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## Quality education versus teaching-learning activities in the classroom at primary schools of Bangladesh

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### Abstract

There has been a rapid growth in enrollments and gender parity in the primary schools of Bangladesh but the quality of primary education could not reach at a satisfactory level. The national assessment of primary education indicated that the poor performance of children of grade 3 and 5 which gives us a picture of the quality of primary education in Bangladesh especially in languages and mathematics. Thus the quality teaching-learning alone can play an important role in achieving overall quality of primary education. The purpose of this study was to explore the present situation of teaching-learning activities at classroom in the primary schools based on classroom observation along with the perceptions of teachers and students. A random sample of teachers and students from Government Primary Schools participated in the study. Classes were also observed for realizing actual teaching-learning situations. Data were collected using structured interview questionnaires and classroom observation schedule. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for analyses of data. The findings revealed that most of the teachers used traditional teaching methods. Activity-based learning was absent in the classrooms and students did not get individual help from teachers. A large number of students could not be able to solve homework alone given by the teachers. Many teachers even did not check the homework and give feedback to their students. The teachers were overloaded with classes and interaction between teachers and students found in a minimum level. Use of modern technology such as multimedia, internet, digital content as teaching aids was very limited. Many teachers did not have any subject based training and same teacher have to teach different subjects. The study indicated specific recommendations to enhance the quality of teaching-learning at primary level.

**Keywords:** quality education, teaching-learning activities

### 1. Introduction

Primary education bears the greatest significance in the total education system of any country because it is the only basis of all education (MoPME). Weakness of this education affect on the life of an individual as well as on socio-economic development of a nation. Bangladesh is currently running one of the largest primary education sectors in the world with as many as 106,859 primary institutions of 14 different kinds (Education watch report 2014) [7]. Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) oversees more than 64% of these schools and around 79.9% of total children enrolled in primary level educational institutions. Around 69.2% primary teachers are working in MoPME managed schools (ASPR, 2014) [4].

Recently government has been introduced Pre-primary education throughout the country and also the government is committed to extend the duration of primary education up to grade VIII by 2018 under the National Education Policy 2010 [11]. Government is working to reduce teacher and student ratio from 1:56 to 1:40 under PEDP-3. The goal of PEDP3 is "quality education for all our children." It has six results areas where learning outcomes is first one of them. Already supplied laptop, multimedia and internet modem at some model schools. Government has set up 12 new PTI and introduce new training course, diploma in primary education (DPEd) 18 months long in exchange of C-in-ED) to create qualified and efficient teacher for developing the quality of primary education (MoPME).

As a result of the multi-dimensional interventions implemented during the past two decades Bangladesh has seen a remarkable progress with regard to the quantitative development particularly in enrolment and gender parity of primary education (DPE, 2012) [6]. The enrolment rate has recently increased to about 100% and overall dropout rate declined. Survival rate is significantly higher than before. The cycle completion rate has been

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gradually improving since 2005. The average student absenteeism has reduced gradually since 2005. It is estimated that 49% of the schools have met the student teacher ratio of 46:1. The increase was equally shared between boys and girls (ASPR, 2013) [3].

Despite improvement in certain aspects of basic education in quantitative terms, quality of education remains to be a great cause of concern for the government, policy makers, donors and others concerned (Rahaman, n.d.). Improving the quality of primary education is one of Bangladesh's highest priorities (World Bank report 2011) [21]. Chowdhury *et al.* (2002) [5] mentioned that one-third of those who completed primary education have been found to be functionally illiterate. Based on the recommendations in the Dakar Framework for Action other international conventions concluded that everyone has the right not only to receive education, but also to receive education of a high quality (World Education Forum, 2000) [20]. ADB (2003) [1] also mentioned that although there has been a rapid growth in enrollments and strong overall growth in the primary education system, the quality of primary education in Bangladesh is not at a satisfactory level. In the last decade Bangladesh made great strides in improving access to education however quality remains a challenge (NSA 2013) [13].

With a view to improving the quality of education a competency-based curriculum developed by NCTB in 1988 has been implemented in the primary schools. Afterwards the curriculum was further renewed and modified several times. Recently in 2012 the national curriculum of primary schools has been thoroughly revised and renewed by NCTB. With a view to providing critical evidence of the efficacy of PEDP II interventions to improve the quality of education and pupil learning outcomes in cognitive and other skills, the DPE decided to conduct a series of National Students Assessments (NSA) of learning achievement of primary pupils. The first in this series was conducted in 2006, and the second in 2008 and NSA 2011 was the 3rd in the series. NSA 2011 clearly indicates the poor performance of children of grade 3 and 5 which gives us a picture of the quality of primary education in Bangladesh especially in languages and mathematics. NSA 2013 also recommended that there is no significant change in overall pupil performance between successive years.

A lot of factors play an important role to ensure the quality education such as curriculum, teaching-learning methods, assessment, teaching materials, school environment, learners' socio-economic background and class teachers etc. According to UNICEF (2000), ILO, UNESCO, EI and WCT (2001) [8], The Education Watch report (2002) [16], ABSIYE, Hassan Ahmed (2013) [2] the improvement of quality education depends on learning environments, teacher-pupil ratio, teaching materials, initial teacher education, teachers training along with many other activities. Martua Manullang (2005) [9] found that there is a significant correlation of the variables of teachers' educational level, teaching experience, and professional attitude with the quality of the teaching and learning interaction. Ramamoorthy, Balakumara and Karthikeyani (2013) [15] told that multimedia applications could be used to develop an interactive teaching-learning as tool. To improve the quality of education, PEDPII focuses interactive teaching approaches new child-friendly teaching techniques. UNICEF Bangladesh (2009) [19] stated that Traditional and dominant way of teaching in most schools

tends to focus on memorizing facts. ILO, UNESCO, EI and WCT (2001) [8] revealed that the improvement of the quality of education depends on the quality teaching and learning environments, with many other activities. Based on the recommendations in the Dakar Framework for Action other international conventions concluded that everyone has the right not only to receive education, but also to receive education of a high quality and providing this quality education teachers have to play key role (World Education Forum, 2000) [20]. Ulf Fredriksson (2002) [17] focused that quality education is the education that best fits the present and future needs of the learners and teachers have a key position in all kinds of education where no measures are possible to improve education if the teachers are not thought of. He also agreed that most reforms and improvement strategies have to deal with what is going on in the classroom, which means the everyday work of the teachers. It can be concluded that quality teaching-learning is one of the main component of quality education where quality teaching learning depends on classroom activities. So it is needed to clear that what is happening in the classroom.

## 2. Purpose of the Study

This study intends to explore the present situation of quality education especially teaching and learning practices in the classroom of primary schools of Bangladesh.

## 3. Research Questions

- What are the teachers' opinions about their teaching at primary level?
- What are the student's perceptions about their classroom practice?
- What are the practices on teaching learning according to the classroom observation?

## 4. Methodology

This study was designed to describe the actual picture of class room practice. This study was descriptive in nature and used survey tools. A mixed method approach, both quantitative and qualitative, was used to analyze the data collected for this study.

### 4.1 Population and sample

This study was delimited to only GPS because of time constraint. Data were collected from 80 respondents of different categories. Of them 32 were teachers and 48 were students. Besides these, data were collected from 32 Classroom Observations. 16 schools were selected (from 8 Upazillas and 8 districts) conveniently from 7 administrative divisions considering regional variations. Of them 6 were urban schools and 10 were rural schools. Among the 32 teachers, 6 were males and 26 were females. A total number of 32 classes from 16 schools were observed to explore the situation of teaching learning in the classes. Only those classes were observed where the sample teachers were teaching in the classes. The student sample consisted of 48 having 25 boys and 23 girls.

### 4.2 Tools for data collection

In this study to collect data from the field, questionnaire and class observation schedule for teachers, interview schedule for students were used as tools. Questionnaire consisted of a total number of 32 items. Some questions were open-ended and some were close-ended. Open ended questions were

specific where respondents could give their opinions and close-ended question have provided with pre-determined options which were mutually exclusive. A few questions were asked to know the personal information of teacher such as name, age, gender, educational qualifications, experiences, training etc. Some questions were formed to know about teachers' belief on teaching-learning strategies in the classroom and what difficulties they had faced to ensure quality in the classroom. Open-ended questions were mainly asked to obtain suggestions to improve quality teaching-learning.

Class Observation Schedule was used to observe the teaching-learning activities. This observation was direct and non-participant. A 5-point rating scale was used to observe and rate items. In these items observation was made on pedagogy, teaching aids, group work, use of chalk-board, responsibility to slow learners, whether teacher discuss the lesson with question-answer process or continuous lecture, whether students follow the teacher or talk to each other etc. Some items were yes/no type. These questions mainly tried to elicit information about exchanging greetings, checking previous lesson, the use of lesson plan, encouraging asking question, appreciation of correct answer, the use of lesson plan, the evaluation after teaching in the class etc.

Interview Schedule (16 items) for students was prepared to collect data from the students. The aim of this schedule was to know student's perceptions about teaching-learning. In this research, the interview schedule was virtually a structured questionnaire. Maximum questions were close-ended. Some items were used for getting information about schools and students such as name, class, roll number, gender etc. Some questions were asked to identify teachers' activities in the classroom such as teaching method, teaching aids, homework, about responsibility to slow learners etc.

#### 4.3 Tri-angulations of data

Different types of tools and different types of respondents were used to collect the same data. These are as follows. Teachers use teaching aid whether or not at the time of teaching, the information was collected both from teachers and students and also it was observed from class observation. Information was collected from teachers, students and from the class observations about teachers' responsibility to the slow learners. Also the Information was collected from students and the class observations about teaching activities such as continuous lecture method, question answer method, group work, to check previous lesson, evaluation after teaching and appreciate after giving correct answer etc. In this way most of the data were triangulated where triangulation is one of the measurements of reliability and validity for data.

#### 4.4 Procedure of data collection

The data collection tools were pre-tested at 4 govt. primary schools in Dhaka city area which were not included in the actual study. The purpose of piloting was to ensure the validity and reliability of the tools for data collection. After collecting the data from pilot study it was found that respondents were confused to understand some of the questions in the tools. So the tools were revised on the basis of findings of the pilot testing. Some new items were also included in the tools to make it comprehensive and valid. After reaching school, head teachers consent were taken about the purpose of the researcher. According to the permission of HTs, researcher distributed questionnaire to 2 teachers and they gave their opinion about the teaching learning activities, their problems and their perception on the quality of teaching learning at primary level.

Then researcher observed the teaching-learning activities in the class of the same teachers those who gave their opinion as teachers. A full period was the duration of observation of math class as direct non-participant observer by using observation schedule. Finally students perception were taken about teaching-learning activities by using interview schedule from three students of each schools of class 3, 4, 5 who were selected randomly. No confusing or critical or personal questions were asked to the students that may hurt their mind. All sample students were asked same questions with same order. Researcher tried to minimize any systematic error that occurs due to preparation of the instruments. Researcher himself was the observer and interviewer in most of the cases. So, it was possible to minimize the measurement errors. During data collection period, the experiences of piloting were always kept in mind.

#### 4.5 Analysis and Interpretation of data

All the data collected by questionnaires, interview schedules and observation schedule were coded before analysis. Processing and recording (some cases) were done and then it was ready for analysis. Most of the areas were some sub-areas. Thus a clear situation of teaching-learning at primary level was presented. Descriptive statistics were carried out for various variables to get frequencies and percentages. Data were analyzed using computer program SPSS and MS Excels.

#### 5. Findings

To explore the teaching – learning activities 32 classes were observed and the same 32 teachers were asked who taught those classes and also 48 students were asked about teaching learning. At the time of class observation some observations were yes/no types which are shown in the table 1.

**Table 1:** Activities of teachers in the classroom according to class observation

Activities No	Yes			
	n	%	n	%
Teachers exchanged greetings	25	78.1	7	21.9
Teachers checked previous lesson	12	37.5	20	62.5
Teachers encouraged students to ask question	11	34.4	21	65.6
Teachers appreciated students after correct answer	30	93.8	2	6.3
Teachers gave homework by using chalk board	23	71.9	9	28.1
Teachers summarized lesson at the end of the class	8	25	24	75
Teachers evaluated students to check understanding	19	59.4	13	40.6
Teachers finished the lesson within proper time	28	87.5	4	12.5

Teachers used lesson plan	2	6.3	30	93.8
Teaching process was attractive	11	34.4	21	65.6

At the time of class observation some observations were at 5 point rating scale. Result of those observations is shown in the table 2 and also discussed below.

**Table 2:** Activities of teachers in the classroom according to class observation

Activities	Never	Very little times	Some times	Most of the times	Always
	(N)%	(N)%	(N)%	(N)%	(N)%
Students listened teachers lecture	-	-	(9)28.1%	(23)71.9	-
Students was talking each other	(8)25%	(15)49.9	(6)18.8%	(3)9.4%	-
Students asked teacher	(13)40.6	(12)37.5	(5)15.6	(2)6.3	-
Teachers answered to all questions	(16)50	(4)12.5	(3)9.4	(7)21.9	(2)6.3
Students understood the instruction of teacher	-	(5)15.6	(16)50	(10)31.3	(1)3.1
Teachers gave lecture continuously	(1)3.1	(11)34.4	(14)43.8	(6)18.8	-
Teachers discussed with question answer	(1)3.1	(12)37.5	(15)46.9	(3)9.4	(1)3.1
Teachers worked with chalk board	(1)3.1	(9)28.1	(14)43.8	(6)18.8	(2)6.3
Teachers used any teaching aids	(17)53.1	(8)25.0	(6)18.8	(1)3.1	-
Teachers has given group works	(25)78.1	(5)15.6	(2)6.3	-	-
Students work in a group	(23)71.9	(5)15.6	(2)6.3	(2)6.3	-
Teachers moved to observe student works	(5)15.6	(14)43.8	(8)25.0	(3)9.4	(2)6.3
Teachers took care to slow learners	(19)59.4	(5)15.6	(4)12.5	(3)9.4	(1)3.1

Though all activities of teaching-learning were observed at the time of class observation and students were asked at interview schedule yet teachers were also asked. The opinion of teachers is shown in the table 3 and it is discussed below.

**Table 3:** Classroom activities of teachers according to their opinion

Activities	Never		Sometimes		Always	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Teachers taught lecture method	13	40.6	15	46.9	4	12.5
Gave chance students to group work	1	3.1	10	31.3	21	65.6
Taught students by question answer process	-	-	8	25.0	24	75.0
Teacher gave thanks for correct answer	-	-	-	-	32	100
Evaluated students to check understanding level	-	-	3	9.4	29	90.6
Took care equally for all students	-	-	-	-	32	100
Helped personally to slow learners	-	-	3	9.4	29	90.6

### 5.1 Exchange greetings and check previous lesson

To exchange greetings can create good relation with students and teachers which is helpful for quality teaching. According to class observation 78.1% teachers exchanged greetings always but 56.3% students said that it was sometimes. Previous knowledge is very helpful for quality learning. Students were asked this question but majority of the teachers (62.5%) did not check previous lesson before teaching.

### 5.2 Teacher's use of lecture method

Lecture method is not modern teaching method but sometimes it is needed not always or maximum times. Table 3 shows the teacher's opinion and table 2 shows the information from the class observation about the use of lecture method only. According to teachers opinion 13 teachers (out of 32) never used lecture method but it found from class observations only 1 (out of 32) teacher never used this method.

### 5.3 Group work

Group work is a modern teaching method. It can be easily used in teaching. According to majority teachers they always use this method. On the other hand from classroom observation researcher has found that 78.1% teacher never

give group work to the students. Only a few teachers use this method sometimes. Students also asked this question and 72.9% student said that teachers never give them chance to work in group.

### 5.4 Question answer process

RIT is very useful to attract students' attention in the classroom. If students can give his/her opinion, they enjoy, participate actively and follow the teacher. Sometimes teacher add information with the students in this process. According to teachers' opinion great majority of the teachers (75%) used this process always whereas researcher found from class observations 15 (out of 32) teachers used this process sometimes and only 1 (out of 32) teacher used this process always. From table 2 and table 3 it is clear.

### 5.5 Thanks for correct answer and to show equal attitude for all

It is very important to appreciate the students for correct answer and teacher should show equal attitude for all. Any discrimination hurt the students. According to teachers 100% teacher give thanks to the students for correct answer. From class observation it was about same result. Beside this teachers said that all teachers always show equal attitude for all.

### 5.6 Summarize the lesson and evaluation after teaching

Researcher has found that most of the teachers summarized the lesson at the end of the class which was very good sign for teaching learning system. Again from table 1 shows that more than fifty percent students (62.5%) said that teachers evaluated students sometimes but class observations shows that 19 teachers (out of 32) teachers evaluated students always at the end of the class.

### 5.7 Responsibility to slow learners

Responsibility to slow learners is the important characteristics of quality teaching-learning. 90.6% teachers maintain this responsibility always according to their opinion but students said that most of the teachers maintain this responsibility sometimes whereas from class

observations it is found that more than fifty percent teachers never maintain this responsibility.

### 5.8 Use of teaching aids

Use of teaching aids can play an important role in teaching – learning. Effective use of proper and attractive teaching aids can make it very easy. Besides the class room observation, teachers were also asked about the use of teaching aids in the class room.

**Table 4:** Teachers' used teaching aids according to their opinion

Teaching aids	Never		Very little time		Sometimes		Always	
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%
Chalk board	-	-	-	-	5	15.6	27	84.4
Chart	-	-	-	-	16	50.0	16	50.0
Model	-	-	4	12.5	27	84.4	1	3.1
Geometry box	-	-	1	3.1	23	71.9	8	25.0
Real things	-	-	5	15.6	23	71.9	4	12.5
Multimedia	28	87.5	4	12.5	-	-	-	-

Table 4 shows that according to the opinion of teachers, a great majority of the teachers (84.4%) always used chalkboard, 50% teacher used chart as teaching aid sometimes and 50% teacher used it always, a great majority of the teachers (84.4%) used model as teaching aids sometimes, 71.9% teachers used geometry box as teaching aids sometimes. Use of modern technology such as multimedia, internet, digital content as teaching aids is very limited. From class observation researcher found majority (53.1%) of the teachers never used teaching aids. Students were asked about the use of teaching aids, majority of the students stated that teacher used nothing as teaching aids. But a few students said that teacher used pen, picture, chart, scale, paper, stick, geometry box etc. as teaching aids sometimes.

### 5.9 Other help in home

When students understand the lesson in the class they don't need other's help though some students take other's help to understand more. Some students who are slow learners may need other's help. Maximum students would not need. It was found that a great majority of the students (79.2%) need other's help in home which indicates the weakness of the teaching-learning system. Only 2.1% students never need other help and 18.7% need sometimes.

### 5.10 Home work

Table 1 and table 2 shows that most of the teachers give homework by using chalk board but only a teacher never gives homework. Here information from students and class observation differ slightly. According to students opinion some teachers always check homework and most of the teachers sometimes check homework.

### 5.11 Use of lesson plan

Lesson plan guide the teacher with respect to class duration, class size, students understanding level etc. So it can improve the quality of teaching. Most of the teachers (93.8%) did not use the lesson plan formally though lesson plan can also maintain informally.

### 5.12 Student ask question to the teacher

From 13 classes (out of 32) it is found that students ask nothing about lesson in the class, a few students asked

sometimes. On the other hand students were asked this question, majority (62.5%) of the students said that they asked to teacher sometimes.

### 5.13 Teacher encouraged students to ask question

Table 1 shows that from class observations it is found that majority of the teachers (65.6%) never encouraged students. the result whereas 70.8% students said that teachers encouraged them sometimes.

## 6. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the teaching learning activities at classroom such as effective use of teaching aids, use of lesson plan, encouraging students to ask question, summarizing lesson and assessing the students, group working, caring for slow learners, checking students' homework etc. are far different from expectation. The picture of actual teaching learning activities at class room has been made in the light of the reports provided by teachers, students and class observations. This study has found imbalanced among the teachers statement about their classroom activities, students opinion and practical observation. If subject based teaching and quality supervision can be introduce and also if reduce the teachers work load and improve the quality of teachers training then teaching learning activities at classroom will be improved after a certain time. If it is possible to ensure quality teaching learning activities in the classroom, SDG 4 will be achieved timely.

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