchical nature of family socialization is reproduced and reinforced at school. Like a parent, the teacher wields

authority, assumes responsibility for the whole class and expects respect and unquestioning compliance with his/her instructions.

Many interviewed teachers believe that children's subdued activity in the space of classroom denotes attentiveness and scholastic achievement. Silence and quiet are valued and regarded as signs that learning is taking place. Teacher Kawtar, for instance, views that "silence and calm allow children the chance to focus. Too much talk and activity can be distracting. I always insist on them performing tasks silently, especially avoiding bilateral conversations. If anybody has anything to say, he only needs to raise his hand and share it with the rest of the class... I do not like them calling me 'teacher, teacher'; it creates noise to no avail." Learning is related to silence and lack of activity on the part of students. Children were sometimes seen in conversation about topics arising from/ or linked to ongoing teaching. This would sometimes provoke the teachers' scolding because children, in the teachers' view, seemed to be inattentive to their explanation. Sometimes children would react and try to explain that they were just talking about the lesson. Still the teacher insisted on maintaining silence and paying attention. The teachers did not know what the children were talking about. They were largely ignorant about nuances of children talk. This results in a lack of differentiation between which talk was beneficial and which needed recourse to 'disciplinary actions'. They, therefore, reacted to all conversations (including those related to syllabi learning) with a call for quiet and restoration of order in the classroom. This translates into a repressive regime in the classroom, silencing even the children's effort at negotiating actively with work. Passivity was imposed on children; class work was constructed as a silent activity.

During classroom observation period the researcher took notice of a deficient socio-emotional climate reigning in the overwhelming majority of classrooms. There was a lack of intimacy in teacher-student relationship. Most teachers held themselves aloof from their students. For the sake of discipline and order maintenance, the teachers reduced the establishment of favorable teacher-student relationships to insignificance. For instance, teacher Nawal explains that "there should always be a distance between the teacher and students. The teacher should not make himself very approachable so that children cannot take advantage of that and misbehave. As soon as you loosen your grip they get out of control. In order to operate tranquilly, you need to impose a certain order in class from day one. It is good to release your grip from time to time, but you need to restore order quickly." The teacher's pressing concern over order and discipline in classroom forestalls the foundation of a friendly relationship with students. The latter are supposed to be kept at a bay. Keeping children at a distance discourages disorder and strengthens the implementation of disciplinary measures.

Teacher Nawal's strategy of the enactment of order maintenance is espoused by other teachers who seem to be unwilling or unable to take the necessary steps to form and maintain positive and supportive relationships with the students they instruct. For example, teacher Hasan shares a similar conception of teacher-student relationship. He views that "You need to maintain a barrier so that they know their limits; a teacher remains a teacher and a

student remains a student. You should not go down to their level. Assuming such a stance saves you lot of trouble and allows you to work comfortably.” The teacher insists on maintaining a strict social distance between himself and his students. The aloofness of the teacher hinders the establishment of positive channels of communication in the classroom. This attitude serves the teachers as they suggested above; however, this excessive preoccupation with the imposition of order denies students the chance to operate in a relaxed atmosphere free of inhibitions. The researcher noticed during classroom observation that a lot of students were tongue-tied and found it difficult to express themselves in class, especially shy ones, who were not afforded the opportunity to exteriorize and contribute their thoughts to enrich interaction.

The teachers’ interviews obviously demonstrate their deep concern about classroom control and discipline to the point of ‘obsession’. Classroom control tops all other concerns. One of the main pillars of progressive pedagogy—group work—is sacrificed for control mechanisms and disciplinary considerations. Teacher Safaa explains that she rarely makes use of group work because “it is quite hard to apply in large classrooms. It’s difficult for the teacher to monitor all the groups. This leads to chaos... A lot of students engage in off task activities and rely too heavily on others to do the work...Introverted students can feel dominated and be reluctant to contribute. Moreover, it’s time consuming; half an hour allotted to most lessons isn’t enough for conducting group work properly. Personally, I can’t see much benefit in students working in groups.” The teacher eschews group work to maintain her grip over her class. Group work poses managerial concerns. The teacher enumerates what she considers as ‘deficiencies’ engendered by the implementation of group work. In fact, the researcher attended a class in which the teacher once used group work. Her insistence on subdued activity in group work activities curbed students’ freedom to interact freely. The kind of chaos sometimes observed during the class was mainly the result of the teacher’s poor theoretical and practical knowledge of group work management. Group work is much more than just putting students into groups and expecting the assignment to be collaboratively performed.

Many teachers even attribute the decline in students’ achievement to slackened disciplinary measures--outlawing of corporal punishment. For instance, teacher Najat believes that “when corporal punishment was outlawed, many children have lost the incentive to study. They know they will not be beaten. They will only be reproached and that’s it. We were taught by corporal punishment and we had generations that honored the country....Today there is too much leniency in family and at school. This is only leading us backward.” The teachers believe that the power of intimidation provides enough incentive to advance students’ achievements; keeping children under pressure and threat brings out the best in these children. The teacher calls for stricter disciplinary measures or even the reinstationalization of corporal punishment as leniency has only led to performance decline.

## 8. Discussion

Classroom control and discipline seem to constitute an integral part of the pedagogical conceptualization of most interviewed teachers. The teachers insist on establishing their authoritative presence in class as a guaranty of exacting obedience and compliance from students. The teachers seem to be preoccupied with students’ bodily ‘regulation’. It is true that children are characterized by physical vitality and restlessness, but that could be channeled into active learning tasks that capitalize on play as a learning strategy rather than a reason to restrict their bodily energy. The teachers’ understanding of pedagogy appears to be not derived from theoretical knowledge related to play but instead stem from cultural construction of the child. For instance, teacher Bochra’s construction of play discloses that she differentiates between younger and older children. She recognizes (although not in the refined vocabulary of formal disciplinary knowledge) that younger children are more physically present and less mature mentally as compared to older ones. Therefore, pupils’ physical vitality and short attention span were interpreted as problems that required the regulation of their bodies. In many classes children are trained to raise their hands quietly and when appointed by the teacher to respond to a question, they are supposed to stand up, step aside, cross hands and then utter the response. And if ever a child, in some classes, utters the answer without being asked to respond, he/she is likely to be reprimanded and silenced by words like “Ilaqwa” or “ssakta nfaallah”, furiously shouted by the teacher to demand immediate quiet and order.

Most interviewed teachers show an unusual way and exaggerated concern for maintaining order amongst their students. Classroom order is perceived in a rather narrow and confined sense. In the teachers’ conceptualizations, classroom control and management is not defined as the process by which the teacher creates and maintains a classroom environment that captures students’ attention and allows them the pace and space to learn, but merely as a strategy for the teacher to operate in a silent and passive environment that infuses fear through issuing verbal threats and sometimes physical assaults. Classroom control and management usually consist of adherence to a list of rules and procedures but rarely of the sensitivity and caring attitude of the teacher. Furthermore, there is no participatory approach in deciding on classroom code of conduct. Learners do not negotiate the boundaries of acceptable behavior and are socialized into classroom routines. Rules are dictated and students are expected to comply with them. The perception of the importance of students’ voice in determining classroom rules and procedures is quasi absent. The interviewed teachers seem to handle and conceive authority in individualistic and disjointed terms, that is, as something held or placed exclusively in the hands of teachers. Trouble of discipline can be avoided by retaining students’ interest in learning throughout the utilization of stimulating classroom materials and activities. It is true that successful classroom management is a fundamental constituent in effective teaching and that poor management squanders class time, diminishes students’ time on task, and undermines the quality of the learning environment. However, excessive control creates a suffocating atmosphere that not only

infuses fear and creates tension, but also hinders students' engagement in classroom activities. Teachers and students are interactionally linked and essentially function in a relation of authority. By way of explanations, authority is a relational and transactional construct mutually enacted or instituted as teachers and students interact. However, the overriding view amid the teachers is that authority is something that the teacher possesses at the expense of the student. They believe that partaking authority might undermine their independence and freedom of action.

Coupling silence with learning created a definition of learning as an act of individual engagement. The teachers usually eschew types of classroom activities involving pair work and group work in order to maintain quietude and silence. During the researcher's extended observation period, only three or four instances of group work were witnessed. The researcher reported this concern to the teachers, and they predominantly imputed that to the difficulty of applying group work in large-sized classrooms, and they stressed that it was not viable for them to divide the class into eight or nine groups because they could not monitor that large number of groups. Moreover, they added that students usually engage in off task activities when they escape the teacher's controlling eye. However, group work is not a common practice even in classrooms with relatively smaller size. Most teachers fail to see the benefits of cooperative learning. Group work allows students to develop teamwork skills and social interaction competence. Operating in groups brings the added value of receiving peer support, contributing and sharing ideas, knowledge and workload, and empowering students to learn cooperatively. Most teachers seem to be unaware of the theoretical foundation and technical know-how of transacting group work; putting students into groups, as was observed in some classrooms, and expecting them to operate together is not enough to attain good outcomes. Students need to be taught teamwork operational skills.

The close watch over children is incorporated into the pedagogical activities of the teachers. Disciplinary injunctions and syllabi transfer are so welded together in teacher-student interaction. They appear to be part of the same semantic classification. The teachers conceptualize learning as a controlled silent activity, and accentuate motoric work, that is, drill and practice—specifically in lower grades—which present-day theories would regard as tangential, even insignificant, to learning. Most students take classroom set of laws seriously and are generally ready to pursue them. They need their teachers' authorization even in transacting meticulous things. They seek teacher permission to move or loan materials and query the teacher about the order in which questions are to be answered, which pen to use, whether to skip a line, and how much space to leave in the margin. The requirements of keeping orderly copybooks is highly controlled, the compulsory tagging of work such as date, title, and swift completion of work are inherent in everyday activities in the course of which children construct the meaning of classroom learning. Learning grows to be a set of 'to perform skills'. Sequentially, learners turn into performers. Apparent lack of stressing mental activity curtails learning to a set of isolated and hollow actions.

Insistence on order and discipline might be a repercussion of disengagement. Many observed teachers

rarely show a genuine interest in what they do. They usually start lessons by asking students about where they left off the day before, which denotes a lack of preparation. The teachers' exclusive use of textbooks further attests to that. The teachers' key mission is one of enforcing order to expedite delivery of the prearranged content. Thus, forgoing the opportunity to infuse what they teach and how they go about it with a personal meaning because the teachers mainly define their task in terms of establishing order and prioritizing control over their classes. Such a perception assists in illuminating the teachers' disengagement from the epistemic constituent of their task and their corresponding concern over disciplining. This proves that the value system of classes is that one of maintaining order. So, central to the teachers' construction of children is the thought of the child as a 'physical being' that needs constant supervision and control. These constructions, mentioned above, are meant to regulate children's bodies. In the teachers' elucidations, the child's 'mental being' is largely absent or reduced to inconsequentiality. Classroom control is perceived largely in terms of putting in force disciplinary standards and curtailing disruption but infrequently as a strategy of establishing patterns of cooperation to make best use of learning. This strengthens the argument that for teachers the children are just physical organisms to be regulated rather than thinking ones. The students are so socialized into the teachers' conceptualization of order. The teachers construed children and their behavior chiefly through a disciplinary lens that sought to create docile and obedient students, who were kept under control even during the nonattendance of the teacher as the latter assigned student monitors who served as 'extensions' to the teacher's supervisory eye.

It has been observed that learner's talk without teacher's permission is indicative of disruptive behavior and a lack of teacher control. Learning takes place, as assumed by the overwhelming majority of interviewees, if learners keep quiet and listen carefully to the teacher. To ensure this the teacher usually scolds those who 'disturb' classroom practice by speaking without permission. Learners are subordinate partners in classroom interaction. The teacher mediates all forms of interaction as she is considered superior in terms of knowledge, experience and judgment. Therefore, the teacher dominates classroom activities, controlling all turn-taking in interaction with students. In reply to the teacher's questions, a student is selected to provide an answer. The student's response is succeeded by the teacher evaluation, and rarely by another student. It is very exceptional for students to take the initiative or to negotiate meaning with the teacher. Their contributions are restricted to answering questions and asking peripheral questions related to organizational and procedural issues. The topic of the lesson is also under the teacher's control. After individual study of a text from the course book, the teacher elicits responses from the students with the aim of reconstructing the text. This procedure prevents topic development and revelation of point of view. The teachers also limit students' contributions when they attempt a longer reconstruction or monologue. These traditional conceptions of classroom behavior are in agreement with the norms of behavior in the wider community. Learners do not live in a vacuum. In fact, before taking up their turns in the classroom, "they



are participants in a cultural milieu and their beliefs and assumptions about modes of behavior and knowledge are structured by the culture of the community in which they operate" [28]. Teachers and students' cultural and social values, assumptions and beliefs affect the way they see, order and evaluate the interactional practices within the classroom. Therefore, teachers' classroom practices are reflections of their social and familial practices.

Primary school teacher-student relationship is governed and regulated by a well-defined system of hierarchical values and customs. This relationship emphasizes a rigid and highly controlled environment. The teachers exhibit the traits of authoritarians, reinforcing traditional values of obedience and submission. This student control ideology is described as custodial [29]. This control orientation is modeled by a traditional classroom that provides an exceedingly controlled setting where the upholding of order is dominant. There is a predisposition to view the classroom as autocratic, with a rigid hierarchy of pupil-teacher status, unilateral and downward flow of power and communication, and an expectation that students unquestioningly accept teachers' decisions. Classrooms tend to operate on a rigid time schedule with accent placed on completion of a prearranged amount of material. The instructional method is mainly teacher-fronted. A custodial student control orientation is also typified by the stereotyping of students in accordance with appearance, behavior, and parents' socioeconomic status [30]. Teachers do not attempt to understand student behavior but instead view misbehavior as a personal affront. They perceive students as irresponsible and undisciplined persons who must be controlled through punitive sanctions. Impersonality, pessimism, and watchful mistrust pervade the atmosphere of the custodial classroom [30].

In certain cases the exaggerated authoritative presence of some teachers can prove very incapacitating for some children. As a case in point, there were three instances in which students in grades 1 and 2 in three different classrooms urinated and were humiliated in public. The first child lost control of himself when he was ordered to go to the board to demonstrate how well he had learned a poem by heart. Wetting his pants provoked his classmates' mockery and the teacher's indignation. To add insult to injury, the teacher hurled a set of demeaning remarks that certainly did a lot of damage to the child's psyche. The second one was close to the researcher. He seemed to have forgotten his copybook and was afraid of the teacher's reaction. When another student noticed the incident and reported it, the teacher jokingly said that there were no diapers in the teacher's closet and ordered the child to go to the toilet to clean himself. The third one wetted himself for no obvious reason but escaped the teacher's notice. Only students closely around him saw what happened. During break time I asked the child sitting next to him about the incident and informed me that the boy failed to pluck up enough courage to tell the teacher about his biological need. These incidents might indicate how some students react to the strained atmosphere that reigns in many classrooms.

Some teachers refuse to see their classroom authority undermined. There was a case of a pupil who was neglected in a backseat. He seemed to have resigned and completely lost interest in the world around him. When the researcher queried about his obvious detachment, the

teacher explained that she deliberately treated him as a 'pariah' simply because the boys' mother had complained to the headmaster about the teacher insulting her son. The teacher added that if the mother wanted her child to be treated with special care, the doors of private schools around were wide open. The pupil was a victim of the teacher's attempt to settle the score with the mother. This incident, I think, demonstrates to what extent the teacher refuses to see her authority undermined. The teacher's behavior can be interpreted as a reaffirmation of that authority. The teacher's behavior seems to denote that the teacher believes that absolute control over the class is her unalienable prerogative.

Classroom decision making and the effective management of the learning process "cannot be made without reference to the larger context within which instruction takes place" [31]. In any context the educational procedures are not only an exchange of ideas amid teachers and students, but it is also a set of conventions which determines what comes about between the parties. These conventions are determined by the social and cultural norms within this particular practice context [32,33]. Stressing the central role of the social context, "the classroom is a socially defined reality and is therefore influenced by the belief systems and behavioral norms of the society of which it is part" [32]. As a social construction, the classroom becomes then a cultural space where teachers, students, dimensions of the local educational philosophy, and broader socio-cultural values, beliefs, and expectations all congregate.

Comprehending Moroccan primary classroom practice requires establishing a backdrop to social practice since the first is part of the second. Thus, the general patterns of interaction in the Moroccan classroom context indicate that, initially, "Authority is external and imposed upon the individual" [34]. Additionally, compliance with authority is characteristic of the Moroccan culture. It is taken as a sign of 'good' behavior and is accepted positively by the society. Hence, a good student has to comply with the decisions of his/her teacher or headmaster and a good child has to remain reliant on parent's regulations. He/she has to follow their thoughts and behavior rather than constructing his/her own. Third, the advice of superiors is valued positively and people are advised to make use of it [35].

Broadly speaking, respect and deference to superiors are commended in the Moroccan society. In the classroom context, the teacher is endowed with authority on account of expertise and knowledge. Pupils are expected to demonstrate their respect by keeping mostly quiet or verbalizing few-word answers when they are permitted to do so by their instructor [36]. Thus, the teacher controls classroom practices. He/she is considered responsible for classroom behavior. Furthermore, in the traditional classroom, learners' talk is indicative of disruptive behavior and a lack of teacher control. Learning takes place if learners keep quiet and listen carefully to the teacher. What transpires from the above discussion is that what is going on in the classroom is part of what is going on in the wider society. The notion of legitimacy of authority, which students grow up with in their homes and the wider society, makes students respect their teachers and endow them with authority. Children are brought up on the value of respecting elders to the extent of not

questioning what they say. Therefore, these children often maintain the same status for teachers in classrooms as elders whose sayings should not be questioned.

The hierarchical social makeup restricts teachers from wholly appropriating the notion of going down to the learner's level, prior knowledge, preoccupations, and requirements. The role of hierarchy is predominantly apparent in communication between teachers and students in the observed classroom practices. The teachers, almost exclusively, ask the questions, thus indicating the importance of teachers' authority and command over all legitimate knowledge. The teacher is the chief player in terms of controlling and defining the parameters for students' participation and contributions. This traditional view of teacher-student relationship is anchored in the notion that the teacher is supreme, that he owns knowledge, and that he knows best how to communicate it. The student's role is to be modest, obedient and receptive. Several texts have described the supremacy of the teacher and the modesty of the ideal "disciple" [37]. The teacher commonly displays two forms of hierarchy, characteristic of Moroccan society: structural and qualitative. Structural hierarchy is a sign of authority in connection with the organizational dynamics which operates within the classroom, while qualitative hierarchy is representative of knowledge—being more knowledgeable than the student [38]. Students' relationship to their teachers exhibits, at least at face value, the respect and esteem, and even reverence expected of a novice toward an expert.

In the same vein, the value of obedience extends to the relations that direct hierarchical relations not only between father and children, but between the older and younger, between masters and disciples / students, holders of authority and subordinates, and between rulers and ruled. [39]. In the traditional system, the foundation of authority is the ground rule that governs hierarchical relations. In the same way, the values transmitted within the family are reflected in the mosque and at school. Family and school produce values that socialize individuals into obedience and submission when transposed to domains other than family and school. In fact, obedience is the cornerstone of the patriarchal order which confiscates religious morality for justification [39].

The family is the first institution where values are transmitted and reproduced. The family organization, especially in its traditional and extended model, is maintained and governed by the principles of hierarchy and authority. Early on children incorporate that parents are authority figures commanding obedience no matter what orders or requests they put in. They are well-informed in respect of what matters to their progeny. Henceforth, early family socialization instills in the individual's mind that any pursuit to defy parents' authority is frowned upon both under social and religious justifications. Here the issue extends beyond normal parental control to refer to the matter of power distribution and coercion at all levels.

When classroom authority is excessive, it is justified, legitimized, and accepted by the system of values. The authority of the father is replaced by the master in the Koranic school and the teacher in modern school. A Moroccan popular saying that circulated in the past—and still enjoys some currency-- narrated that when a father brought his son to school, he told the master, "you slay

[the child] and I rip off the skin." In other words, your authority completes mine. We, thus, find the same principle which governs both the father/child relationship and the teacher/student, namely, the principle of authority/obedience. The family is therefore the first institution where values are transmitted and reproduced. The family, especially in its traditional and extended model, is imitated and governed by the principle of hierarchy and authority.

The phenomenon of authoritarianism in the educational field is rooted in the traditional social structure, which fears the unlocking of creative powers, and encourages docility, compliance, and reliance [40]. Authoritarianism adapts to and integrates within existing social structures, regardless of its negatives. Authoritarianism is socially reproduced; an authoritarian society produces authoritarian teachers, who contribute to the production of authoritarian students [40]. Family is the place where the individual grows, acquires the culture, builds character, and instills behaviors. Family usually constitutes a microcosm of society. Family education derives its principles and foundations from the socializing process. Therefore, the values that guide the behaviors of many families such as authoritarianism, dependency, and suppression are social relations that govern the society in general. Family is considered one of the most important sources of authoritarianism in the society, and has sometimes functioned as a tool to perpetuate social domination through the upbringing of children into submission and subordination through arbitrary and repressive methods. The structure of family, which is based on hierarchy, is rooted in similar social structures. Social authoritarianism passes on to educational institutions that evolve in the heart of society, and subsequently spread to other social institutions. The atmosphere which reins in educational institutions is that of intellectual repression, which disables the energy of growth, and sometimes leads to students' rejection of these institutions [40]. A free society generates free education, and an authoritarian society often restricts the minds of individuals, suppress their liberty, and curb their thinking [40]. So, there is a need to establish a relationship within families and other institutions of socialization on the basis of mutual understanding, dialogue and respect away from oppression and violence. The focus should be on methods of reward and encouragement rather than threat and punishment.

Authority and loyalty in our culture are framed and ordered over three models; salient amongst them is authority inside the family and the household. Parents have the last say at homes while children hold a secondary role [41]. Power and authority are two major dimensions that are respected and valued by Moroccans [37]. As community members seek power and authority, they value power holders and their practice. It is something deemed natural and children are raised to understand the parents' authority inside and outside the house. Sons and daughters are meant to obey their parents practice. According to Islamic religion, obedience to parents is fundamental. In the family context, children are discouraged from questioning the elders. Children who repeatedly inquire and/or interrupt others' communication to voice their minds are often considered to be impolite. The parents are the first to be blamed and criticized for their children's

misbehavior. Parents, therefore, have to teach children to remain silent and to listen to their elders engaged in conversation. The teacher, similar to the father is thought to be in possession of the same power and authority. Children are supposed to demonstrate their respect and show fear to their teachers. The above portrayal of family practice indicates why identical practice is established in the classroom framework. This suggests that classroom practice reflects and is reflected by family practice.

Even outside the space of classroom young learners are deprived from 'safe and welcoming sanctuaries' to escape restrictions imposed on them in classrooms. The researcher observed that there is no room for clubs and other extracurricular activities in the space of all researched schools. The teachers ascribed that to overloaded syllabi, absence of convenient physical space and tight teachers' schedules. As a result, the teachers forgo the opportunity to help the school form into a learning community through which the pupils can feel safe at school, more at home, and that the school can be fun and geared to their interests because when students feel safe and at home they are likely to try their hardest and measure up to academic expectations.

Indubitably, classroom control and instruction are interrelated. Classroom management is the foundation upon which the rest is based. Nonetheless, taking a harsh stand on matters of classroom discipline, still a common view in many classrooms, can be quite inhibitive for young learners. Genuine and lasting learning takes place in a safe and enjoyable environment not one based on fear and threat. A high quality teacher-student relationship is a keystone for all other aspects of classroom management.

A good pointer on the dynamics of students' engagement in classroom is the nature of relationship they have with their teachers. [41]. Students who benefit from an affirmative and accommodating relationship with their teacher attend better to instruction, exert greater effort, persevere through difficult situations, are better able to cope with stress, and are more accepting of teacher direction and criticism than students who do not enjoy supportive and positive teacher-student relationships [42]. Better educational opportunities can be offered in a humanistic student control orientation that situates learning and behavior in psychological and sociological, rather than moralistic, terms [30]. The classroom in the humanistic model is visualized as an educational community that prompts teachers to establish a democratic atmosphere in which students engage cognitively and interpersonally in cooperative interaction and experience. It accentuates self-discipline as teachers believe that students can learn to be responsible and self-regulating individuals. A two-way communication between students and teachers is promoted. The humanistic teacher is positive about the student and builds up friendly relations with students. Teachers and students are enthusiastic to act unrestrictedly and take on responsibility for their actions.

Teachers need to step out of their traditional roles and adopt the role of facilitators to help the learner to create his/her meaning. Without effective facilitation and supportive social interaction, students might not be able to connect their learning to the greater social structure and know how to use any newly acquired learning [43]. Students need to feel affirmed, assured and valued; no "amount of focus on academics, no matter how strong or

exclusive, will substantially change the fact that the substrate of classroom life is social and emotional." [44]. Positive individual relationships between adults and youth constitute the foundations of successful programs of education in general. Students need to feel comfortable in their instructional environment in order for learning to materialize. Students come to school with common human needs. They need to feel safe and secure both physically and emotionally. Students' sense of belonging and acceptance at school enhances their ability and opportunity to learn and perform well at school [45]. Students experience in class could be empowering or disabling as a straight result of their interactions with their teachers in class. When outstanding adults are asked what most impacted their success they often credit a special relationship with educators in the school [45].

If our schools and classrooms are not animated by wide-ranging visions of equity, democracy, and social justice, they will never be able to fulfill the widely proclaimed goal of lifting educational achievement for all children. Consequently, critical classroom practice on the part of teachers is centrally significant to all effective and lasting reform efforts. The enduring assumptions, values and beliefs that teachers possess and share need to be revisited and redefined. We need a respectful classroom culture that treats all students with dignity. Much of classroom climate is a reflection of perceptions, and teachers enjoy the ability to influence the perceptions and feelings positively or negatively through the relationships they establish with students. As a researcher I have observed that not many teachers believe that there is value in forging and maintaining constructive and encouraging relationships with their students in providing for their students' academic attainment and behavior. It is rare to hear the teachers stressing the need for a warm climate and the importance of planning high quality instructions in providing academic and behavioral success. Academic improvement occurs when classroom culture is supportive and welcoming. In order for classrooms to unlock the potential for continuous improvement, they need to create opportunities for engagement and secure commitments from all members through democratic practices and active meaningful participation [46]. A rigid learning characterized by excessive teacher control environment makes it difficult for students to go beyond knowledge reproduction to construct their own meanings.

Freed of the urgency to reorganize knowledge in interesting ways, most observed teachers stick with the task of preserving order in the classroom to ease safe transfer of the prearranged content. However, an efficient discipline program functions congruently with an effective classroom management system. Good discipline programs thwart most problems by attending to student physical, intellectual, social and emotional needs. Useful discipline techniques center on improving a student's self-image and sense of responsibility through support and kind words rather than reproaches and reprimands. Teachers can communicate messages that students are valuable and capable even when students make wrong choices [47]. Caring on the part of teachers and educators include qualities such as patience, listening, gentleness, understanding, knowledge of students as individuals, warmth, encouragement, and overall love for children [48]. Positive "relationships based on trust and respect, nurtured

over time by supportive organizational structures and norms of interaction, are the human infrastructure within a school that enables effective teaching and learning to occur.” [45]. Similarly, growth in academic achievement connected to teacher instructional practices that are instructionally and emotionally supportive [49]. When teachers were observed applying themselves to foster students' interest and initiative, making available fittingly challenging learning frameworks, and constructing positive social relationships, students' demonstrated higher levels of math skills, stood to gain a lot at the behavioral level, and had more positive awareness of their academic abilities [49].

The pedagogy of teaching is closely related to positive relationship building and maintaining. Teachers not only influence students by how they treat them, but they also influence students by how they teach them and how they communicate with them during teaching. Positively influential teachers instruct with effectual approaches, plan for inspiring lessons, stimulate students throughout these lessons, offer specific and proper feedback, differentiate learning to cater to the needs, interests and skills of all students, handle their classroom effectively and efficiently, and put into practice effective and positive discipline procedures. Students' motivation and engagement is relative to the quality of relationship they have in school [45].

In summary, in primary classroom setting, the relationship between the teacher and the student can be characterized as a formalized interpersonal connection between an authority figure and a subordinate who interrelate on nearly a daily basis [49]. Classrooms are cultural institutions with norms and values and formal and informal rules that affect how people are treated and they treat each other. Classrooms remain a vehicle to maintain the status quo and reproduce long established cultural structures. Conversely, classrooms should operate as instruments to break the grip of 'oppression' and instill in children the virtues they need to participate in democratic citizens in rapidly changing world landscape.

## 9. Conclusion

Excessive pedagogical authority is central to the act of teaching in primary school. The culture of control and discipline is at the core of classroom life. Primary school teacher-student relationship is governed and regulated by a well-defined system of hierarchical values and customs. This relationship emphasizes a rigid and highly controlled environment. The teachers exhibit the traits of authoritarians, reinforcing traditional values of obedience and submission. The teachers construed children and their behavior mainly through a disciplinary lens that sought to create docile and obedient students. The teacher's excessive authority is not a contemporary construction. It is a continuation of a long-established practice under which the teachers are regarded as supreme in the space of classroom. They 'own' knowledge and know how to impart it. The teachers seem to handle and conceive authority in individualistic and disjointed terms; that is, as something held or placed exclusively in the hands of teachers. This goes against principles of progressive pedagogy in which the establishment of democratic values

reigns supreme. A democratic classroom practice involves the development of learning goals with students, established to strengthen character and infuse courage which will expectantly provide them a presence of mind for living a life of equanimity and willpower over their actions.

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## Conflict of Interest

None.

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