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Editorial

Modern world is advancing rapidly and so doing more and more research is essential to keep pace with the other countries of the world. In this regard publishing the research findings in the journals disseminates the research findings to the global community. If we look at developed nations, we see that they have reached to that stage with the help of researches. A lot of researches are going on throughout the globe on various issues. Being a developing country Bangladesh needs more researches on various education related issues because quality research can produce knowledge which is applicable for creating a new branch of knowledge, resolving issues or the development of a new system.

Our present Government realizes the importance of researches and so it always encourages and funds quality research works. Research and Documentation Division of NAEM invites research articles on key issues of education with a view to helping policymakers and administrators take different suitable steps to improve the standard of curriculum, policies, management and administration. It also aims to develop the professional competencies and practices of our teachers and teacher educators.

This issue of NAEM Journal is packed with a variety of topics including ELT, challenges of teaching, ICT in education, assessment system, inclusive education, practicability of a training module . We hope that the articles in the current issue will be very much helpful to the researchers, policy makers and other concerned to work unitedly for upgrading the education system of Bangladesh.

I would like to offer my heartiest thanks to Professor Ahmad Sajjad Rashid, Director General of NAEM for his continuous supports, co-operation and encouragement to bring out this issue of NAEM Journal. I do not want to miss the opportunity to convey my heartfelt gratitude to all the contributors for their invaluable endeavors and spending valuable time for preparing these articles despite their multifold commitments. I also thank the editorial panel of this issue for their hard work and sincerity in editing the articles. Despite our intensive care, this issue of NAEM journal may have some printing or any other kind of mistakes. We beg humble apology for such errors if there be any.

I wish every success and sustainability of this Journal for a long time for the enthusiastic readers around the globe. It would be a great honour for us if the readers find the issue educative and satisfying.

Rokshana Bilkis

Director(Research & Documentation),NAEM

&

Editor,NAEM Journal

Exploring Listening and Speaking Tests in Internal Exam at Secondary Level of Education

Md. Nahid Ferdous Bhuiyan¹
Md. Shamsul Suda²

Abstract

Although all skills of a language are important for communication, listening and speaking are often considered to be more frequently used skills in our real life communication, and English is no exception. But these two skills were more mostly neglected in English language teaching practices of our classrooms. Many studies showed that listening and speaking skills were less or rarely taught in the classroom mainly because these were not tested in public or internal exam. In alignment with the latest curriculum, our present English textbooks are written mostly in accordance with the principles of CLT approach and it emphasizes equal importance on four skills. National Curriculum (2012) also suggests testing these skills. The ministry of education (2015) consequently released a circular instructing all secondary level institutions to administer these tests in the internal exam. This present research was aimed for exploring listening and speaking tests after the introduction of these two tests. More specifically it was intended to study the teaching of these two skills, the practice of these tests and their challenges to administer. It finds that the teaching practices of these two skills in the classrooms have increased comparing to those in the past but not in optimal level. These tests are not given in the terminal examination and administered as continuous assessment. It reveals that 73% teachers teach listening indirectly, 48% directly and 42% teachers teach speaking skills. However, 30% schools still do not give their students these two tests. Both groups those who give students these tests and those who do not have indentified some challenges to administer these tests. It also shows their suggestions to solve these problems.

Introduction

In this very era of globalization, the popularity of English as a lingua franca increases rapidly more than ever before and English is, therefore, taught as a compulsory subject of the curriculum

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in many countries. In our formal education system, English is also made as an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) to teach from grade one to twelve (Islam, 2010). Although a language has four skills, among these language skills, listening and speaking are often mostly used and most important for successful communication, and English is no exception. Listening is the first language skill acquired by the children that provides a foundation for all aspects of language and cognitive development and it plays a lifelong role in the process of learning and communication (Hyslop, 1982). Listening also paves the way for all other skills including speaking (Silberstein, 1994). Speaking and listening skills are crucial for practicing and embedding new vocabulary and language structure and as such form the substratum on which literacy is built (Billah, Md., M, 2005). They also form the basis of social interaction, and are skills to be taught, as listening and turn taking do not come naturally to children, even in their first language (Rahman, 2009). So these two skills should be given emphasis and taught in the classroom, but unfortunately these skills tend to be ignored in our schools and colleges. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach was introduced in the 90s in Bangladesh with a view to improving the quality of teaching and learning English and accordingly the government changed the curriculum to be communicative (Rahman 2009). The curriculum has been changed and new textbooks and examination format have been developed once again in 2012. In the new curriculum it is stated that listening and speaking skills will be tested in the internal examinations of class 6, and 7 and in future it will be introduced in the public examinations (see National Curriculum 2012). Later on 3 March 2015 a circular was published in the website of the Ministry of Education instructing the school to test these two skills in the internal examinations from class 6 to 10 (See Appendix-9). Now it is very important to find out whether the schools feel interested in testing listening and speaking skills in the internal examinations as directed in the curriculum, though these are not tested in the public exams, and if they do what is the impact of it on teaching these two skills.

Statement of the Problem

In Bangladesh, though the learners are taught English as a compulsory subject for a long period of 12/13 years, communicative competence of our learners remains unsatisfactory, especially they are very poor at listening and speaking skills (Akter, 1999). Before CLT was introduced in the 1990s, English was taught as a content based subject that emphasized only reading and writing skills in teacher-centred classes following Grammar Translation Method (Haque, 1999). In place of Grammar Translation Method (hereafter GTM), CLT approach has been introduced, communicative textbooks have been developed and quite a good number of teachers have been trained. Khan (2005) and Yasmin (2008) commented that the textbooks were good which highlighted the four language skills, and emphasized natural situations and activities. Then, in 2012 the curriculum and the textbooks along with the testing system have once again been changed suggesting Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach like the earlier one emphasizing all four language skills. In spite of all these changes and teacher training initiatives, things have not changed that much in terms of teaching listening and speaking skills and the reason is that the teachers are reluctant to teach these two skills to their students on the pretext of having no test of these two skills (Yasmin, 2008). But in the new curriculum it is stated that listening and speaking skills will be tested in the internal examinations for classes 6 and 7 and 20% marks is allocated for this purpose. So, this research focuses on the present condition of teaching listening and speaking skills at the secondary education in Bangladesh after the introduction of tests of these two skills.

Research Questions

The overall objective of this study was to explore listening and speaking skills tests and their reflection at the secondary level institutions in Bangladesh after the introduction of the tests of these two skills. The specific objectives of this research reflected in the research questions and the research questions of this research were as follows:

1. How far are listening and speaking skills practiced in the secondary level classroom?
2. To what extent are listening and speaking skills tested at the secondary level of education in Bangladesh?
3. What possible problems do teachers and head teachers perceive in administering these tests?
4. In what ways do they think that these problems may be minimised for successful administration of these tests?

Rationale of the Study

Listening and speaking skills were ignored in the classroom for various reasons and the main reason of them was the absence of test of these two skills. Now, these two skills have been included in the internal tests from class 6-10. As this study intends to explore the reflection of this test on teaching listening and speaking skills, it will help the policy makers to take next course of action based on the findings of this research. It will also help the people involved in teaching English to make their teaching and testing more effective following the recommendations of this research paper. Moreover, as testing listening and speaking skills is a new phenomenon and almost no research has been conducted in this area, this research will unfold areas of further research regarding English language teaching and testing in Bangladesh.

Review of Related Literature

Kachuru (in Rahman, 1999) states that at the beginning of the twentieth century, English became firmly established as the academic and official language of Indian subcontinent and many colleges and universities were established for teaching English. English is a foreign language in our primary and secondary curriculum from class one to twelve and is taught as required subject (Haque, 1999; Rahman, 1999). Teaching approach in Bangladeshi English class, in both before and after the introduction of CLT, is teacher centred in which students are hardly involved in activities and listening and speaking activities are totally ignored (see Rahman, 1988; Haque, 1999; Yasmin, 2008).

Although CLT originated in the late 1960 and expanded in the 1970s (Dutta, 2006), it was introduced in Bangladesh in 1996 (Khan, 2005). One of the most characteristic features of CLT is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these into a more communicative view (Littlewood, 1981). Richards and Rogers (1986) claim that CLT marks the beginning of a major paradigm shift within language teaching in the twentieth century whose ramifications continue to be felt today.

With regard to the syllabus for secondary and higher secondary levels, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, Bangladesh (1995) states, 'the English language syllabus aims to focus on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing as learner-centred activities within communicative context (Haque and Baki, 2012). After long 16 years the curriculum has again been revised and the aim of the recently revised syllabus is the same as the previous ones

(see National Curriculum 2012). However, since listening and speaking skills are not tested in the public examinations, they are not emphasized in the classroom (see Haque *et al*, 1997 in Haque and Baki, 2012).

Teaching and testing are inter-related, one influences the other and in this regard Hughes (1989) says that the proper relationship between teaching and testing is that of partnership. Therefore, in order to foster positive backwash effects that will improve language education, test must integrate all parts of language competence (*ibid.*). A good test can be supportive of good teaching and exerts corrective influence on bad teaching (Hughes, 1989). Besides, one of the functions of test is to encourage students to learn something; for example, when students know they will be tested with a particular skills, they will be motivated to learn that skills to do better in the test and the visible progress they make in the test increases motivation of learning (Heaton, 1990).

The success of CLT approach and training largely depends on the efficiency of teachers, but we have a huge shortage of qualified English teachers throughout the country and many of the existing ones are not efficient (Ahmed, 2005). Ara (2005) points out that the standard of English teaching in our country is anything but satisfactory due to the dearth of adequately qualified English teachers.

Teaching and testing are interrelated and teaching may be ineffective if it is not reflected in testing. Heaton (1990) defines test as a tool that is used to find out how well the students have mastered the language areas and skills which have just been taught. He also stresses that a test should be reliable and valid. Teaching in one method and testing by another frustrates the students as happens in our examination system which is measuring something else rather than communicative competence (Akter, 1999). In Bangladesh, testing is basically memory based; language tests are tests of memory, not tests of language proficiency or communicative competence (Shahidullh, 1999). Though the syllabus objectives demand that students' ability to use the language skills for communication be tested, in actual fact, students' ability to memorize and copy the textbook contents is what is required for getting high marks in the examination (*ibid.*). In the textbook all the four English language skills are integrated and equally emphasized, but in the testing system, both internal and SSC, only reading and writing skills are tested and speaking and listening skills are totally ignored (Barman et al, 2006). Though the existing examination tests students' reading and writing skills, it is not effective as it tests their memory and not their ability to use these two skills (*ibid.*).

3. Research Methodology

This study is descriptive as well as analytical in nature. The data collected for this study were both quantitative and qualitative in nature. For this research, data were collected from 50 students, 5 English teachers, and 5 head teachers from 5 schools from Dhaka city. Apart from this 5 English classes of grade 7 were observed with observation checklist to see the present scenario of teaching listening and speaking skills in the schools.

Four types of tools were used for data collection. These were two questionnaires for students and teachers, observation checklist and interview for head teachers. The questionnaire for the teacher contained both close-ended and open-ended questions whereas student's questionnaire consisted of only close-ended questions. Semi-structured questions were used for interview. After the collection of data, they were analysed and interpreted. At first the data were compiled and tabulated. Then the tabulated information was summarized and interpreted separately using tables

and charts. Finally the data were analysed on the basis of the central research objectives. In the discussion parts the data obtained from different respondents have been calculated and made average to show the final result of the research

4.1. Findings and Discussion

This research tried to find out to the present scenario of teaching listening and speaking skills after the introduction of test of these two skills in the internal examination. This chapter deals with the background of the respondents who participated in this research providing their valuable information regarding teaching and testing of listening and speaking skills. It also presents the interpretation of tabulated data, comparative study of the data provided by the different types of respondents and general discussion of data on the basis of the objectives of this study.

4.2. Comparison of Findings

It should be noted that all the variables used in the classroom observation, students' and teachers' questionnaires and head teachers' interview are not the same, only the major responses obtained about similar types of variables have been compared.

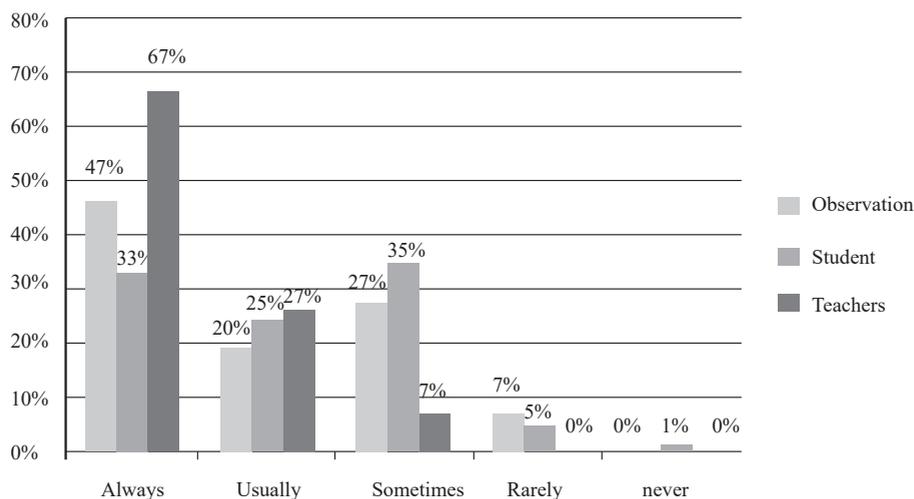


Figure 4.1.1: Using English in the classroomaudi

Using English by the teachers for giving instruction, teaching new words and explanations or clarification is very important in CLT as it creates an English environment which helps the students improve listening skills as well learn the language. Figure 4.11 shows the responses found from classroom observation, students' and teachers' questionnaires. From observation it is found that 47% teachers use English always and 20% usually, 27% sometimes and 7% of them rarely use it while 33% students said teachers use it always, 25% usually, 35% sometimes 5% rarely and 1% students said that teachers never use English in the class. On the other hand 67% teachers said they use English always, 27% usually and 7% of them sometimes use it.

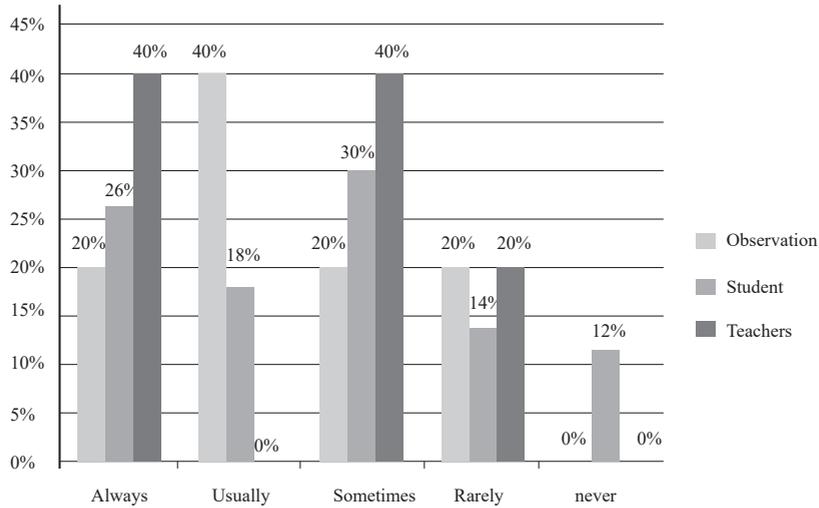


Figure 4.1.2: Doing listening activities

In case of teaching listening activities meant for students to practise listening skills directly and formally, it was found in the observation that 20% teachers teach listening activities always, 40% teachers usually, 20% and 20% teachers teach these activities respectively sometimes and rarely. It should be mentioned here that among the lessons of the textbook observed these was no listening lesson taught by the lesson. 26% students responded saying that their teachers teach listening activities always, 18% usually, 30% sometimes, 14% of them teach these activities rarely and 12% said never. On the other hand, 40% teachers said they teach listening activities always, 40% sometimes and 20% of them said rarely.

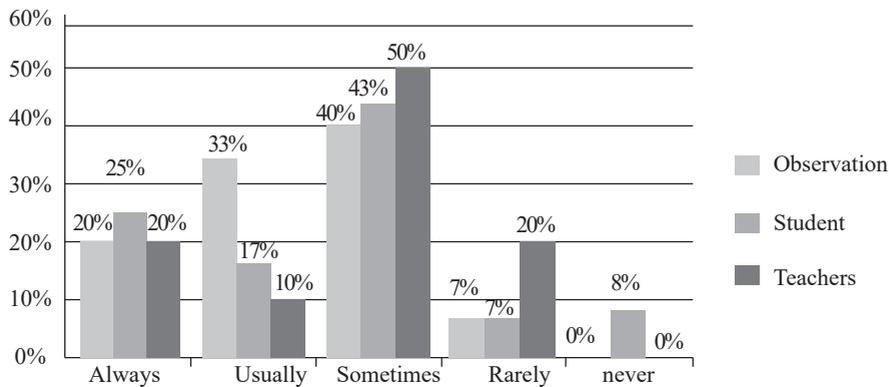


Figure 4.1.3: Doing speaking activities

In almost every lesson in the textbook one or more activities on practicing speaking skills in pair or group is there. In response to the question of doing these activities it is found from the observation that 20% teachers do these always, 33% usually, 40% sometimes, and 18% rarely do these activities. 25% students said their teachers teach these activities always, 17% usually, 43% sometimes, 7% rarely and 8% never teach these activities. On the other hand 20% teachers said they do these activities always, 10% usually, 50% sometimes and 20% teachers said they do these rarely.

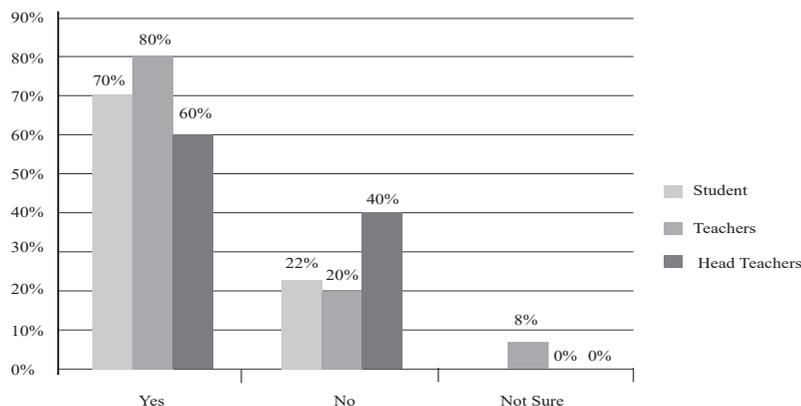


Figure 4.1.4: Test of listening and speaking skills in the internal exams

In response to the question whether listening and speaking skills tests are administered in the internal examinations 70% students, 80% English teachers said that these tests are taken in their schools through class tests and monthly tests. 60% head teachers said that these tests are formally taken in their schools through continuous assessment based on the classroom performance. On the other hand, 22% students and 20% teachers said that listening and speaking skills are not tested in their schools. But 40% head teachers said that listening and speaking skills are not formally tested in their schools.

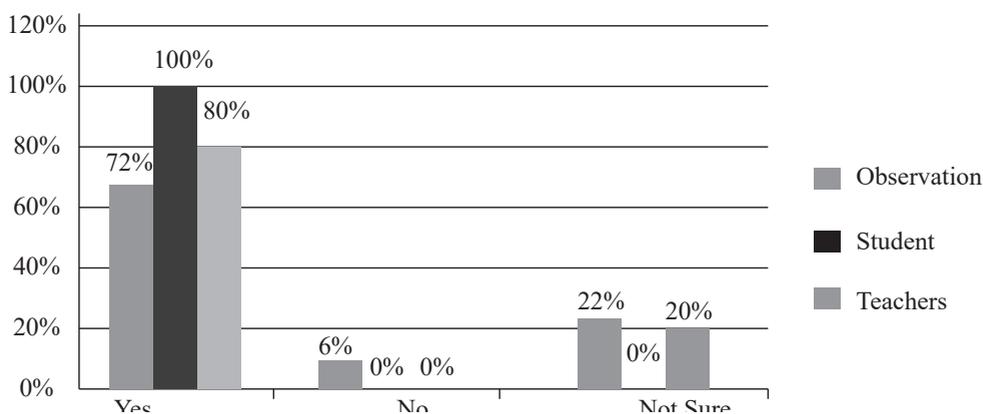


Figure 4.1.5: Introduction of listening and speaking skills tests in the public examinations

In reply to the question whether listening and speaking skills tests should be introduced in the public examinations 72% students, 100% teachers and 80% head teachers are for the inclusion of the tests in the public exams while 6% students and 20% head teachers are against it.

4.3. Discussion Based on Research Questions

This study has been carried out with four questions and these are (1) to assess the current state of teaching listening and speaking skills, (2) to find out the state of listening and speaking skills tests in the internal examinations, (3) to identify the problems of these tests and (4) to find out the solutions to the problems. To decide the result the components of teaching listening and

speaking skills such as using English for giving instruction, teaching new words and explaining things, teaching listening activities, doing speaking activities and doing pair/group works have been summarised and made average. First all the all three figures found in three degrees, i.e. sometimes, rarely and never are added up to and the total figure from the addition is divided by 3 (three groups: students, teachers and head teachers) to make an average. From the findings of observation, students, teachers and head teachers it is found that the state of teaching listening and speaking skills is quite satisfactory after the introduction of tests of these two skills as around 73% teachers use English in the class to create an English environment to give students exposure so that they can develop their listening skills. But the finding of English in Action Research Report 2011 shows that 62% teachers did not use English in the English lessons. That means 38% teachers used English in the class. In terms of teaching listening activities given in the textbook 48% teachers teach listening and 52% of them do not teach it for different reasons. In case of teaching speaking skills 42% teacher teach speaking activities while 58% teachers do not teach from the textbook called EFT by engaging students. Though the current status is not that much satisfactory, it is slightly better than the era before the tests were introduced as around 73% teachers then did not use English in the class and 87% teachers did not engage students for speaking practice (Roshid, 2008).

Regarding the second objective that is the state of listening and speaking skills tests in the internal exams it is found that 70% schools take these tests but in most of the cases these are taken informally through continuous assessment that means marks are given on the students' classroom performance in listening or speaking tasks in the class while preparing results for half yearly and final examinations.

In response to the third objective it is found that around 30% schools are not taking the tests because of the various problems, mentioned by the teachers and head teachers, which are the barriers to implement the decision and those who take the tests also face problems. The problems of listening and speaking skills tests are as follow:

- Students are weak in English especially in listening and speaking and so they are afraid of these tests.
- Most of the classes in our country are large and it is difficult to arrange tests for them, especially test of speaking skills.
- There is a lack of materials for testing listening and speaking skills and most of the teachers are not confident to produce materials on their own.
- Many teachers have not got any training and even the trained teachers have no idea about testing listening and speaking skills as these were not dealt with in the training courses they attended.
- There is lack of equipments in the schools such as CD, CD player, or multimedia devices for taking these tests, especially for testing listening tests.
- Many students as well as teachers are not interested enough as these are not tested in the public examinations.
- There is a lack of clear instructions or guidelines from the concerned authority asking the schools to implement the decision of listening and speaking skills tests.
- There is lack of monitoring to oversee the implementation of the test in the field level.
- Teachers may be biased giving marks as happens in the case of science practical examinations.
- Teachers themselves are weak in English, especially in listening and speaking skills and so they are not confident enough to teach and test the two skills.

- It is time consuming to test speaking skills through one to one interview.

The fourth objective of this research is to find out the possible solutions to the problems of listening and speaking skills and the respondents, i.e. English teachers and head teachers have come out with the following suggestions to overcome the problems:

- Every school and English teacher should be given clear directions/instructions from the concerned authority about the tests.
- Every school should be provided with necessary equipments and materials for teaching and testing these two skills.
- Training should be arranged on how to conduct tests on these two skills and assess them.
- Schools should be monitored to ensure the implementation of listening and speaking skills tests.
- Listening and speaking skills practice should be ensured before giving these tests.
- Number and duration of classes should be increased.
- The ratio between teacher and students should be reasonable.
- Subject based qualified teachers should be recruited.

The 'Backwash Effect' theory has been used in this study to see if the tests have any positive or negative effect on teaching and from the findings it can be said that introduction of listening and speaking skills tests has not influenced teaching these two skills that much. If we see the ratio of testing (70% from the average of students, teachers and head teachers) and teaching these two skills (54% from the average of using English, doing listening and speaking activities), it is different from each other. Therefore, it can be said that testing of these two skills does not much influence on teaching, although rate of teaching listening and speaking skills has been increased in comparison to the era before the test of these two skills was introduced. For example, Only 27% teachers used English in the class and 13% teachers taught speaking skills involving students in pair and group (Roshid, 2008) whereas according to the findings of this research 73% teachers use English and 42% teacher teach speaking activities in the class. Thus the result appears better than before but not as it was expected after the introduction of test. The reasons might be the way these tests are administered. In most cases, they are not giving the test formally during the terminal exams; rather students are evaluated and assessed through continuous assessment based on their performance in the class.

Summary of the findings

Though the findings of the research do not demonstrate a very positive scenario of teaching and testing of listening and speaking skills after the introduction of tests of these two skills in the internal examinations, the condition has been improved to good extent. It is seen that 73% teachers teach listening indirectly, 48% directly and 42% teachers teach speaking skills involving students. In terms of testing these two skills 70% schools take the tests though these tests are taken mostly through continuous assessment not giving much importance on these. The rest 30% do not take the tests because of various problems mentioned in chapter-4 that hinder the implementation of the decision. Around 84% respondents think that the tests should be introduced in the public examinations which will motivate as well as compel the teachers and students to teach and learn these two skills.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this research:

- A separate or special training on testing listening and speaking skills tests should be arranged for the teachers. Although a institution and a project offer training for English teachers, they only offer training sessions on teaching these two skills. Few sessions on testing these two skills could be integrated into these existing training programmes.
- An online course could be designed by a2i or NCTB or video sessions could be uploaded on NCTB website to train the teachers on designing, administering these tests and assessing students' performance in these two skills.
- Every individual school should be sent a formal letter of order/instructions to compulsorily administer listening and speaking skills tests in the internal exams;
- An initiative should be taken by the proper authority to send listening texts on the textbooks or CDs to each secondary institution.
- An immediate step could be taken or feasibility study should be carried out on how to introduce the test on these two skills in the public exam.
- A bank of materials on listening and speaking skills can be produced and supplied to schools so that teachers can use them for testing as well as teaching if they want;
- A decision should be made whether government or school itself will provide the schools with equipments like multimedia or/and CD player etc needed to practise and test these two skills and implemented as soon as possible;
- Government should take initiatives to train the untrained English teachers and stop repetition of training the trained teachers by establishing a central coordination unit and maintaining database of the teachers;
- Government should make it mandatory that every training institute and project will have their own 'Monitoring and Evaluation Unit'---implementation of listening and speaking skills test can be monitored by the above mentioned units as well as by Education Board.
- A manual containing detailed guidelines about these tests should be prepared and sent to schools and posted in the websites of the Ministry of Education, NCTB, and Education Board etc;

Conclusion

Listening and speaking skills tests at secondary education in Bangladesh has been introduced with the expectation that it will enhance the teaching of these two skills. But this research reveals that around 30% schools are not implementing this decision for different reasons and those schools which are taking these tests doing it casually mostly through continuous assessment. This research also reveals that the ratio of testing and teaching of these two skills is not similar but the practice of teaching listening and speaking skills in the classrooms increases if we compare the findings of this research to those of previous studies. Therefore, it may be said that if the tests are taken formally and sincerely by all schools, it could bring about positive changes in teaching and learning of listening and speaking skills.

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An Analysis of Bangla and English Results of Students in the Public Examinations at Higher Secondary Level Education in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The research work has been conducted with a view to analyze Bangla and English results of students in the public examinations at Higher Secondary Level Education of Bangladesh. Documents from different education boards and four respondent groups, namely principals, teacher's, guardians and students were the sources of the data. As revealed from the documents analysis the pass rate and number of GPA 5 achievement of students in Bangla was a little bit higher than that of English but not in a regular trends from 2008 to 2018. The facts remain that the students are not satisfied with the results in both subjects as per their stakeholder's expectation. According to the respondent groups some probable constraints are prevailing behind this scenario the remarkable ones are - Insufficient number of skilled teachers; Lack of trained teachers; Large class size; Apathy of teachers in attending towards the mainstream classes; Listening, Speaking and Writing skills test in English and Bangla are not practiced as imposed in public examinations; Phobia to English as foreign language and assuming Bangla is easy subject, etc. Some exceptional comments made by the teachers and students i.e. Syllabus is vast enough to complete in time; in availability of teaching aids. On the other hand students' opined only two reasons like "Inadequate opportunities to practice English in their daily life and practice Bangla and English grammar in the present teaching-learning methods. In response to the question pertaining to dissatisfactory result, some reasons disrupting the performance of students i.e. less meritorious

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students; less attention to the class and irregular attendance; student politics, lack of awareness of guardians, lack of accountability of teachers and students, poor management system, etc. The following initiatives may help in improving the situation i.e. be ensured regular presence of students; sit for regular tutorial; congenial teaching-learning atmosphere, principals, teachers and students accountability to the proper authority for their assignment; inclusiveness in the class; special measures for weak students; subject based training for teachers; curricula and syllabus might be need based; policy should be adapted to develop teachers' professionalism; assure relevant teaching-learning materials; regular monitoring and assessment; teaching-learning methods should be modernized; In-service training of subject-based teachers should be recruited as priority basis. Students profile should be maintained to run the planned works throughout the year. Provision for self-evaluation of teachers' should be imposed for the development of their profession.

Introduction

In a developing country like Bangladesh, education, especially Higher Secondary (HS) Education must be the mainstay for attaining knowledgeable human resource, which would ultimately be the engine of national upliftment. The students who are studying in HS level institutions without helpful assistance may be dropout, which results in massive decrease in languages proficiency based manpower. It may be considered as wastage in education that will hamper the ultimate success of our planning. The fundamental role of a teacher is to facilitate learning and to create an autonomous learner one who can continue to learn by himself/herself, especially with the assistance of quality teachers. However, there is a definite deficit in knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to guideline from good teachers, good curriculum, enjoyable and attractive teaching-learning methods and good physical facilities.

Bangla is the native language of Bangladesh, it is introduced at the primary education level and its inclusion continues till the tertiary level of education (Islam, 1998). English is the foreign language but prioritized as second state language to build skilled manpower. A student has to study Bangla as a compulsory subject for twelve years to pass the HSC exam. At HS level in Bangladesh, Bangla is taught followed by the curriculum of the primary level that includes the learning of English for seven years as well (Sinha 2001). However, after twelve years' schooling in Bangla and English most of the students fail in HS examination. Even if they pass, they get very dissatisfactory marks. However, the students who pass and somehow get good marks do not seem to reflect their achievement practically. They can neither speak fluently and naturally nor understand grammatically correct Bangla when they are not spoken to nor comprehend the meaning what they read nor they can interpret the reading materials. They cannot write correctly and speak out their feelings and opinions. As a result, they do not learn Bangla at all and reach the target stage that they were supposed to end of their curriculum.

Pedagogical framework ensures a unique opportunity in addressing challenges faced by students by making teaching-learning interesting and enterprising (Selim and Mahboob 2001). Teachers Training Institutions have been working for several years with the GoB in appropriate use of curriculum, an effective initiative as changed teaching-learning aids, in education system of Bangladesh. So, the teachers must realize that if it would be able to conduct sessions in a learning friendly environment in the education arena.

In this century no nation can dream of success without the advancement of mother tongue, quality education, science and technology. These subjects especially the Bangla subject is under the core curriculum but students are not doing better on these areas even the English subject as well. Bangladesh with 160 million people only in 155 thousand square miles faces the issue seriously. Unfortunately expectation of the mass people has remained unfulfilled. Besides, repeated failures of larger dimensions in our national activities and in international arena are in one hand reducing self-confidence of our people and on the other giving a poorer image of the country in the world.

Many people opined that education system of the country is in disarray and ineffective, quality is going down all the time. Need based education helps a man develop good character, be responsible to the society and country (Ali 1973). Currently, top priority should be given to develop human resources through proper education and native language subjects must be addressed to make human resources. To improve transparency in the achievements of different educational institutions, every institution should develop its homepage highlighting its achievements and performances of its faculty members. Educational institutions should be ranked based upon their performance and achievement (Littlewood 1984). Institutions and individuals should be rewarded based upon their performance (Coppin 1970).

Statement of the Problem

Bangladesh is endowed with a large pool of intelligent young citizens who, with proper education, can be turned into a valuable human resource befitting the needs of the 21st century. Refashioning classroom environment and redesigning the tools of learning is an important part of the envisioned education reform. Education is the key to success in all the sphere of life. The HS level education is the main stream to enter in the higher education and in the job market as well. However, the learners at HS level failed to achieve national goals, for example, passing out rate, success in all subjects, quality etc. and dissatisfactory results in Bangla and English subjects. In Bangladesh there are 42,78,441 students enrolled in 4,495 colleges and 1,23,518 teachers are rendering their services there (BANBEIS 2018). In 2018, a total of 10, 72, 028 students participated in HSC examination from different boards and among them 6,91,958 students came out successful and the pass rate was 64.55%. Therefore, the present study is very timely and appropriate to look into the very crucial problem.

In our country more than 50% students either fail in Bangla or do poor results at different public examinations, namely, SSC, HSC, BA (Pass), BA (Hon's). The failure is not due to the fact that Bangla is more difficult than all other subjects in the curriculum. In reality, the fault is with the methodology and grammatical mistakes we follow to teach it (Connell (1985). The mean pass rate at the SSC examination, during the period 1990-2017 (all board) was 64.84%. The figure for the same period for HSC examinations was 56.31% (BANBEIS, 1990-2018) and The Daily Star, 2004.

Importance of the Study

The research work has been made aimed at increasing the quality and competent learners from educational institutes of Bangladesh to fulfill the need of the society. Nevertheless, the findings of the research would be available for using other concerned groups, institutions, research organizations, etc. Researchers from universities and other research organizations will get equal access to the data and information generated through the research work. The findings of the study

may be published in electronic and printed media to inform policy makers, teachers, about the commissioning and implementation effective teaching techniques and methods in the field level.

Over the years, Bangla subject has been the medium of dissemination of knowledge in various fields where there is ample opportunities for good command on native language is essential (National Education Policy-2010). Currently, there is tremendous scope to accommodate in the job market, which the people could easily achieve and surpass others by the complementing the knowledge of everyday practiced technology with competence in Bangla along with English (Nagaraj 1996)

Rationale of the Study

A new approach to the teaching and learning up to the HS level has been introduced in the country from the beginning of 1990s. NCTB introduced Bangla and English Textbook for classes 11 & 12 is a complete break from the previous selection of literary text that have been used at the HS level for a very long time. The introduction of Teachers Guide (TG) has not yet been embraced by most of the teachers, students and guardians. Many of our teachers and students use Bangla as common classroom teaching language even in English classes (Das, 2002). Multimedia classrooms and teacher training together will improve overall quality of learning in HS level Bangla subject by promoting effective and participatory learning and eliminating unnecessary memorizing tendencies (Ellis, 1999). So, it is high time to conduct a research on how the teachers cope with this approach in their respective working places. The initiative will help to identify the fields where changes are required

Scope of the Study

According to NCTB curriculum, Bangla and English syllabus for 11& 12 grades, the Bangla syllabus aims to focus on learner-centered activities within communicative contexts. Training of teachers on making educational content on hard-to-grasp topics and make electronic versions of Text Books available in secondary and higher secondary levels institutions (Ellis 1999). All most all the governments addressed on the importance to effective teaching-learning for quality education, considering the opportunities of implementation of electronic learning in all level education institutions, an impact study need to be undertaken to find out the pros and cons of introduction of frequent training on application and implementation the curriculum of Bangla and English would be very useful. Therefore, a study had been undertaken on "An Analysis of Bangla and English results of students in the public examinations at higher secondary level education in Bangladesh" with a view to achieve the following objectives. To find out the existing state of teaching-learning of Bangla and English subjects in the classroom at HS Level; To analyze the performance of students' in Bangla and English subjects in the public examinations; To identify the causes of dissatisfactory results in both the subjects and To identify the impediments on the way to impart effective classroom teaching in Bangla and English subjects.

Methodology

Secondary data has been collected from nine Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Boards (BISE) of Bangladesh with a SMART format. The primary data collected from 60 HS level educational institutions under 12 districts. The sample size was 60 Heads of HS level institutions, 150 teachers, 240 students and 20 guardians of different institutions. The districts and the institutions were selected through multistage random sampling. In first step, 12 districts were selected with a view to make data collection convenient and keeping it reliable and valid. Secondly, proportionate number of government and non-government, rural and urban institutions were selected on random basis from each district.

Necessary tools were prepared in order to collect primary data and information in conducting the research work. The tools that is, questionnaire and interview schedule, instructions of FGD were developed with the help of team members. However, these tools were again finalized through a piloting by a workshop. A series of interviews and six FGD were conducted to collect pertinent data. With a view to collect secondary data a standard format has been developed by the research team and sent it through terrestrial mails and e-mails to the education boards (Dhaka, Cumilla, Sylhet, Chattogram, Rajshahi, Jessore, Barisal and Dinajpur). A request letter with to the Chairman of each board has been included there. All the board authorities were kind enough to fill up the format and sent us as per schedule date. The pertinent data were collected from the field, edited and computerized for processing through MS EXCEL. Statistical tools and techniques were used for analyzing and interpreting the data. Relevant computer software was employed, where necessary, for analyzing the collected data and preparing graphs.

Data Interpretation and Presentation

The results presented here have been prepared from secondary and primary data sources. The secondary data were analyzed with relevant statistical tools and the paragraph 3.1 covers the findings from the result sheets provided by the education boards. The paragraph described and presented data regarding on students participated in the public examinations, pass rate and number of GPA 5 under all the education boards. These all are secondary, authentic and reliable data. From this presentation, interpretation and analysis are the distinct view of last 11 years trend in HSC examinations and students' achievement. The result sheets were covered the results of Bangla and English subjects of students at HS level.

Comparative results in Bangla and English Subjects of Different Education Boards between 2008 - 2018 Academic Years

The table - 1 shows that the results of Bangla and English subjects at HS Level in the public examinations conducted by different education boards of Bangladesh from 2008 to 2018, a total of 68,90,583 students appeared in the examinations in Bangla subject of which 65,81,315 students were successful, pass rate was 90.49% and a total number of 3,01,885 GPA 5 achieved in Bangla and on the other hand a total of 79,20,684 students appeared in the examinations in English of which 59,83,249 were successful, pass rate was 78.54% and 2,57,049 number of students achieved GPA 5.

Highest number of students (1,28,019) achieved GPA 5 grade in Bangla in Dhaka Board and lowest number (10,311) achieved in Barisal Board. On the other hand, highest number (1,27,455) GPA 5 achieved in English in Dhaka Board and lowest number (9,336) of GPA 5 achieved in Barisal

Board. The table indicates the students achieved more GPA 5 in Bangla subject in comparison to English subject. On the other hand the pass rate is higher in Bangla than that of English subject between 2008 to 2018 academic years [Table 1].

Table-1: Total number of students appeared, total number of students successful, average pass rate and total number GPA 5 achieved in Bangla and English subjects under different Education Boards between 2008 and 2018

Education Boards	Results of HS Exams of Bangla and English Subjects in the Academic Year 2008-2018							
	Bangla				English			
	Total No. of students appeared	Total No. successful students	% of Pass Rate	Total No. A+ in Bangla	Total No. of students appeared	Total No. successful students	% of Pass Rate	Total No. A+ in English
Dhaka	2296637	2220071	96.81	128019	2529525	2072248	81.81	127455
Jessore	784505	752849	96.08	19911	943443	685069	78.53	19898
Chattagram	616217	579997	94.64	11457	615311	514110	82.75	16622
Rajshahi	898225	867554	87.84	77291	974374	808910	83.45	46826
Dinajpur	739553	706958	95.71	35365	838985	633527	75.42	17921
Sylhet	412886	396947	96.64	12671	412886	350733	84.56	11018
Cumilla	854991	800906	93.98	10984	854991	693647	81.69	11707
Barisal	479281	426721	89.14	10311	1251948	375008	78.56	9336

The Fig. 1 shows that the success rate in Bangla subject mostly higher than that of the English subject under all the Education Boards from the academic years between 2008 and 2018. This figure also shows that highest number of students success from Dhaka Board lowest in Sylhet education Board [Fig. 1].

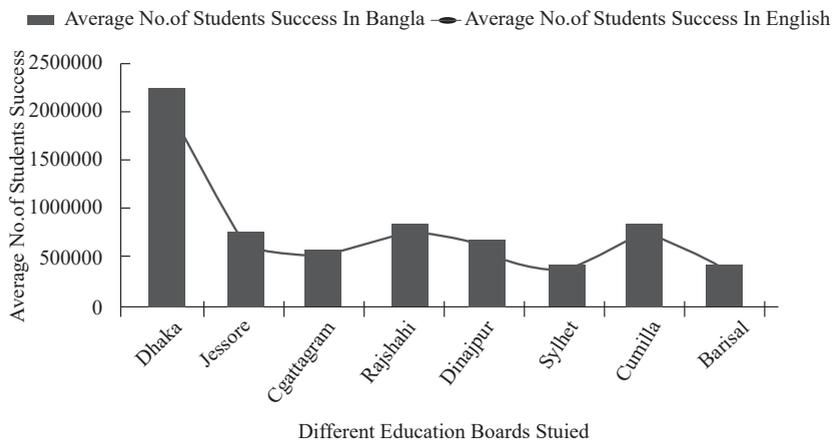


Fig. 1: Total number of Students Success in Bangla and English subjects under the different Education Boards of Bangladesh between 2008 and 2018

The fig. 2 shows that the achievement of GPA 5 in Bangla subject not always higher than that of the achievement in English in line with the achievement GPA 5 in all the eight Education Boards. The trends showed that the number of GPA 5 achieved by the students in Dhaka Board both in Bangla and English subjects almost similar. The achievements of other boards varied in different academic years. In Rajshahi and Dinajpur boards the number of GPA 5 is higher than the rest of the Boards [Fig. 2].

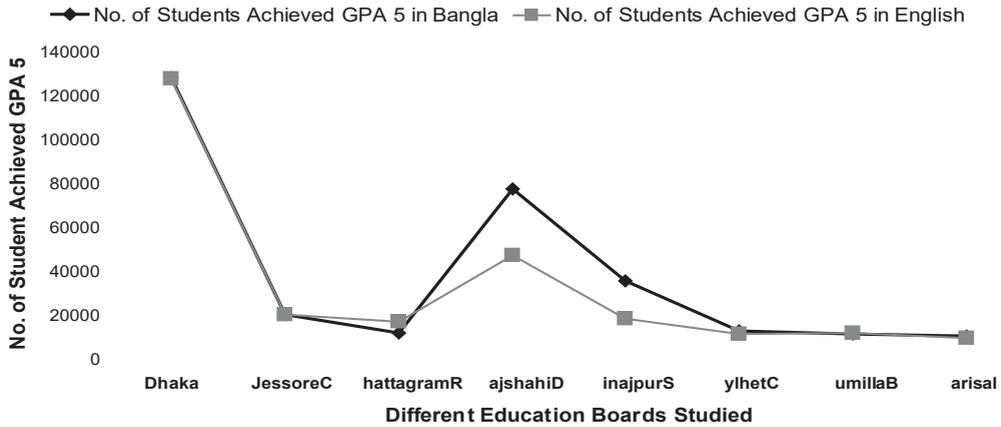


Fig. 2: Total number of Students Achieved GPA 5 Grade in different Education Boards of Bangladesh in Bangla and English subjects between 2008 and 2018

The Fig. 3 shows that the pass rate in Bangla subject was always higher than the English subject conducted by the eight education boards. The trend was not linear but slightly varied in different academic years. The values of $Y = -0.599x + 96.551$ and the relationship was $R^2 = 0.1796$ in the case of Bangla and the values of $Y = -0.1137x + 81.358$ and the relationship was $R^2 = 0.0082$ in the case of English that means the relationship was insignificant.

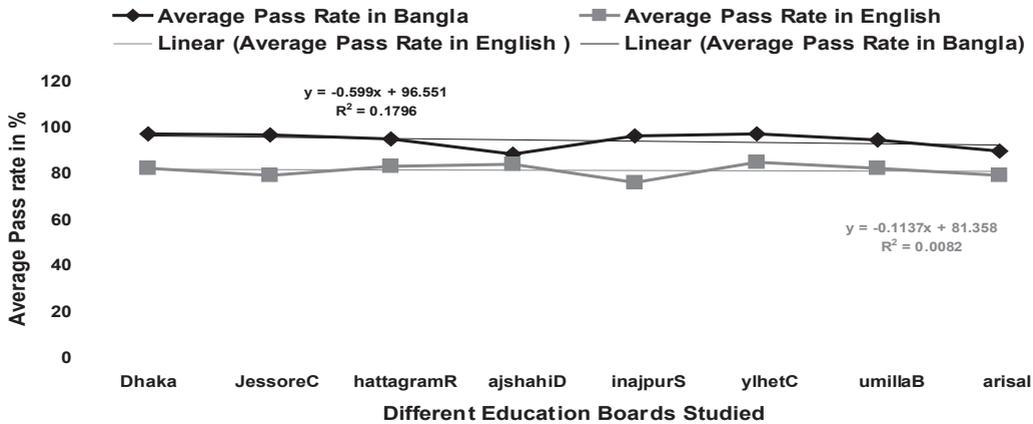


Fig. 3: Trends of Pass Rate in Bangla and English subjects in the public examinations conducted by different Education Boards of Bangladesh between 2008 and 2018

The primary sources of data documented here to demonstrate the opinion of the respondent groups of the present study. The sources were four groups' respondents and FGD. However, for convenience, the results of different respondent groups were pulled together and are presented under the paragraph under table 2 and 3.

3.2 Causes which reflects the students' results at HS level in the public examinations under different education boards of Bangladesh

The respondent principals and classroom teachers has delineated some causes which reflect the results of public examinations at HS level are mentioned under the Table 2. The remarkable ones are - insufficient numbers of skilled teachers in Bangla and English subjects; lack of trained teachers; large class size; apathy of teachers attention towards the mainstream classes; listening and speaking skills test are not practiced in the class as imposed in public examinations, short duration of classes, students are not attentive to the class because of lack of congenial environment; phobia to English classes as a foreign language, weak foundation in English in primary and secondary level, etc. Some other comments by respondent teachers and students i.e. syllabus is vast enough to complete in time, principals and teachers also opined unavailability of teaching aids in the colleges. On the other hand students mentioned only two reasons like “No scope to practice of English in their daily life” and “No scope to practice Bangla and English grammar in the present teaching-learning method.

Table -2: Comments on existing limitations that reflects the results of Bangla and English at HSC level educations in Bangladesh

SL No.	Causes which reflects the students results in the public examinations	Principals (N=60)	Class Teachers (N=150)	Students (N=240)	Guardians (N=20)
1.	Insufficient skilled teachers	42 (70.00%)	122 (81.33%)	198 (82.50%)	10 (50.00%)
2.	Lack of trained teachers	22 (37.67%)	110 (73.33%)	NA	6 (30.00%)
3.	Large class size in the mainstream classes	45 (75.00%)	136 (90.67%)	214 (89.16%)	14 (70.00%)
4.	Listening and Speaking skills test are not practiced as imposed in public exam.	25 (41.67%)	73 (48.67%)	85 (35.42%)	13 (65.00%)
5.	Short duration of classes	27 (45.00%)	52 (34.67%)	52 (21.67%)	NA
6.	Phobia to English as foreign language	24 (40.00%)	70 (46.67%)	232 (96.67%)	08 (40.00%)
7.	Weak foundation in English and Bangla at primary and secondary level	15 (25.00%)	52 (34.67%)	NA	11 (55.00%)

SL No.	Causes which reflects the students results in the public examinations	Principals (N=60)	Class Teachers (N=150)	Students (N=240)	Guardians (N=20)
1.	Insufficient skilled teachers	42 (70.00%)	122 (81.33%)	198 (82.50%)	10 (50.00%)
8.	Lack of suitable environment	26 (43.33%)	95 (63.33%)	19 (7.92%)	12 (60.00%)
9.	Syllabus is vast enough to complete in time	23 (38.33%)	35 (23.33%)	NA	13 (65.00%)
10.	Subject based teachers recruitment policy are not followed at colleges staffing pattern	39 (65.00%)	41 (27.33%)	NA	NA
11.	In availability of teaching aids	35 (58.33%)	81 (54.00%)	95 (39.58%)	13 (65.00%)
12.	Improper seating arrangement	28 (46.67%)	59 (39.33%)	136 (56.67%)	8 (40.00%)
13.	No opportunities to practice grammar	21 (35.00%)	72 (48.00%)	91 (37.92%)	9 (45.00%)
14.	No scope to practice of English in daily life	16 (26.67%)	62 (41.33%)	159 (66.25%)	17 (85.00%)
15.	Lack of teachers interest for counselling the learners	31 (51.67%)	29 (19.33%)	96 (40.00%)	13 (65.00%)
16.	Irregularity of teachers in the classes	13 (21.67%)	38 (25.33%)	NA	7 (35.00%)
17.	Irregularity of the students in the classes	12 (20.00%)	36 (24.00%)	126 (52.50%)*	09 (45.00%)*

*The percentages do not add up to 100 as one participant marked more than one statement.

3.3 Measures to be taken to overcome the constraints in ensuring quality teaching-learning both Bangla and English Subjects to maximize the success rate at HS level

According to the consent of the respondent principals, teachers, students and guardians the following measures could be taken to overcome the existing impediments in the education

institutions to materialized the English teaching are: number of English teachers has to be increased; teachers should be trained; ensure small class size; listening and speaking skill test should be included in public examinations; modern teaching aids should be arranged; emphasis should be given to develop foundation on primary and secondary level; campaign has to be taken to remove students fear to English through practice and co-curricular activities; emphasis should be given on listening and speaking skill; syllabus may be reduced and incorporate need based contents.

Table -3: Measures to be taken to overcome the impediments for ensuring success rate
in Bangla and English subjects at HS level

SL No.	Suggestions	Principals (N= 60)	Classroom Teachers (N=150)	Students (N = 240)	Guardians (N=20)
1.	Qualified and skilled teachers' should be recruited at all levels of education institutions	27 (45.00%)	126 (84.00%)	113 (95.00%)	19 (95.00%)
2.	Number of teachers in English has to be increased	21 (35.00%)	122 (81.33%)	197 (82.08%)	13 (65.00%)
3.	Posts creation either in English or Bangla are not coping with the teacher's student ratio	16 (26.67%)	110 (73.33%)	153 (63.75%)	15 (75.00%)
4.	Class size should be small or splitting the classes into different sections	14 (23.33%)	136 (90.67%)	92 (38.33%)	13 (65.00%)
5.	Listening and speaking skill test should be included in public examinations	11 (18.33%)	62 (41.33%)	112 (46.67%)	16 (80.00%)
6.	Teachers accountability and transparency need to be ensured	26 (43.33%)	72 (48.00%)	142 (59.17%)	17 (85.00%)
7.	Motivational campaign has to be taken to remove students fear to English through practice	13 (21.67%)	42 (28.00%)	82 (34.17%)	11 (55.00%)
8.	Modern teaching aids should be arranged	17 (28.33%)	49 (32.67%)	NA	NA
9.	Syllabus should be more easier and need based	NR	75 (50.00%)	124 (51.67%)	10 (50.00%)
10.	Suitable and reliable teaching materials (TG in particular) should be available in market places	23 (38.33%)	68 (45.33%)	NA	NA

SL No.	Suggestions	Principals (N= 60)	Classroom Teachers (N=150)	Students (N = 240)	Guardians (N=20)
1.	Qualified and skilled teachers' should be recruited at all levels of education institutions	27 (45.00%)	126 (84.00%)	113 (95.00%)	19 (95.00%)
11.	Emphasis should be given on listening and speaking skills	NR	82 (54.67%)	113 (47.08%)	12 (60.00%)
12.	Working stations need to be established as English speaking zone	16 (26.67%)	112 (74.67%)	NA	7 (35.00%)
13.	English classes must be taught in English	12 (20.00%)	45 (30.00%)	81 (33.75%)	9 (45.00%)
14.	Appointment of part time teachers from teachers pool	8 (13.33%)	53 (35.33%)	NA	NA
15.	To call guardian meeting for enhancing students' credibility	18 (30.00%)	61 (40.67%)	NA	13 (65.00%)
16.	Enrich teacher-student relationship	13 (21.67%)	120 (80.00%)	215 (89.58%)	11 (55.00%)
17.	Students regularity in the classroom need to be ensured	42 (70.00%)	123 (82.00%)	59 (24.58%)	9 (45.00%)

* The percentages do not add up to 100 as one participant marked more than one statement.

Conclusion

Posts creation either in English or Bangla are not coping with the teacher's student ratio at the educational institutions in Bangladesh. The ratio at HS level should be of 1:40 but the average class size was found 120+ students (range 25 to 230). Average workload of a teacher was more than 12 classes per week. Mean pass rate of Bangla subject was always higher than that of the results of English subject. According to ToE and students, 45 minutes class duration is not sufficient to conduct a large sized class and to cover the vast syllabus. As a result, teachers failed to maintain regular classes according to the given Lesson Plan in the Text Book.

Recommendations

- Qualified and skilled teachers should be recruited at all level educational institutions;
- Number of teachers in English and Bangla have to be increased;
- Teachers should be in-service training across the country;

- Large classes should be splitting into different sections for better monitoring;
- Listening and speaking skill test should be included in public examinations;
- Teachers accountability and transparency need to ensured;
- Motivational campaign need to be introduced in the form of team consists of some good teachers who will motivate and counsel the students to remove the phobia to English and make them understand the consequences of overconfidence on Bangla subject and
- Guardians meeting should be introduced after a specific interval for enhancing students' credibility and enrich teacher - student relationship for better results.

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A Study on Student's absenteeism at the Department of Philosophy in a Divisional Government College of Bangladesh

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Abstract

National Education policy 2010 states that the aim and purpose of higher education is to transmit knowledge and explore new knowledge along with building skilled manpower. The tertiary level colleges under the National University (NU) are playing a vital role in the promotion of knowledge and the creation of skilled manpower. Students in higher education need to attend classes regularly so that they can learn better through social interaction. The anecdotal experience of the research team suggests that absenteeism in tertiary level colleges under NU has become common matter for various reasons. To understand better the reasons for absenteeism and to propose possible solutions a study was conducted in the department of philosophy of a government college at the divisional level. The results of the study show that as students have a negative view of philosophy (in which they are studying), they also have a particular reluctance for knowledge as a whole. They have shared significant reasons for absenteeism. The reasons are: lack of subject motivation, teacher-student relationship, and department related various issues, lack of transport facilities, family problems, engagement with part-time jobs, and the weakness in the assessment system. Concentrating on a specific department, the study tried to understand the various facts of absenteeism and came to the conclusion that where the policy fails to implement a good practice, the willingness and role of the teachers, students, administration and parents can contribute a lot to bring back the absent students to the classroom for gaining knowledge and make students as human resources.

Keywords: Absenteeism, Higher education, Attendance, National University, Human resource.

Introduction

While many students begin their undergraduate study in the NU affiliated colleges intending to gain a qualified degree and acquire adequate knowledge and skill for a better life, the majority gradually starts distancing themselves from the study. Over time, students' resentment gives rise to partial or full absence from classroom teaching and learning activities. The authors of this paper, who work as lecturers in different government colleges, experience students' absenteeism through their daily lives as teachers. This situation provokes questions.

What causes students absenteeism and why is this happening in the colleges?

There is no quick answer to these questions. The authors consider absenteeism as one of the indiscipline aspects in the affiliated colleges under the NU of Bangladesh. Absenteeism causes aberrant behavior such as: disobedience, cheating especially in examinations, continual lateness and so on. As the authors consider absenteeism an aspect of indiscipline and withdrawal behavior of students, they intended to explore the causes behind the situation. They also wanted to understand the students' personal factors that could have compelled them to display this behavior. Moreover, many studies have been done to explore the problems of higher education in Bangladesh, but very few studies have been done in this field. Therefore, the authors worked in a research team and conducted a research study to explore answers to the following research question.

What are the causes behind student's absenteeism in the philosophy department of a NU affiliated government college?

The purpose of the study was to explore the reasons behind student's absenteeism at the department of philosophy in a government college of Sylhet division. This article reports the research study and argues that where policy fails to implement a practice, it is the willingness of the teachers as a whole and of the departments in a specific context, can contribute a lot to bring back the absentees to the classroom. It uses pseudonyms for the participants.

Background

For the last three decades, Bangladesh has been known as a role model for the development of socio-economic fields all over the world. Bangladesh has been able to meet two of the Sustainable Development Goals ahead of time lowering poverty rates and bringing gender equity despite political conflicts, natural disasters and financial crises. Bangladesh's workforce needs to be prepared to continue this trend of socio economic development and meet the challenges associated with it (World Bank, 2019). Only skilled, capable, patriotic, modern and educated human resources can advance the economy of the country and in this case, higher education institutions can play the role of 'economic engine'. Particularly, it is desired in policy documents and in people's belief that higher education has enormous potential to promote prosperity in the developing nations (Mobbassars and Muhammad, 2010).

However, the development of a modern society depends on a large extent on the nature and standard of higher education. Thus the role of higher education is to prepare competent, knowledgeable and far-sighted people for assuming various higher responsibilities. The growing importance of knowledge in the modern world can hardly be ignored, especially in a global environment which is fiercely competitive (University Grants Commission, 2006). In the era of globalization, when intellectual capital is more and more valued both by individuals and a nation,

higher education has become significantly important. Higher education can provide critical thinkers and innovators, as well as healthy, informed and enthusiastic citizens. Higher education endorses social mobility and a high standard of living (Chaudhary, Iqbal, and Gillani, 2009).

In Bangladesh there was a time when higher education used to be considered a luxury in a society of mass illiteracy. However, towards the turn of the last century the need for highly skilled manpower started to be acutely felt by every sphere of the society for self-sustained development and poverty alleviation. The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh endorsed the need for producing skilled manpower in its policy documents. UGC policy states that highly trained manpower not only contributes towards human resource development of a society through supplying teachers, instructors, researchers and scholars in the feeder institutions like schools, colleges, technical institutes and universities. They are also instrumental in bringing about technological revolution in the field of agriculture, industry, business and commerce, medicine, engineering, transport and communication (University Grants Commission, 2005).

The Bangladesh University Grants Commission is the legal body to administer academic activities of the Higher education system. The higher education system in Bangladesh is mainly implemented by three different kinds of universities. The first is the National University (NU). There are various public and private tertiary level colleges in the country. Four years graduation with one year post graduation and three years of graduation with one year post- graduation offered by these colleges and certificates are awarded by the NU. The NU provides affiliation to the tertiary level colleges and develops curriculum, designs courses and formulates assessment policy for these colleges. The NU curriculum focuses on traditional subjects under science, arts, social science and commerce discipline. The academic activities of tertiary level colleges function under the guidelines of NU.

The NU was established in 1992 to ease the burden of public universities and run the functions of education at the territory level smoothly through the affiliated colleges. The NU alone is providing tertiary education to 2,300,053 students which are about nine times than that of 34 public universities and seven times than that of 95 private universities (Daily Star, 2019). This huge numbers of students get a chance to complete their higher education at their door. But the question is: can NU be able to teach so many students properly? Unemployment rates are consistently high among tertiary graduates, causing prolonged and frustrating joblessness for many. At the same time, the culture and practice of collaborative research to promote industry competitiveness and innovation has been largely missing in the country's tertiary education landscape, undermining Bangladesh's competitiveness ranking in the global knowledge economy (World Bank, 2019).

However, the current skill levels of the labour force are unlikely to support future market demands. While there is an abundance of low-skilled workers, there is a strong demand for graduates with higher cognitive and non-cognitive skills and job-specific technical skills (the College Education Development Project). It is generally agreed by academicians, education thinkers, education researchers, education policy planners and other stakeholders that the quality of higher education in Bangladesh has been deteriorating steadily, in some areas quite alarming, over the last two decades (Amiruzzaman, 2011).

The second and third kinds are the public and private universities. Both the public and private universities implement different trends of higher education, such as: general, science and technology, medical sciences, engineering and architecture, agriculture, marine and so on. Each

public and private university is independent in making decisions about curriculum, courses and assessment. The public universities are funded by the government while the private universities are solely dependent on the student's tuition fees. There exist significant differences among the universities in academic resources and physical facilities provided for the students. Moreover, the approaches to teaching, learning and assessment followed by the aforementioned universities differ significantly. The differences are likely to impact the knowledge, skill and competences that the students are gaining from these universities. The research team intends to understand if the differences give rise to student absenteeism in a particular department of a NU affiliated Government College.

The National Education policy 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2010) has realized the need to reorganize the overall higher education system for preparing the country's future generation for the competitive globalized world of the 21st century and to reach the goal of high-income country by 2041. For this reason, the intentions of producing competitive citizens have been addressed in the aims and objectives of higher education. The aims and objectives of higher education are as follows:

(i) To help the students in the acquisition of world class education; to generate inquisitiveness among them and to help them grow up with human qualities; (ii) To help in the unhindered practice of intellectual exercises and growth of free-thinking; (iii) To relate the realities of the country with higher education in all conceivable areas; to identify the problems of the society and state and to find out solutions to them; (iv) To expand the horizon of knowledge through ceaseless cultivation of knowledge and through multidimensional, original and practical research; (v) To effectively introduce students to the knowledge of the modern and fast-advancing world; (vi) To build up citizens who will possess scientific, secular, liberal, humane, progressive and forward-looking mindset; (vii) To innovate new areas of knowledge through cultivation, research and creativity and (viii) To build up a citizenry inspired by wisdom, creativity, human values and patriotism (p-23).

But the clear distinction between the policy intention and reality is noticeable. Many countries in the world are engaged in the creation of skilled human resources and the search for new knowledge through the development of higher education standards. The picture of the affiliated colleges of the NU is completely different. The colleges are facing many challenges. These are: shortage of teachers, inadequate transport and accommodation facilities, improper infrastructure, inadequate library and laboratory facilities and very small research funding. Besides these challenges, now student's absenteeism has emerged as a major concern in the colleges. After enrolment, if students resend themselves, it means there could be something that compels them to do so. The study that is going to be reported in this paper tried to find out why the students do not want to go to college after getting enrolled.

Literature Review

This section represents the review of some relevant literature that has shaped the study and informed the analysis of the collected data.

Absenteeism can be very difficult to define. Although actual definition varied, a typological framework could be established using the following classifications of absence: planned or unplanned, voluntary or involuntary (Berlita, Mbindo and English, 2013). Absenteeism in tertiary education is discussed as an important benchmark that indicates the lack of quality in education

in a particular country. This is a significant indication of the existing and future problems of an education system. Regular attendance is essential for a student's academic achievement, social development and learning a new language in which most academic books are written. Regular students can be successful in their future professional life that could give them a better life and a better family. Absenteeism not only affects the academic progress of the student, but also influences the in-class planning of teachers and at the same time the motivations of the other students in the class (Thornton, Darmody & McCoy, 2013). Chronic absenteeism has a significant relationship with certain dangerous behaviours such as substance abuse, violence, physical injury, suicide, showing sexually explicit behaviour at an early age, pregnancy and eventual dropout (Ferrell, Nance, Torres & Torres, 2013; Gage, Sugai, Lunde & DeLoreto, 2013; Kearney & Graczyk, 2014; Nolan, Cole, Wroughton, Clyton-Code & Riffe, 2013; Thornton, Darmody & McCoy, 2013). This review of the literature helped the authors to interpret the data and formulate recommendations.

Methodology

This section briefly describes the overall methodological approach and design that were used to find out answers to the research question.

This study followed a mixed-method research design with a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the research question. A mixed research design permits a better understanding of the research problem since it allows quantification of participants' responses in broad terms as well as providing qualitative detail about their personal perceptions (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). A questionnaire survey and semi-structured interview were used as instruments of data collection and questionnaire was divided into two parts. First part of the questionnaire was designed to know the students' motivation in choosing the college and philosophy as a subject for higher education. Part two of the questionnaire was designed to explore the important reasons that could have influenced the students not to be present in the class room activities.

In this study, 12 semi-structured interview questions were used in order to acquire information related to the research question. The researchers then probed using additional questions. These 'probes' differed somewhat from participant to participant.

The research team has been in the field for five days to collect data. They spent 3 days to get familiar with the wider context of the research setting and to develop rapport. After developing rapport, the research team utilized two full days to collect data from the participants. Before data collection, the research team clearly described the purpose of the study and the kind of involvement required from the participants. The participants were assured that they could leave as participants anytime during data collection if they feel uncomfortable with any part of the data collection activities or the research. There were no such occurrences. Finally, informed consent was taken from the participants. The recordings and the field notes are kept safe for five years in a hard drive and a computer under the control of the lead author of this article.

Sampling and Selection of Participants

The research team used two common sampling strategies, namely random sampling and purposive sampling. A small number of samples (n=31) were selected for this study. The participants were selected based on presence in their class. Those who did attend class regularly were not selected as participants for this study. During their in-course exam, these 31 participants were

selected from the first year, second year and fourth year of the Philosophy department. Students of the third year were not selected because they were not in college for their upcoming final exam. The researcher went to the department and selected participants with the help of the college principal and head of the Philosophy department. 31 participants (both male and female) were selected using random sampling. Four teachers and six students were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. The six participants were given pseudonyms as liton, shuvo, monowar, mamun, asma and reza and teachers were presented as anonymous. The criteria of the teachers being interviewed included having some teaching experience (minimum eight years) in Government colleges, an academic background with a professional degree, and a willingness to participate.

Data Analysis

The research team collected a mass of raw data and then they transcribed it. Mixed analysis involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques within the same framework, based on the selected research paradigms. The data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics. Questionnaire data was turned into numbers according to the 3 point scale with a data range of 1-6. Arithmetic means were calculated and a mean score on any aspect higher than 2.41 indicates that participants somewhat agree with that aspect. Tables, pie charts, and bar diagram were used for representing the findings from questionnaire survey. The representation includes the highest agreement and disagreement on each item and there was also a percentage summary of each item. Semi-structured interview data were transcribed first and then translated from Bangla into English. After intensive reading the possible code categories of ideas and themes were marked by the researchers. Finally the data was coded based on categories and themes were identified and created. The raw data of the study were saved to examine when needed.

Findings

This section presents the results of the study about students' absenteeism in the Philosophy department of a selected government college in Sylhet. The study findings are presented in two sections. In section one, students subject preference motivation will be shown. The second section shows findings from semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview data were categorized by themes.

Section one: Findings from a motivation survey and questionnaire survey

A motivational survey and a questionnaire survey were conducted to find out what were the motivations of the students behind the admission to the philosophy department and the reasons for their absence. The purpose of the motivation survey was to know the factors behind subject choice preferences. The purpose of the questionnaire survey was to know which of the reasons plays a key role in absenteeism.

Results from motivational survey

Table 1 indicates that 12.9% students affirmed that Philosophy is their first choice to get admitted into this subject where 25.8% disagreed. However, 61.3% partially agreed with the factor. In case of admission, college priority played a great role to 58.1% of respondents where 32.3% disagreed. The respondents were asked whether studying in a 4-year honors graduation course were a better option than a 3-year graduation course. Because there was an option for lower scorers

to choose a 3-year graduation degree (pass course)¹. The larger part of the total disagreed, but 38.7% agreed. The source of their motivation was asked in item number 4 to 6. A big share of the respondent students agreed that family motivation and intimate friend's motivation helped them to choose this subject. 51.6% of students disagreed that they were influenced by the former teacher to study Philosophy, but 32.3% of students agreed with the factor.

Table 1: Student's motivation for getting admission in Philosophy Department (%)

Factors	Agree Count (% of total)	Partially agree Count (% of total)	Disagree Count (% of total)
1. As a subject, Philosophy gets priority	4(12.9%)	19(61.3%)	8 (25.8%)
2. College is the main factor not subject	18(58.1%)	3(9.7%)	10(32.3%)
3. Only B.A (Honours) get priority than B.A (Pass)	12(38.7%)	4(12.9%)	15(48.4%)
4. Motivation from former Teachers	10(32.3%)	5(16.1%)	16(51.6%)
5. Motivation from Family	18(58.1%)	8(25.8%)	5(16.1%)
6. Motivation from Intimate Friends ²	17(54.8%)	6(19.4%)	8(25.8%)

Note: In this motivational survey a 3 point scale is used where 3=agree, 2=partially agree and 1=disagree. Number of respondents N=31.

The pie chart below shows the mean response of each item. All items other than 4 and 5 were, on average, positively opined by participants. However, no agreement or disagreement level is fully attested to 100% by the respondents. This means that a student's attitude varies for different personal reasons. The students opined that they emphasized on reputation for choosing a college to get admission. There might have been slightly negative attitudes but the emphasis was

In Bangladesh 3-year graduation degree is well known as pass course

positive rather than negative. The respondents got more motivation from family to get admission in Philosophy rather than from former teachers and intimate friends. To get admission in Philosophy, the participants showed the highest positive attitude towards family motivation.

¹In Bangladesh 3-year graduation degree is well known as pass course

²In the pie chart it is shown as Intimate-Motivation

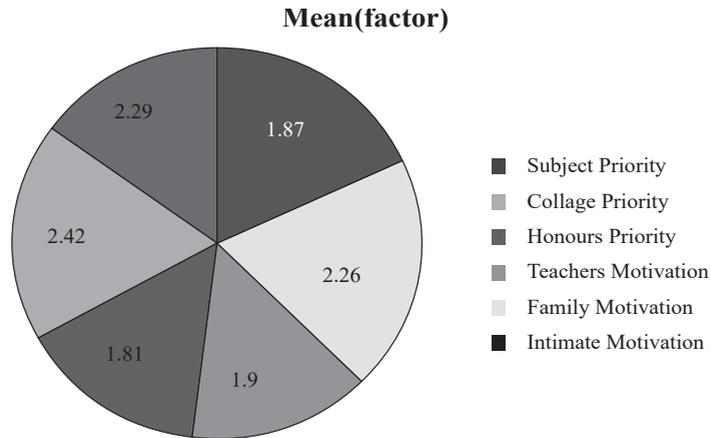


Figure 1: Item-wise average on each factor.

Note: A 3 point scale is used where 3=agree, 2=partially agree and 1=disagree. N=31.

Results from Questionnaire survey

In the survey questionnaire eight causes were set to rank according to importance. Out of the eight causes or reasons the eighth was named as others. The student respondents were asked to identify and rank the causes that contributed most to their absenteeism. Table 2 shows the percentage of causes or reasons behind absenteeism and total count of respondents in each cause or reason. The table also represents how differently the respondents ranked the causes of absenteeism. 13 out of 25 respondents identified distance from home to college as the most significant cause of absenteeism where 7 out of 25 marked it as their 2nd important cause of absenteeism. Likely 43.8% respondent ranked engaging with other's work as their first reason for absenteeism, but only 2 out of 16 thought it as their 2nd important factor for being absent. Here other's work means a source of earning. 44.4% of 18 respondent ranked family problems as the 3rd concern for their absence, though 5 out of 18 identified it as their 1st reason for absenteeism. 3 out of 15 respondents ranked lack of transport facilities including insecurity in transport as a key a factor that contributed most to their absenteeism. In others section of the questionnaire 8 respondents marked peer influence, laziness and lack of eagerness, with different ranking status, as the causes of their absence in sessions.

Origin	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total Count
Distance	13	7	4	1	-	-	-	-	25
	52.0%	28.0%	16.0%	4.0%	-	-	-	-	
Transport Facilities	3	7	1	2	2	-	-	-	15
	20.0%	46.7%	6.7%	13.3%	13.3%	-	-	-	
Family problem	5	4	8	1	-	-	-	-	18
	27.8%	22.2%	44.4%	5.6%	-	-	-	-	

Engaged with other's work	7	2	3	1	1	1	1	-	16
	43.8%	12.5%	18.8%	6.3%	6.3%	6.3%	6.3%	-	
College environment	-	2	1	2	3	-	2	-	10
	-	20.0%	10.0%	20.0%	30.0%	-	20.0%	-	
Classroom/ seating Arrangement	1	-	-	1	-	4	-	-	6
	16.7%	-	-	16.7%	-	66.7%	-	-	
Routine Management	1	3	1	-	-	-	2	2	9
	11.1%	33.3%	11.1%	-	-	-	22.2%	22.2%	
Others	1	1	1	2	2	-	-	1	8
	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	25.0%	25.0%	-	-	12.5%	

Table 2: Reasons identified as most significant for absenteeism

The bar diagram (Figure: 2) represents which of the reasons contributed most to the students' absenteeism. 80.60% of the respondents identified distance from home to college as the key reason for their absence in the class, while 48.4% recognised the transport facilities as the main reason for absenteeism. It seems an equivocal opinion but their range of giving importance was not the same (see Fig: 2). 58.1% students claimed the family problem as the key factor of their absence in the class. More than half of the respondents opined that engagement with other's work during class as the most significant reason for absenteeism. Classroom facilities and sitting arrangement was not identified as reliable reason for absenteeism by the students, because 80.6% respondents opined that they were happy with the existing arrangements

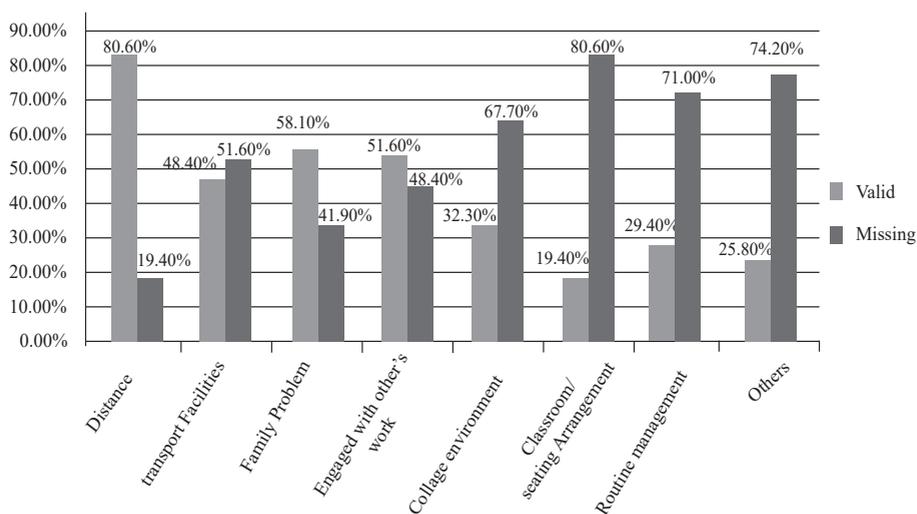


Figure 2: Reason wise valid response and missing percentage
Note: N= Number of respondents. Total number of respondents is 31.

The questionnaire survey gives idea about the causes, set by the research team, that are significantly contributing to the students' absenteeism in the Philosophy department of a particular college. Arguably, the findings drawn from the questionnaire survey do not reflect high statistical validity and due to inadequate time and small sample size no other measures were employed to prove statistical conformity. However, as mentioned in the methodology section, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both teachers and students to get clear understanding of the reasons behind absenteeism. The narratives of the semi-structured interviews are presented in the section to follow.

Section two: Findings from semi-structured interview

In this section, the causes of absenteeism were discussed and interpreted fewer than four categories. The categories are: Family, institutional and economic influence on absenteeism; the greater ecology of the department construed students' resentment; Lack of prior knowledge, unwilling decision, peer influence and some cultural habits contribute to students absenteeism and Absenteeism resulted from the gap between policy and practice of assessment system of National University

Family, institutional and economic influence on absenteeism

Sometimes students get demotivated by their family. In our study participant students said that their parents think it is unnecessary to go to the college for passing exams. In semi-structured interview, Litton, a student of philosophy department, mentioned:

Parents say that stay home. Not necessary to go to college. Many students of National University passed every year without attending their class. So you also can (Liton, Interview, 12-11-2019).

My mother says stay home. Give me accompany instead of going college regularly (Asma, interview, 12-11-2019).

Absenteeism is highly common among students who come from low income families. Because of financial difficulties many students are busy earning their part time job. Resultantly they are fully unable to attend their class. Reza, a student, claimed:

I am eldest son of my family, so I have to work to support my family (Reza, Interview, 12-11-2019).

One of the reasons for absence is travel costs. One student stated:

My house is out of town. So, it takes a lot of money to come daily and college bus does not reach there. That is why I do not come regularly (Monoar, interview, 12-11-2019).

Teachers also said that inadequate transport and accommodation facilities, economic condition and involvement in part time jobs are causes of absenteeism. Two of the respondent teachers mentioned:

One day I went shopping and found a student in a department store of a reputed brand. The student told me that he did not come to class because he worked there six hours a day (Teacher, Interview, 12-11-2019).

Seats are not available for all students in the college hostel. That is why students who live on the outskirts of the college frequently miss classes (Teacher, Interview, 12-11-2019).

The greater ecology of the department construed students' resentment

This section presents the existing relationship and nature of interactions between the teachers and students and at the same time it tries to understand the complexity that contributes to students' withdrawal behaviour.

A Teacher said in the interview, "there are enough classrooms and teachers in our department. Though the library is not modern, there are enough books for the students. We have one multimedia classroom (Teacher, Interview, 12-11-2019) But the students of the department compared the facilities with other departments and raised their concerns as follows:

We do not have enough classrooms and teachers for conducting classes. Classrooms are not so clean. However, teachers are very good in behaviour (Mamun, Interview, 12-11-2019).

When problems are brought to the teachers, they try to solve it and we see female teachers as more sincere and reachable (Monoar, Interview, 12-11-2019).

Philosophy is a hard subject to understand for me. If teachers would use more examples and multimedia may be it could work. But currently we experience the learning environment as out of fun (Shuvo, Interview, 12-11-2019).

Some sort of intimidation from the department led the students towards absenteeism. Two of the students mentioned:

Because of negative attitude to the students, we are not comfortable to share any problem with the concerned (Reza, Interview, 12-11-2019).

We are not allowed to share any of our concerns. We have been asked with attendance booklet to explain why we were absent from class or such questions and then asked to leave (Monowar, 12-11-2019).

A Teacher of the department explained the situation differently than the students.

We organize monthly meeting to listen student's problems but they do not come there and those who come do not say so (Teacher, Interview, 12-11-2019).

Teacher student boredom and stressful relationships is one of the reasons for absenteeism. Unless having an easy relationship, students cannot or do not want to share their concerns, teachers cannot even try to solve the concerns. Reza, a student, expressed:

Even if I do not understand the class, I do not ask because I feel uneasy (Reza, Interview, 12-11-2019).

Lack of social, cultural activities, inadequate physical structures of college, perhaps, led the students towards absenteeism. During interview one student expressed:

Compared to the other departments there is no such physical and cultural environment in our department so that we can feel happy here. Department do not arrange much socio cultural or sports activities to make friendship with peers in the time of working together (liton, Interview, 12-11-2019).

Sometimes students feel unsafe to come at college because of unrest in student's politics. One student mentioned:

I feel afraid of coming in the college when political unrest occurred (Asma, Interview, 12-11-2019).

Lack of prior knowledge, unwilling decision, peer influence and some cultural habits contribute to students absenteeism

From motivational surveys we know that most of the students got admitted in this department unwillingly. They had another choice to study in under graduate level, but having low grades in higher secondary certificate (HSC) examination they obliged to get admission in philosophy. Perhaps, the unwilling or uninformed decision for choosing subject for higher study causes students' erratic behaviour to their study.

Those who studied logic in HSC level, philosophy was familiar to them -Shuvo, a student of second year strongly said:

Philosophy is a very unfamiliar subject and I don't understand some courses like 'problems of philosophy', 'The ancient philosophy'. So I am not interested in classes (Shuvo, Interview, 12-11-2019).

A teacher of the department reinforced Shuvo's statement more strongly.

Many Students are psychologically frustrated about philosophy, because this was not related to their prior qualification. Some students gain knowledge on sociology or math or history in the secondary and higher secondary level, but for some students philosophy was absent there. Most of the students of this department never heard about philosophy before getting admission. That is why they cannot easily connect with the subject (Teacher, Interview, 12-11-2019).

Students also pointed out that the teachers did not explain to them how to apply the knowledge of philosophy in real life. Liton, a student, articulated his confusion about future possibility of philosophy in job market as follows:

I am in doubt about the future scope for my job by this subject (Liton, Interview, 12-11-2019).

In the greater Shylet region, there exist general tendencies among some affluent people of going abroad for getting a job and late rising from bed. And these tendencies greatly affect some of the students' mind-set. An affluent student of first year expressed as follows:

I usually get up in the morning at 10.30 am and if I can get any chance to go abroad (London) then I will go without completing my study (Shuvo, Interview, 12-11-2019).

A teacher of the department brought a different perspective to what Shuvo mentioned. The teacher said:

Students are not interested in achieving knowledge, their only target is gaining certificate (Teacher, Interview, 12-11-2019).

Both teacher and students mentioned that peer influence could be a possible major factor that causes absenteeism. They expressed their perspectives as follows:

I have lost my interest because my friend circle does not come regularly. If they were come I would come (Shuvo, liton, monoar, Interview, 12-11-2019).

Although they come to classes in the first year, attendance declines in later years for peer influence (Teacher, Interview, 12-11-2019).

Absenteeism resulted from the gap between policy and practice of assessment system of National University

Repetition of questions makes the students dependent on the guide books. They can easily guess that previous year's questions will be repeated and they find the answers in the guide books. This system made the students dependent on guide books. So they are not interested in reading textbooks and attending classes. Shuvo, a student, mentioned the influence of assessment system in generating students' negative attitude towards the usefulness of regular attendance in classroom teaching and learning activities as follows:

Despite not having regular classes, the department allows us to fill up forms to sit in the final exams. The department also gives us the in-course and attendance marks. And in final exam we can easily understand which questions will come by seeing repetition of previous questions (Shuvo, Interview, 12-11-2019).

In a semi-structured interview, a teacher of the philosophy department mentioned,

Sometimes comparing to other departments' in course marking system students create pressure to give them undeserving in-course marks (Teacher, Interview, 12-11-2019).

DISCUSSION

We reconstructed meanings and interpreted our data in the narrative form. The collected views both from teachers' and students' are very important to have a real picture of absenteeism of that targeted department. First of all, the repetition of the final exam questions is found as responsible for the students' decreasing attendance or indifference towards the classroom. Repetition of questions has enhanced selling of guidebooks and increased dependence on guidebooks resulted in. The students followed those guidebooks solely, attended only the exams and at the end of the year, got good results and arrived at a decision that they did not need to go to college. Moreover, they know much about the loopholes of the in-course system, where they become over sure that they will get the pass marks. Sometimes, they are creating force for that. As the students are getting good marks even without attending the classes, most of the time it is encouraging absenteeism at its best. In this respect, the students have a reflection that they think the department is less powerful for taking strict steps. If the department was strict in its rules and regulations, the picture could be something more positive.

Now, the present in course marking system is increasing absenteeism at one hand and on the other hand peer influence is exploding it. When the absentee students are acquiring good grades without attending classes, it negatively influences their friends who are regular in the classes and attending all departmental activities take the whole process for granted and gets the reflection that absenteeism goes unpunished. So, they start to apply the same strategy. From the students' stated belief, it is explored that they want a class aided with multimedia and other facilities. Moreover, philosophy is such a subject with which most of the students do not have any prior introduction (except those who had logic in HSC level). They cannot understand the new terms, get frustrated and leave the classroom with lots of problems. It results in their involvement in other works and at last, getting disconnected from the classroom. Strange it may sound but the family is supporting the students' involvement with other works as it brings some extra income to the family.

The problems get aggravated with the students' doubt about getting a job in future completing honours or masters in Philosophy. Many of them think that Philosophy as a subject will not help them in getting a good job which in turn forces them to take part in different vocational training programs. Findings have revealed that the lacks of opportunity to choose the subject at the time of getting admission and the gap between the policy and practice in the examination system of NU are the two significant causes of student absenteeism in the Philosophy department of the selected college. In most of the cases, a student gets admitted in Philosophy by chance, not by choice. After being admitted, for the reason of language deficiency and theory-based discussion, they get more demotivated. In addition, the absence in the class has no direct effect on sitting the examination and the result of the examination. For these reasons, the student does not feel the urge to attend the classes.

It is our interpretation and understanding that both teachers and students feel the problems and the causes behind those problems. But students cannot be blamed solely for such absenteeism as they are too young to take their own decisions or to make an opinion. Teachers are also not solely responsible for students' absenteeism to occur. However, teachers can feel their agency more strongly than the students. We, as teachers, possess lots of potentialities within us. We need to be sensible to the students, innovative, more ready to help the students. A teacher can make anything unknown known by applying techniques that are accessible and meaningful to the students'. The administration also needs to be sensible, responsive and helpful to the students learning needs. Their joint effort can minimize absenteeism and the classrooms will vibrate with the students' smiling faces.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To conclude, it can be argued that the lack of opportunity to choose desired subject for higher study and assessment system of National University are the two significant reasons intensifying the phenomenon of absenteeism. Unwilling and uninformed decision to get admission in undergraduate level, lack of prior knowledge, theory driven teaching and learning, untrusted relationship between teacher and students, inadequate infrastructure and facilities, distance from home to college, inadequate transport facilities and involvement in part time job are making the situation more complex and thus disconnect many students from their study. We as practitioners feel the situation as counterproductive to the knowledge and skill that our future citizens should be gaining from their study. The circumstance could also impede Bangladesh's effort of accomplishing the goal of high income country by 2041. Considering the possible threats of absenteeism to Bangladesh's overall development the research team also suggest some recommendations.

The existing rule suggests that a student can be eligible to sit in year final and final exams if she or he records at least 75% attendance in the sessions. This rule must be strictly applied in practice. Moreover, the in-course² exam marks should be given on the basis of their attendance and according to the real performance in the examination. In addition, there is a need to redesign the syllabus of philosophy by which our students can achieve work-oriented skill. Both theory and practical issues should be given the same amount of focus. The class lecture should be participatory so that students can ask questions and find the sessions as interesting. Teachers also need intensive training to make their classes more participatory and interesting.

In addition, the reasons behind absenteeism in other city areas and rural areas might turn out different. Further research should investigate these differences to understand the holistic scenario of absenteeism in higher education. There is a popular saying, "you can drag a horse to water but

you cannot force it to drink it unless it is thirsty.”

Now it is up to the concerned authorities and individuals to think how the students can be made thirsty for class lectures.

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² Out of the total 100 marks, there was 15 marks for in-course and 5 marks for attendance in NU at the time of this research but it was later scrapped by the university authority.

The Present Scenario of Using ICT Tools in Teaching and Learning Process: An overview of a private aliyah madrasah in Sylhet district

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Abstract

Bangladesh has a vision to become a middle income country by 2021 and a high income country by 2041. To achieve these goals, the present government is trying to utilize its resources. Therefore, integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education has become the demand of time and the government of Bangladesh is trying to ensure the use of ICT in education. This attempt is being made to create a digital culture in the country. It can be mentioned that madrasah education is getting priority to this acculturation process of digitalization. This paper reports a study which was conducted to explore to what extent ICT was being used in teaching and learning and in general administrative works in an aliyah madrasah in Sylhet district. Data were collected from the teachers, students and admin staffs by using questionnaire and by observing the ICT infrastructure and classroom teaching and learning of that madrasah. Data reveal that students of that madrasah are very much interested in ICT incorporation in their learning. But the madrasah was facing several challenges such as the infrastructural constraint in using ICT tools and lack of training of the teachers. Based on the collected data, specific recommendations have been made mentioning that ICT facilities need to be provided in every classroom for teaching and learning activities. The research team recommends that ICT based administrative system also need to be developed and practised in that madrasah. It was concluded that trained teachers can play crucial role for continuing the improvement of ICT based education processes.

Keywords: ICT integration, teaching and learning process, digital culture

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Introduction

In 2015, the 193 member countries of The United Nations General Assembly adopted a new development agenda for the post MDG era titled ‘Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development, which is popularly known as ‘Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)’. There are 17 Goals in the development agenda. Among these 17 Goals, SDG-4 is related to education especially to quality education (United Nations, 2015). As a signatory country, Bangladesh is committed to ensure quality in education for all. In the process of ensuring quality in education, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become an important tool all over the world. Actually, through the use of ICT, it is possible to transform the traditional teacher-oriented classroom to learner-centric classroom. The use of ICT offers a facilitative teaching and learning culture that essentially focuses on the teachers’ task of leading or engaging their students in an active, self-engaged, self-directed and motivated way of learning (Volman, M. and Eck, E., 2001). So, realizing the significance of ICT in teaching and learning process, Bangladesh has given the importance on ICT for promoting quality in the whole education system.

The integration of ICT in madrasah education system can play a vital role in modernizing the teaching and learning processes of madrasahs in Bangladesh. The government, NGOs and development-partners are playing a significant role in introducing ICT in madrasah education. The Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh is trying to bring necessary reforms in curriculum, pedagogy and teachers’ capacity building activities for madrasah education system where ICT can be an effective tool. The National Information and Communication Technology Policy-2009 inspires “the preparation of multimedia-based content and learning materials, such as e-books, animated cartoon characters and documentary video clips as supplementary tools for learning” (Chowdhury, 2013, p. 177). Use of ICT in every level of education system was further emphasized in National Education Policy-2010 (Ministry of Education of Bangladesh, 2010).

Use of ICT in teaching and learning process

Use of ICT in teaching and learning process is a widely spoken term in educational reformation. Use of ICT in education is considered as the integration of ICT in education. It includes a continuous installation of ICT with all the curricular mechanisms, instruction, assessment, professional improvement and academic principles. Successful inclusion of ICT in the education is to bring about a holistic change in the teaching and learning process. But it is argued that “providing computers in schools without reforming curriculum, developing professionals, and changing traditional teaching and learning practices does not mean ICT integration” (Chowdhury, 2013, p. 180). So adopting appropriate educational strategies, such as ICT supported curriculum reframing, professional development and infrastructural establishment can enhance the potentiality of ICT to bring change in education of Bangladesh. This can then be called the successful integration or use of ICT in education.

Integration of ICT also involves the ‘learning with ICT’ which denotes pedagogical use of ICT, mainly the knowledge of how computers, digital instruments, internet and other communication devices can support teaching and learning process (Chowdhury, 2013). This is very much important for the scientific use of ICT in education.

Successful use of ICT also includes teaching with ICT which indicates the development of teachers’ technological skills and pedagogical knowledge simultaneously. Koehler and Mishra

(2008) claimed that “technological knowledge isolated from pedagogical application is less effective in education; rather, teaching ICT skills through instructional activities is found more useful for teachers” (Cited in Chowdhury, 2013, p. 183).

Teachers’ pedagogical knowledge of using ICT is related to their tactics for designing teaching activities. Under the constructivist instructional method teacher can create environments for student-centered learning where learners work with ICT individually or in groups (Chowdhury, 2013). Therefore, it is recommended that teachers acquire sound pedagogical knowledge about how to teach with ICT and how to instruct students to learn with ICT. Unfortunately our educational curriculum does not provide clear instruction of constructivist approach of teaching with ICT. As a result our teachers are not confident enough in using that knowledge to assist student learning in their classroom.

ICT policy framework of Bangladesh

The Government of Bangladesh framed its National ICT Policy in 2002. Afterwards, an amendment was drawn in 2009. The National ICT Policy 2009 has incorporated all the components of the National ICT Policy 2002 in a more organized way. Some of the salient policy statements relevant to education are stated below.

(i) Assess skills of ICT professionals and meet gaps with targeted training programs and adopt continuing education and professional skills assessment and enhancement programs; (ii) Encourage closer collaboration between academia and industry to align curriculum with market needs; (iii) Establish an ICT Center of Excellence with necessary long-term funding to teach and conduct research in advanced ICTs; (iv) Enhance the quality and reach of education at all levels with a special focus on Mathematics, Science and English; (v) Facilitate the use of ICT tools in all levels of education, including mass literacy, and lifelong learning; (vi) Ensure access to education and research for people with disabilities and special needs using ICT tools; (vii) Found multimedia institutes; (viii) Initiate diploma and trade courses in teachers’ training institutes to ensure ICT capacity for teachers to meet the challenges; (ix) Promote the use of ICT for the purpose of training in the public sector; (x) Promote distance education, set up institutes and infrastructure for e-learning training programs; and (xi) Create an e-education cell for coordinating and mainstreaming ICTs in education system.

So, National ICT Policy-2009 is designed to expand the quality in education to all parts of the country using ICTs, ensure computer literacy at all levels of education and public service and facilitate modernization and adoption of ICTs through appropriate research and development. Its aim is to train the decision makers in ICT use and promote an ICT culture in all sectors of Bangladesh.

Necessity of using ICT in madrasah education

Information and Communication Technologies have become an integral part in all aspects of life. Over the past few years, the use of ICT has brought a drastic change in business and governance. ICT has begun its presence within education. At present a new era has evolved in the education sector by means of ICT. According to Goal-21 of chapter-1 of the National Education Policy-2010, the government intends “to extend the use of information and communication technology (ICT) instrument in education process at every level” (Ministry of Education of Bangladesh, 2010, p.

2). The government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has also taken various long term development plans like Vision-2021, Vision-2041 and Delta Plan-2100. All of these development plans give importance on ensuring use of ICT in all aspects of life.

ICT-supported education can promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills that will empower students with lifelong learning. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is also an essential part in participatory teaching and learning process. The followings are the different types of learning derived from the use of ICT in education; such as: 1. Active learning. 2. Collaborative learning 3. Creative Learning. 4. Integrative learning. 5. Evaluative learning. So, the use of ICT tools in teaching and learning process of madrasah education is very much important for an active, creative and integrative learning. But unfortunately, there are limited research works done before on this topic.

Many countries have recognized the necessity of changing teachers' role in teaching through ICT and have taken action by launching many professional development programs to train teachers to use ICT. This has allowed teachers to gain access to new knowledge, awareness and skills, improved educational resources, and overcome the traditional separation of teachers and create individualized training opportunities.

Research suggests that the use of ICT is required in teaching and learning process of educational institutions for ensuring quality in education. Though we have a dream to transform our country into a digital Bangladesh, educational institutions of our country remain traditional. So, to build a technology based digital culture, ICT based educational system is highly needed in those institutions. The madrasah is one type of traditional educational institution and vast number of students of the country gets education from this type of institution. The research team experienced that Sylhet is one of the districts of Bangladesh where some parents prefer madrasah for educating their children.

So the government should take proper steps to transform those traditional institutions into ICT based digital ones. Sylhet district can be given the priority to install ICT instruments in this purpose. Before ensuring the use of ICT in those institutions, it is important to explore the existing scenario and the challenges to use ICT in teaching and learning processes and in general administrative works in an aliyah madrasah. This includes exploring the existing ICT based infrastructure, capacity of teachers in using ICT, availability of ICT facilities in the selected madrasah and future challenges. Therefore, the research team framed the following research questions and objectives to conduct the study.

Research questions

Specifically, this study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the present infrastructural condition of the selected aliyah madrasah for providing ICT based teaching and learning environment to its students?
2. Are teachers of that aliyah madrasah capable of operating ICT tools in their teaching method?

Objectives of the study

In a broader scene, the objectives are to identify how the aliyah madrasah is using ICT for both administrative and academic purposes to increase their efficiency and take innovative role by producing ICT concerned teaching and learning system. The specific objectives of the study are:

- (a) to know the present status of using ICT in the teaching and learning process of a private aliyah madrasah in Sylhet district;
- (b) to know the capability of the teachers of that madrasah in operating the ICT tools in their teaching process.

Literature review

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a term which is used to refer to a range of equipment (hardware: personal computers, scanners and digital cameras) and computer programs (software: database programs and multimedia programs), and the telecommunications infrastructures (phones, faxes, modems, video conferencing equipment and web cameras) that allow us to access, retrieve, store, organize, manipulate, present, send material and communicate locally, nationally and globally through digital media (Dunmill, 2006).

ICT is the way of applying pedagogy digitally in the teaching and learning process. Because it is a medium through which teacher can teach and learners can learn more effectively. There are two important reasons for using ICT in teaching and learning process. Firstly, ICT can improve the effectiveness of education. Secondly, it creates an environment of familiarity with digital culture.

However the government of Bangladesh is providing ICT instruments to create an ICT based and technologically improved culture in the educational institutions. To implement that policy adoption of innovative technology is not enough to meet the students' need to technological learning process. So "there is an increasing demand for the inclusion of pedagogy and substantial content knowledge based on use of ICT in teachers' professional development" (Khan, 2014, p.21). It is the teachers' capabilities to incorporate ICT in their instructional tasks that can facilitate these desired changes to the maximum level. Besides, broad and long-term training is required for the integration of ICT and pedagogy together in the classroom. So Khan(2014) made us understand the importance of the teacher's capability of using ICT tools in his/her teaching process.

In all places from rural to urban, a good number of the Muslim students are getting their formal education from Madrasah with Islamic values. Madrasahs are providing modern education parallel with religious education (Bano, 2011). Aliyah Madrasah Education is a public accepted government recognized education system, which is providing education from the rural to urban area of Bangladesh (Rahman et al., 2010 as cited in Al-Hasani, 2017).

According to Bangladesh Economic Review 2019, there are 7,624 madrasahs (MPO) in Bangladesh (Ministry of Finance of Bangladesh, 2019). There are two systems of madrasah education running currently in Bangladesh. One is government controlled Aliyah Madrasah and another one is Qawmi (private body controlled) Madrasah. Aliyah Madrasah has five strata: 1. Ibtidae (Primary), 2. Dakhil (Secondary), which is comprised of groups; Arts, Muzabbid, Science and Business Studies, 3. Alim (Higher Secondary) also includes four groups; Arts, Muzabbid,

Science and Business Studies, 4. Fazil (B.A. Degree / Honor's) and 5. Kamil (Masters) level consisting of four groups; Tafasir, Hadith, Arabic and Fiqh group (BANBEIS, 2011). Recently, the present government of Bangladesh has familiarized another new stage called Junior Dakhil Certificate (JDC) Examination in Bangladesh, which is held before Dakhil (Secondary) Examination (Hossain, 2016).

The aforementioned information reflects that a significant number of student population is getting education from the madrasahs. While getting education is not just gaining certificate, it also involves acquiring adequate knowledge and skill to contribute to national prosperity. Therefore, considering madrasah education as a concern as well as a possibility of national economic development there is a need to look at what type of human resources the madrasahs are producing. So the research team strived to understand the current status of use of ICT tools in the teaching and learning process of an Aliya madrasah.

From the beginning of our independence several attempts have been made to develop and modernize the Madrasah education of Bangladesh to meet the challenges of the contemporary world. Comparing to those efforts, general school education system has attained a lot of constructive improvement while Madrasah education received only a little. In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, budget has been allocated amounting to tk 79,786 crore for education and technology. The government has allotted Tk 7,454 crore for vocational and madrasah education combined (Chandan, 2019). So, madrasahs get a small portion from the government annual budget for education. Nevertheless, madrasah is looking forward to modernizing its education system and curriculum in Bangladesh (Al-Hasani, 2017).

Introduction of ICT education in public and private educational institutions is a precondition for generating ICT culture. The article 19 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh clearly stipulates that the State shall endeavor to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2018).

Our constitution says that the state shall take measures to eradicate all kinds of social and economic injustice between man to man and to ensure equal distribution of wealth among citizens and of equal opportunities at attaining equal level of economic development throughout the Republic.

ICT can solve those problems concerning quality, equity, and access to higher education and can also promote resource sharing and therefore improve efficiency and productivity while at the same time open up access to global resource of knowledge and information (Kunaefi, 2007). So installation of ICT is important to implement the philosophy of the constitution of Bangladesh.

Bairagi, Ahsan, Rajon & Roy (2011) argue that the present use and set-up of ICT are not up to the mark in all forms of educational institutions to meet the current demands of ICT. But their efforts in this regard will help to build a digital society in Bangladesh in future. So, facilities should be enhanced to promote ICT training and computer aided training at all levels of education including primary schools and madrasahs.

This review of literatures has implication in the way the research team analyses and interprets the data collected from an aliya madrasah. The review helps the research team to understand the capability of the madrasah to use ICT in administrative communication and in teaching and learning processes.

Methodology

Quantitative approach was applied to complete the study. There were some specific reasons in selecting that approach. We know that certain type of research problem demands specific approach. Creswell argues- “if the problem calls for (a) the identification of factors that influence an outcome, (b) the utility of an intervention, or (c) understanding the best predictors of outcome, then a quantitative approach is best” (Creswell, 2014, p. 50). Moreover, we know that quantitative research refers to the systematic and empirical investigation of any phenomena via statistical and mathematical or computational techniques. So this approach fitted best to our research question as we had to find out the numerical figure on the use of ICT instruments in the madrasah.

Questionnaire and observation methods were applied. The Principal and other teachers were asked exactly the same questions from the two structured questionnaires. Structured questionnaires were formulated in order to identify the ICT infrastructure of that institution and the capability of the teachers in using the ICT tools during their teaching. Then, three observation checklists were also used to validate the data which were given by the respondents. Another questionnaire was also formulated to know the ICT based learning process of the students.

Methodological flow of this study can be shown in this way

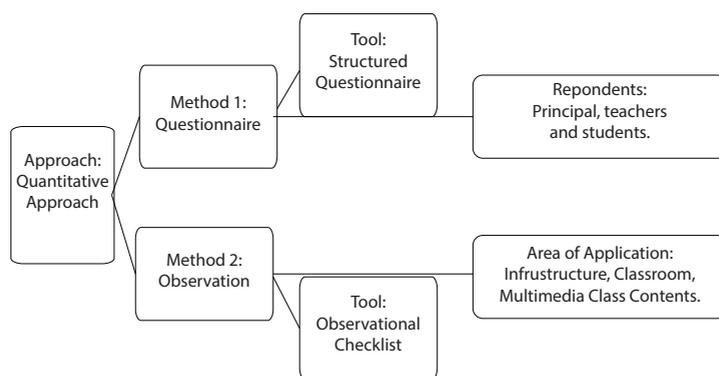


Figure 1

Methodological flow of the study.

A madrasah in Sylhet was selected as the research area. The respondents were principal, teachers and students of that institution who represented their institution. Random sampling technique was followed to select the respondents from teachers and stratified random sampling was applied to select the samples from students of different classes. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze collected data. The statistical packages used to conduct the various analyses were Microsoft Excel and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Limitation of the study

This study was conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for getting a certificate from a training course named Educational Research Methodology (ERM) at National Academy

for Educational Management (NAEM), Dhaka. We worked here as novice researchers and we lacked some sort of experience in doing research. The number of respondents (sample size) was also small. We couldn't observe enough classes as we had been in field for less than a week. As the sample size was small, we are not going to make any big argument from our analysis. Therefore, as novice researchers, we acknowledge that there might exist validity and reliability threats in our findings. For this reason, also we are not going to generalize our findings and compare the scenario of the madrasah with other institutions.

Data analysis and discussion

We had three questionnaires and three observation checklists. We took our data from the institutional head, teachers and students by using questionnaires comprised of structured questions. We used observation checklists to validate data found from questionnaire. The information collected from the principal by questionnaire is presented in table-1.

No	Variables (ICT instruments)	Availability/ Value
	Electricity	Yes
	Alternative Power Supply	No
	Total Number of Classroom	27
	Target Classroom Allotted For Research Area (Dakhil to Alim)	6
	Projector	2
	Active Projector	2
	Total Teachers	30
	Trained Teachers	19
	Trained Teacher of Nine and Twelve Class	18
	Teachers Who Use Multimedia Classroom	10
	Teachers Who Use Multimedia Minimum 2 Days in a Weak	9
	Teachers Who Use Multimedia below 2 Days in a Weak	1
	Teachers Who Can't Use Multimedia	11
	No. of Printer	1
	No. of Photocopy Machine	1
	Number of Computer Lab	1
	No. of Computers in Lab	21
	No. of Active Computers in Lab	21
	No. of Personal Computer for Teacher's Use	3
	Internet	Yes
	Website	Yes
	Notice Publish in Website	Yes
	Official Facebook Page	Yes
	Official Email Address	Yes
	Smart board in Classroom	No
	Online Based Admission Registration System	No

Table-1: Overall ICT scenario of the madrasah

From table-1, we found that a huge number of teachers were trained in how to use ICT in their professional practices and that was (63.34%). Among them (52.63%) of the trained teachers took class using multimedia tools and (47.36%) teachers used multimedia tools in their classroom more than two days in a week. The study found that only (5.26%) teachers used multimedia less than 2 days in a week though they were trained.

There was an ICT Learning Center (ILC) in that madrasah. There were 21 active laptops in that ILC. The researchers attended classes from Dakhil (secondary) to Alim (higher secondary) level as a part of class teaching observation. It was found that about 18 trained teachers took sessions in those classes. Overall ICT related infrastructural scenarios of the madrasah were as follows:

Infrastructure (Variable)	Availability/ Value
Electricity	Yes
Laptop/PC for teachers	3
Internet Connection in Teachers' Computer	Yes
Number of Classroom	27
Reserved Classroom for Dakhil to Alim	6
Multimedia Classroom	2
Classroom with peripheral connection	2
UPS	2
IPS	1
Smart TV	1
Scanner	1
Photocopy Machine	1
Printer	2
Modem	3
Wi-Fi Broadband	Yes
Webpage	Yes
Notice Upload in Webpage	Yes
Official Facebook Page	Yes
Official Email Address	Yes
Tele Communication System	No
LAN/WAN/WLAN	Yes
Computer Lab.	1
Number of Computer in Lab.	32 (21 laptop+9 desktop)
Active Computer in Lab.	25 (21 laptop+4 desktop)
Inactive Computer in lab.	7
Internet Connection in Lab.	Yes
Teachers Who Use 'Multimedia Classroom Monitoring Apps (MMC)'	10

Table-2: ICT related infrastructural scenario of the madrasah

Table-2 shows that only 3(10%) of the 30 teachers had computer for personal use. But internet connection was not available in those computers. The madrasah was well decorated with small numbers of electronic instruments like photocopy machine, UPS, IPS, scanner and printer.

It was noticeable that the madrasah owned website and facebook page to provide information and administrative notice to the students.

Gender based description of ICT training of the teachers

The research team let the 23 teachers fill the questionnaire comprised of structured questions. Out of total 23 respondents, 14 (60.9%) were male and other 9 (39.1%) were female teachers. Among the 14 male teachers, 12 teachers were trained and from the 9 female teachers, 5 teachers were trained. So both male and female teachers had ICT training. Table-3 shows the teachers' gender based tendency in using multimedia in the classroom.

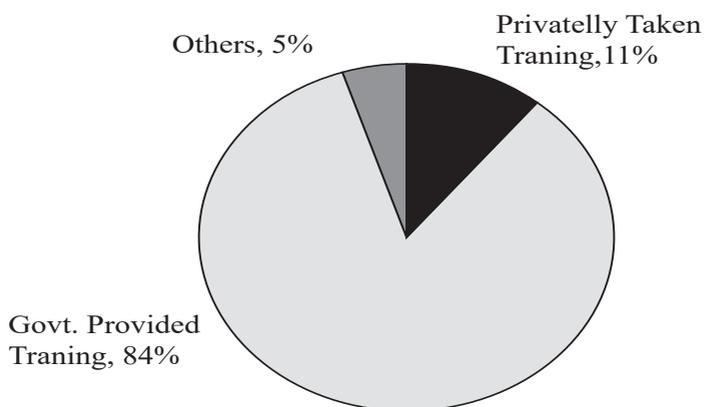
Gender	Tendency of Taking Class using Multimedia (%)
Male Teacher	85.7 %
Female Teacher	77.8 %

Table 3: Teachers' tendency of using multimedia in the classroom

Type of ICT training taken by Teachers

The following pie chart (Figure-2) shows that 84% teachers took training through government funding, whereas 11% and 5% teachers took training through private and other funding respectively.

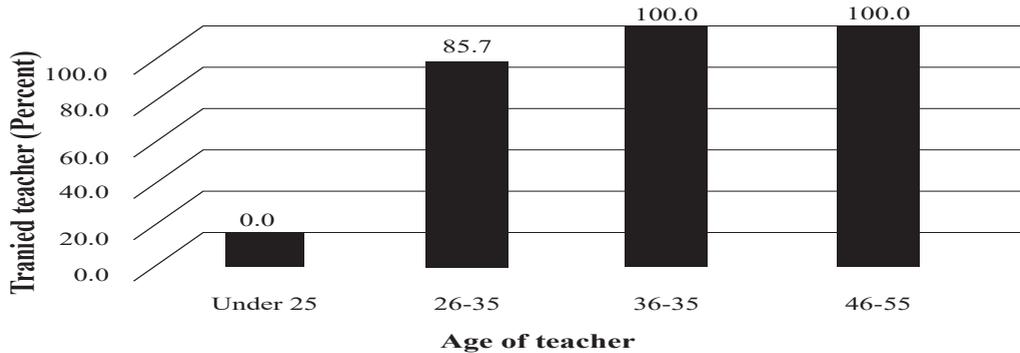
Figure-2: Type of training taken by the teachers



Trained teachers in the aspect of age

The study found that respondents (teachers) aged in the range of 36- 55 were trained. 85.7% of the teachers whose age was in the range of 26-35 were trained. But no one took any training whose age was less than 25 and most of them were newly appointed.

Figur-3: Trained teachers in the aspect of age



Digital content making skill of the teachers

We found that teachers who used multimedia tools were capable of designing multimedia content and they were identified as skilled enough in integrating multimedia in their teaching. They used color in the text with reasonable font size. They demonstrated that they had the knowledge of using animation and suitable effect in their text and picturesque slides. Some of them used video to present the hard topic easily. They also mentioned learning outcome in one of the starting slides of the multimedia class content. Slides were in a good order but updated information was not satisfactorily found in some slides. Neither of the teachers used microphone so that the teacher’s voice could reach the last bench of the class. So controlling class was hampered in some cases. Table-4 delineates the description of observational result of the classroom teaching.

Class Teacher	Class	Subj.	Group	Color	Effect	Animation	Reasonable Font Size	Using Picture	Video	Learning Outcome	Slide Order	Updated Info	Use of Microphone
Teacher-1	Nine	Math	Combined	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Teacher-2	Nine	ICT	Humanities	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Teacher-3	Eleven	ICT	Combined	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Table-4: Teachers’ skill of preparing digital content used in the classroom

Teachers’ membership of ‘Shikkhok Batayon’

It was found that among 23 present teachers of that madrasah 18 were the member of ‘Shikkhok Batayon’ (an online platform of teachers for sharing knowledge). Table-5 shows that findings.

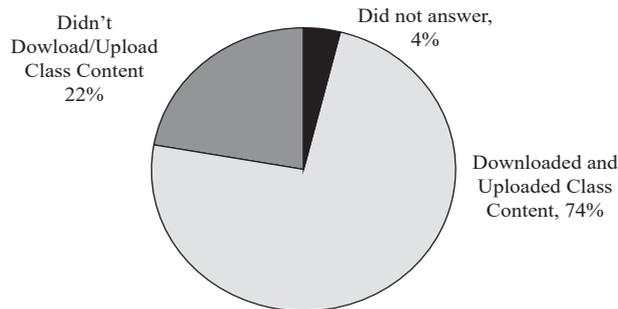
Status of Membership	Amount (Percent)
Member of ‘Shikkhok Batayon’	78.3%
Not Member of ‘Shikkhok Batayon’	21.7%
Total	100%

Table-5: Status of teachers’ membership of ‘Shikkhok Batayon’

Teachers became member of Shikkhok Batayon but only 74% of them uploaded and downloaded multimedia class contents from that website (Shikkhok Batayon) and 22% didn’t do

it. Some teachers didn't answer to that question. The pie chart (Figure-4) indicates the following findings.

Figur-4: Teacher's class content uploading/downloading status in/form Shikkhok Batayan



Percentage of digital content making ability of the teachers

It was found that three-fifths of the teachers had the ability of making their own digital class content. On the other hand two- fifths of the teachers had no capacity to make their own digital class content.

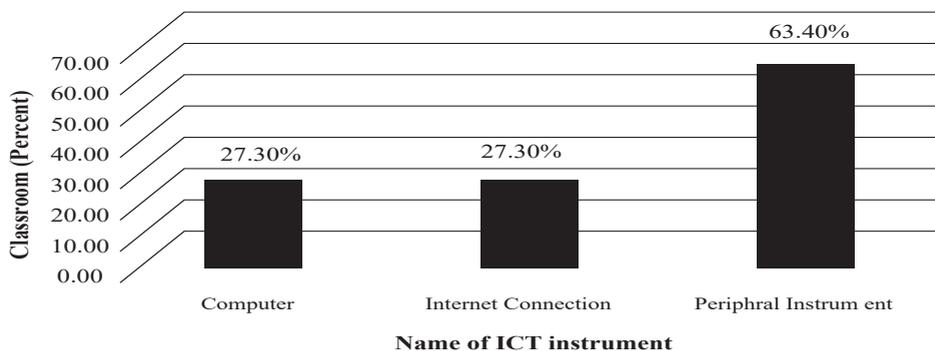
Digital class Content Making Capacity	Percent
Capable	56.5%
Not Capable	43.5%

Table-6: Percentage of digital content making capacity of the teachers

Use of ICT instruments in the classroom

Electric line was available in almost every classroom. Projector, digital screen, sound system was available in 18.18% classrooms. In 77.82% classrooms, there were no facilities of using microphone. The bar chart (Figure-5) given below shows that computer and internet-connection facilities were available in only one-third classrooms. The chart also shows that in spite of having peripheral instruments (cable, electric switch) in 63.40% classrooms, there were no computer and internet facilities in most of those classrooms.

Figur-5: Availability of three ICT instrumnts in the classrooms



Status of using ICT tools in the teaching and learning process

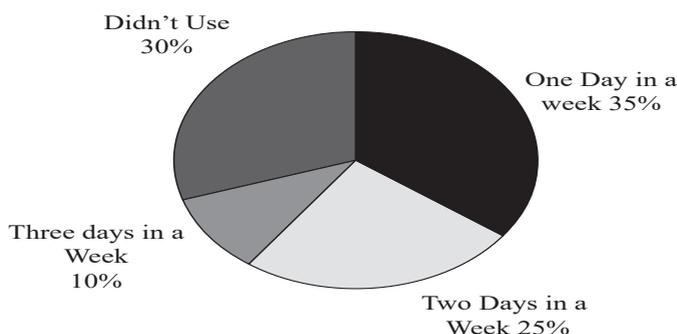
ICT based teaching and learning process was observed as more effective and attractive to the students than the teaching and learning process without the use of ICT. The students were asked in that madrasah

to tell what type of class they usually like. 95% of the total respondents (students) told that they like multimedia class. Due to the constraint of digital classroom the students didn't get the chance to enjoy the multimedia classes. Though students attend maximum 36 classes according to the routine in a week, they usually get about 2 multimedia classes only.

Weekly lab using scenario by the students

This study found that two-thirds of the total respondents (students) used lab at least 1 day in a week. But one-third students didn't use lab in a week. The pie chart (Figure-6) shows the detailed scenario of using lab by the students in the madrasah.

Figure-6: Weekly lab using scenario by the students



Website using scenario by the students

It was found that official notices of that madrasah were uploaded in the website. 63.2% of the students responded that they visited the website to get notices whereas other 36.8% students responded that they didn't visit the website to get notices. The following table shows that scenario.

Table-7: Website using scenario by the students

Responds	Using (Percent)
Don't use website	60.0%
Use website	35.0%
Did not answer	5.0%
Total	100%

Interpretation of data and implication of findings

It was found that 56.5% of the teachers had the ability of making their own digital class

content. So it can be said that maximum teachers of that madrasah are capable of using ICT tools. Both male and female teachers were trained and capable of conducting session using multimedia tools.

Though the madrasah had the experienced and trained teachers, they were not being utilized properly because of the lack of multimedia classrooms in the madrasah. According to the class routine, 36 sessions (in a week) were kept to be held for both the dakhil (secondary) and alim (higher secondary) level students. In practice, only two of those scheduled sessions were held weekly in the digital classroom.

This study found that both the teachers and students were eager to use ICT instruments in their teaching and learning process. If the ICT based infrastructure is increased, the teaching learning process will be more effective and developed in that madrasah.

Younger teachers were not being used properly to improve the ICT based education system in that madrasah. This was found that no teacher under the age of 25 took any ICT training whereas all teachers aged 36-55 took at least one ICT training. 85.7% of the teachers whose age was in the range of 26-35 were trained in ICT.

Students were found very much enthusiastic in ICT based learning culture. They were the majority who used laboratory and website for searching information and notice. The research team found that two-thirds of the total students used laboratory at least one day in a week.

Conclusion and recommendations

Undoubtedly ICTs are potentially useful tools for managing education, teaching and learning. Application of ICT in managing educational institutions should be encouraged. By teaching computer skills to our students Bangladesh can influence inward investment for the future society. ICTs are most likely to be cost-effective when these can reach very large number of students or when these are used for research purpose and eventually used by educational administrators. This study exposes that the level of use and infrastructure of ICTs were satisfactory in the madrasah. However, there are scopes to broaden the extent of it to meet the present demands. This efforts of broadening ICT scopes in this regard will help to build a digital culture in that madrasah education in the near future as well. Though the study was small, the research team proposes the following recommendations on use of ICT that can have implication on policy and practice of education of that madrasah.

(i) Training should be provided to teachers and all levels of administrative staff involved in the madrasah; (ii) Adequate ICT lab facilities and internet connectivity need to be ensured for all the students, teachers and admin staffs working in this aliyah madrasah; (iii) Academic information and notices along with regular updates should be given through the website of the madrasah; (iv) For more speedy administration use of student database, central online based registration system for the students should be employed; (v) To disseminate ICT based knowledge and new technologies which may improve overall students learning conferences, workshops, innovation and other technical gatherings need to be arranged by the madrasah in collaboration with local partners; (vi) To improve and increase the number of multimedia classroom so that maximum sessions can be conducted using ICT and (vii) Teachers of the madrasah can communicate with students using ICT based communication system. Students should be encouraged to submit their assignments and homework using email.

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Developing English speaking skill: Understanding the challenges of HSC level students through participatory action research

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Abstract

The research, of which the report is written, got started with the usual style of exploring problems where we chose to understand the challenges faced by the HSC level students in developing English speaking skill in Bangladesh and found out that there are sufficient literatures on the theories of foreign language skill development. Not only that, these literatures hold the notion of what types of problems may arise during such skill development with a very practical solution to them. But as practitioners, we haven't felt that those foreign courses of actions are working in our context accordingly. The study holds a theme that arises from a tension between clinging to the well-known techniques of speaking skill development in English language and opting for some practical thorough-fare that can complement the whole process of learning a foreign language in our context. During our exploration of the 1st cycle of PAR, we tried to start reflective conversation within the participant practitioners to bring about a change in their understanding of their existing practice. We played the role of facilitators, observers and participants in our own study and gradually evolve as a community of practice. Using a combo of methodologies, we tried to perceive the good bits of the existing practices while adapting to PAR approaches; we gradually tried to bring about an understanding of our practices. We did not expect that understanding would emerge too early in that situated context as we chanced to practice the idea in that context only for two days. But a participant practitioner surprised us by bringing about a reflective understanding to her class that she gathered as an insider in the observation session. We believed that through reflective conversation, the practitioners of that institution could share their classroom practices with each other; look for gaps in practice, try to fill that gap through their new ideas and in this way could help the students come out of the cocoons of challenges as speaking skill difficulties mostly sprung out from gaps in teaching practice or techniques. We kept us limited to the first cycle of PAR initiating a reflective conversation among the practitioners including ourselves and proposed further research in this regard in different educational institutions in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Reflective Practice, inhibitions, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English as Second Language (ESL), Participatory Action Research (PAR), contextualisation, L2 (Second language), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Introduction

Learning a foreign language is a kind of adventure through which students can encounter and learn a language that is not native but interesting. On the other hand, skill development in a foreign language is not a matter of magic that gets happened overnight. Foreign language skill development has become a crucial matter globally as English language has got the status of being the ‘lingua franca’. Nevertheless, English is taught throughout the world in different context such as EFL, ESL, and EIL. According to Ur (1991):

Of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important, people who know a language are referred to as ‘speakers’ of that language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing; and many if not most foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak (p- 120).

This idea of Ur was enough to emanate a doubt in our mind that why our most learners are not comfortable with speaking in English? We know that inhibitions in speaking a foreign language is a natural experience for L2 learners but it is not an inherent problem for learners rather it springs out mostly from gaps in teaching practice. Generally, if there is problem in input, there may have some defects in outputs. However, we did not want to give our attention to learners of all levels because it would involve a lot of time and cost. So, we chose to understand the challenges faced by HSC level students in developing speaking skill in English language as they were learning English for the last ten years continuously and had passed a public examination.

However, the transition from GTM (Grammar Translation Method) to CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) was not an easier one which naturally created some noteworthy problems. Our age-old ideas about teaching practice are yet not ready to get adapted with CLT method. Teachers are still not ready to play the role of a ‘facilitator’ in the classroom while learners are facing various challenges in developing skill in English, specially speaking. We limited our concern to the learners of HSC level as they have come to this status by sitting at a public exam which has taken their test on English reading and writing skill and we consider these skills as the ‘advanced’ ones which involve comprehension. In contrast, listening and speaking are the primary skills and when one can write a foreign language, he/she surely has an input or store of that language. So, there may have some learning or teaching gaps in the ways of transferring the stored knowledge into skill. The curriculum instructs that to convert their stored knowledge into skill it is necessary to ensure the practice of four basic language skills in the classroom and emphasizes the development of speaking ability. But there remains a big gap between policy level expectations and actual practice in the classrooms as Podder (2013, cited in Alam, 2016) explores how the national confusion and flaws in policy dictated the classroom practices and negatively impacted the desired outcomes for listening and speaking. With this background in mind, the authors continued a research work, in a well- known institution of a divisional city of Bangladesh, the main focus of which was to find answers to the following questions:

- a. What are the instructions given in the curriculum regarding English speaking skill for HSC level students?

- b. What are the challenges faced by the HSC level students in speaking skill development?
- c) How the approach PAR can offer a feasible solution to these challenges faced by the HSC level students?

Now with a view to answering the above questions, the study gradually explored into the challenges faced by the students belonging to a small unit of our education system, hence leaving every opportunity of exploration, comparison and planning for the other units of the system. This article reports the study in detail using pseudonyms for the participants.

Literature Review- base of a theoretical framework

Feeling challenged in developing speaking skill in a foreign language like English, is an experience that has been felt by many L2 learners. Lindsay (2000) once conveyed some inspiring words to the language teachers saying that learning a language is challenging and the learners need our sympathy and our help. By being flexible and sensible helper, one can be a good language teacher. It's a fascinating job with many rewards (p. X). Keeping these words in mind, we started our journey piping through the literatures that involved our research interest area.

Developing speaking skill in CLT

Our new curriculum has been designed keeping into consideration the theories of CLT as it is a flexible language teaching method that has evolved with the development of the understanding regarding second language learning. According to Richards (2006), the current CLT theories and practices have drawn on a number of different educational paradigms and traditions from diverse sources and thus there is no single or agreed upon set of practices that characterize current CLT. So, CLT can be applied in varied ways, considering the teaching context, the age of the learners, their level, and their learning goals (p.22). Richards (2006) has affirmed some core assumptions related with current CLT that gives emphasis on developing speaking skill through engaging learners in interaction and meaningful communication in the second language (p.22). It can be presumed that CLT encourages the development of speaking skill giving us the liberty of contextualising.

The renowned linguist William Littlewood (1995) shares that the classroom should be considered as an artificial environment for learning and using a foreign language where the classroom environment can be exploited as a social context. There the foreign language can be used for classroom management, as teaching medium, for conversation or discussion session and for basing dialogues and role -plays on school experience (pp. 44-45). Both Richards and Littlewood have attached importance to using the second/foreign language in the classroom environment through CLT method.

The challenging factors observed by the experts

CLT method may be solely oriented towards and complementary to developing L2 speaking skill but problems may arise variedly during the practice. According to Ur (1991), a successful speaking activity involves characteristics like talking a lot by the learners, even participation, high motivation and an acceptable level of language accuracy. On the other hand, problems may arise in L2 class if the students feel some kinds of inhibition, worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face or simply shy, if they found no motive to express themselves

beyond the guilty feeling that they should be speaking (pp.120-121). Problems like low or uneven participation or mother-tongue use may also arise. Ur thinks that these problems can be solved by using group work, basing the activity on easy language, making a careful choice of topic and task to stimulate interest, giving instructions on discussion skills and by keeping the students speak in the target language. In this regard, Lewis (2002) expressed that in monolingual classes, teachers face particular difficulty in persuading students to speak English. Some ideas like role-play, group presentation by students, interclass debate, or speech competition can motivate the students a lot where a limited use of the first language can be allowed in clarifying a difficult point.

The most appreciated 'Monitor Model' that theorizes second/foreign language acquisition effectively can be recounted in this regard. Stephen Krashen (1982, cited in Yule, 1996) proposed the "Monitor Model" theory of second language acquisition, where he explored the fact of inhibitions by his 'affective filter hypotheses'. Affective factors are the emotional and psychological factors like motivation, self-confidence and anxiety which work as filters during the input of the second or foreign language. When the filter is low, students can receive more input and when the filter is high, students cannot receive maximum input. High filter slows down L2 acquisition. The model was very interesting to us as it focused on the matter why a learner feels challenged in learning a second language.

Factors inhibiting speaking skill development in EFL context

Mostly, language skill development challenges get issued where the language is a foreign one. In this respect, the EFL and ESL context cannot be ignored. Shumin (2002) expressed that effective oral communication in a foreign language demands the ability to use the language appropriately in social interactions. He pointed out some factors that affected adult EFL learners' oral communication like age or maturational constraints, incomplete forms; and loosely organized syntax hindering EFL learners' comprehension and affects the development of their speaking abilities. Moreover, socio-cultural factors as well as affective factors can also hinder the skill development process. The researcher offered the solutions of initiating small talk in the classroom and practicing interactive activities.

In the same way, Green, Christopher and Lam (2002) conveyed the idea that developing discussion skill can be an effective solution to the challenges in speaking skill development. They believed that discussion skills are often undeveloped in the EFL/ESL classroom as a combination of 'potent inhibitors' exist there that hinder the process. These potent inhibitors are large class size, students' level of proficiency and time constraints. A possible solution can be the use of structured or guided discussion where the learners will receive content input just before the discussion itself; they will be given roles to play then, and will follow predetermined steps through to the end of the discussion. Finally, the teacher will provide feedback on the whole performance.

Furthermore, Hosni (2014) focused on speaking problems as major challenges to effective foreign language learning and communication. She pointed out the causes to speaking difficulties to EFL learners such as "Linguistic difficulties" where the students struggled to find out the appropriate vocabulary while trying to speak in English. Moreover, she found out that students tend to use mother tongue in L2 class. She pointed out that teachers are more concerned with grammar and blamed shortage of time. Meanwhile, she took a look into the curriculum to analyze whether it included any speaking task or assessment criteria. She ended up prescribing that more communicative tasks should be included in the curriculum, in the classroom and through extra-curricular activities.

Innovative approaches used through contextualisation to develop speaking skill in L2

Varied works were found in our study field where new approaches had been employed through contextualisation. Saputra (2015) reported on, in this regard, results of a study that attempted to solve the speaking problem of students emphasizing the method CLT using the 'Kemmis and McTaggart model' where the research method was 'Classroom Action Research'. It was a collaborated work following 'Kemmis & Taggart Model' that was conducted for about four cycles, took speaking test and came to the conclusion that CLT had positive meaningful effort on improving students' speaking skill. Reporting on the problems, the writer illustrated the researcher's experience in the language class where students were not motivated in speaking task. Some of them were interested knew not how to express their idea due to their limited vocabulary and cultural background. Similarly, some of them knew how to construct sentences but felt reluctant to speak as they were afraid of making mistakes in grammar or pronunciation or afraid of peer censoring. They kept silent bearing their ideas and feeling in their minds. The purpose of conducting CAR was to solve the problems happened in the classroom. The design of the study followed the procedure of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting where the researchers collaboratively utilized some instruments such as observation checklist, field notes, and speaking skill tests. After the completion of four continuous cycles, the researchers got the desired result and concluded that the method CLT is very much congenial to developing English speaking skill in a typical EFL context.

Similarly, Harmer (2001) suggested doing action research in this respect. Writing about the experience of teachers, he stated that 'a potential danger for many teachers is that though each year or term brings us new groups of students, it is sometimes difficult to maintain a sense of excitement and engagement with the business of teaching' (p.344). He inspires the teachers for a development that will move them from 'unconscious incompetence' (where we are unaware that we are doing something badly) to 'unconscious competence' (where we do something well without having to think about it). Prescribing 'Action Research', he encouraged the teachers to get engaged with its procedures to improve aspects of their teaching. He suggested techniques like collaborative development among teachers, peer teaching or observation, and making teachers group or associations in this regard. Moreover, he encouraged the development of a 'virtual community' where through internet; teachers can talk to each other, exchange ideas and ask for help. Especially, teachers who work on their own or feel isolated can enter into interesting discussions on these sites (p. 350). Though he suggested 'Action Research' to bring change into teaching practice, he advocated numerous broader view of development for teachers' and teaching practice through his book.

However, the PhD thesis done by Alam (2016) was a guiding work to us as the wider context of his research went with ours. He worked by adapting Participatory Action Research where he emplaced the western construct of PAR to make a transition for Bangladeshi context. Alam (2016) in his thesis reported and illustrated the development of a learning community of teachers in a rural Bangladeshi secondary school through the adaptation of PAR approaches. He believed that PAR provides opportunity to explore existing conditions of teaching practice offering explorative tools to examine collaboratively and reflect on the practices. This reflective practice can better students' educational outcomes. The observable outcome of the project was that it took more than six long months to get the teachers habituated with the process but at last they received that, and gradually brought change in their practice both outwardly and inwardly.

It was noted by us that PAR was a new paradigm for research. According to Stringer, the purpose of PAR is to improve the quality of people's organizations, communities and family lives (Stringer, 2007, cited in Creswell, 2012). Kemmis and McTaggart pointed out six central features of PAR like -exploratory, participatory, practical and collaborative, emancipatory and reflexively focused (Kemmis and McTaggart, cited in Creswell, 2012). At the same time, each version of PAR reflects the cultural, political and economic realities, and social issues of the time and place in which it was developed as well as the personal experiences of the individuals who led the movements in these locations (Miller and Maguire, 2009). So, PAR is not a fixed set of rules or approaches; rather it has the contextualization option.

However, these literature reviews gave birth to the research questions and guided us so subconsciously that a theoretical framework germinated. We never went for theorization so as to cling to the inductive approach. But we wanted to be informed with a theoretical map that would guide the research process and progress continuously. Only one idea would not work, and so, we went for a blending of ideas to frame our next steps. Jeremy Harmer's (2001) idea of "The developing teacher" presents before us a worldview of a teacher that the world desires right now. Teachers who seek to develop themselves and their practice will benefit both their students and themselves. Our study was not all about exploring the challenges of the students, it wanted more than that. So, for adding that 'more' to our study we combined Harmer's (2001) idea with Alam's (2016) contextualized PAR approach where we conceived a teacher who will get developed by reflecting on his own practice through the eyes of his/her colleagues. It will be a 'collaborative practice of sharing and reflecting'. The blending of Harmer's idea with Alam's contextualised approaches of PAR helped us organize our ideas in a way that we could visualize the whole research step by step.

Methodological Framework

A methodological venture became crucial to the study as we not only wanted the exploration of the challenges faced by the HSC level students but also desired a beginning of a reflective practice where the practitioners sought for a change towards betterment. The ways of collecting data, described here, showed how we reached to the answers to our research questions.

Firstly, we chose to work in this field with qualitative methods as according to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore (p.16). The framework allowed us to explore our participants' experiences and ideas in natural settings. It is descriptive in nature, offers clarification through process data and very much suiting to educational research.

Similarly, we took the approach of Participatory Action Research within our methodological framework as it is not a rigidly fixed or mechanical sequence and creates a perfect window to address social changes easily by collaborating communities (Miller & Maguire, 2009). Moreover, it brings 'strategic change to practice' (Kemmis and McTaggart 2005, cited in Alam, 2016). We had before us the communities of teachers where collaboration was needed and PAR could open up a window of sharing among them as practitioners.

To make the collaboration effective, we played a twofold role. Firstly, we were an active co-participant in the research process, playing our role according to the situation, encountering everything as well as reacting at the process. Secondly, during different activities, we played the role of both insider and outsider.

Not only researchers but also the research setting played a very significant role in the research process. So, for the greater interpretation of paradigm, we took into consideration the research setting as it involves not only the physical, economic and social context of a community, but also the world views that shape the values, discourses and expectations of the community (Alam, 2016). Stepping into that setting was furthered by the principal of the college who successfully played the role of a gate keeper and introduced us with our participants. Initially our plan was to work with three or four teachers only as we thought it would be better to work with those who had enthusiasm. With the help of the two, we got introduced with the class that we were going to observe and with the students with whom we were going to have FGD. However, we were the participants also in the research.

Though we were also the participants in the research process, we did not forget to gain permission from the other participants. After getting permission, we explained the research topic to the participants, assured them of anonymity and confidentiality, gave them choice to participate or withdraw, and explained each question in Bangla. We also gained consent of taking photographs and audio recording their speeches. During transcribing the data, we tried to preserve the meaning they conveyed.

Furthermore, methodological tools for collecting data were adjusted by us time to time to fit our research purpose. We had been in the field for five days and spent three days to get acquainted with the wider context of the research setting. We utilized rest two days for doing focus group discussion, observations, and debriefing which were typical to PAR. On the other hand, unstructured interviews like simple conversations were intrinsically done as a part of qualitative research. For example, the conversation with the principal, while taking tea, was an unstructured conversation. Actually, most of these conversations were spontaneous, even when we planned their direction in advance. The guided questions could be an instance in this respect. We prepared some guiding questions in our mind that could lead to more analytical and useful data. For example, we tried to start our interview session with a question like this:

“What is your opinion in connection to speaking skill in the existing curriculum?”

This question served two purposes at a time. Firstly, we got some data related to our first research question and next it showed whether the interviewed had any pre-conception about speaking skill development. Such types of question guided the interview session to a more relevant broader perspective.

According to the framework, we observed lessons at first and debrief afterwards. We invited a teacher available there to accompany us to the classroom for observing the class as insider. We observed two classes by two different teachers in two consecutive days. Then, we did a FGD with six students and the teachers facilitated the selection process of students. So, it was a purposive sampling. We considered the sample size satisfactory to our purpose as Creswell (2012) defines FGD as a process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people typically four to six (p. 218). At the FGD, we decided to break the ice at first and started with warm up talks like how many of them wanted to be a doctor and how many of them didn't. It took 51 minutes and we recorded everything.

The debrief session took place after that, where we shared what happened in the classroom we observed. A critical discussion took place where we reflected on our own practices through the eyes

of insiders and outsiders, never suppressing our own point of views towards the whole context. We recorded it also.

However, we never forget to take photographs during the observation and debriefing so as to memorize the ins and outs of the classroom and the sessions. Moreover, we kept the audio-voice through the use of mobile voice recorders.

We tried to keep the analysis more aligned to the purpose of the study where our shift in understanding and the emerging design of PAR contributed a lot. Moreover, we had to change our roles time to time during the process of data collection to prompt discussion on more provocative issues related with teaching practices.

Lastly, we tried to present the narrative in a sequence so that the readers could understand the evolving nature of the work. Meanwhile, we added large section of dialogues made by the participants in our findings chapter, as simply paraphrasing could disconnect the speaker from the reader. We added the whole process of transcribing dialogues in the appendices of the study report submitted to NAEM for assessment.

The findings to be reported next can show how much have been done. In fact, the methodology section can be compared to a bridge that connects the purpose of the study with the findings. If it is not a strong bridge, a study can fail to reach its goal.

A curriculum oriented towards speaking skill development in English

The adoption of the first National Education Policy 2010 resulted in a new English curriculum in Bangladesh. The change in the curriculum was drawn in order to convert knowledge into skill which focuses on...

... teaching-learning English as a skill-based subject so that learners can use English in their real-life situations by acquiring necessary language skills as well as knowledge, pursuing higher education and having better access to local and global employment (National Curriculum 2012, p. 24).

The English Curriculum for XI and XII level was the sole document to us to find out answer to our first research question The curriculum emphasized that all four skills would be practiced in the classrooms in an integrated manner (National Curriculum 2012, p. 24). Besides, the curriculum said that speaking skill should also be included in the assessment system. The 4.2 subsection of the curriculum reflected that:

Listening and speaking skills of learners will be assessed through continuous assessment and these (10+10 =) 20 marks will be added to determine the learners' final grade in the summative assessment (p. 27).

Moreover, the curriculum has instructed the writers of the textbook to develop themes, topics and activities that will result into acquiring competence in four language skills. The curriculum hopes that it will enable the students follow and give instructions, announcements, directions, and to respond in English. Moreover, students will be able to describe people, place and gather a good knowledge about stress, intonation and English sounds. In a word, the curriculum has given instructions that are very complementing and congenial to developing speaking skill in English language.

Assessment system dictating classroom practices

English speaking skill is not assessed formally in the college as well as in public examinations. This reality got much focused in our FGD with the students and interview session with Mr. Karim especially. During the interview session, Mr. Karim shared with us in this respect:

The students are interested in solving model questions for passing or getting good marks in the exams. Even when I try to inspire them regarding speaking and listening, they show reluctance. For many of the students passing in English is the issue. If anything was included regarding speaking and listening, students would attach importance to practice those skills even for the sake of passing exams or scoring well. Students can at least face an oral test which would be included in the testing system something as the students of science group have as practical exam. (Mr. Karim, Teacher, Face to face interview, 12.11.2019)

The same gap in the system echoed in the voices of the students:

We do not face any speaking test in the HSC final exam and not even in the internal exams of our college. So, many of us do not find any interest in practicing these skills rather we divert our attention to the difficult subjects like physics, chemistry. I myself feel that if something were given regarding speaking in examination, I would practice it more seriously. (Ayesha, Focus group discussion, 11.11.2019)

So, practically the absence of assessment system in English speaking skill discouraged its practice in the classroom of our studied college.

A teacher oriented vs a learner oriented session

Two sessions conducted by two different English teachers were observed by us where we experienced two opposite facets of our classroom practices. The first observation was made with an insider where Mr. Karim started the class as follows:

The teacher delivered lecture on EFT. It was Unit 3, Lesson 4: From Filippos Fylaktos' Film "My Brother, the Traffic Policeman". The teacher started his session in English and introduced the topic. Then he shifted to the mixed use of language and the class mainly remained mother tongue delivery based. The teacher directly jumped to the topic of the text, read out the text loudly to the students, stopping sometimes to translate some new English words into Bangla, or asking for some synonyms of the word, tried to relate the topic with some familiar names or personality of our own or neighbouring culture, and ended the class asking questions from the previous class and giving some suggestions for the upcoming annual exam. (Researcher's field notes, Mr. Karim's class, English for Today, 11.11.2019)

Another observation was made during the session of Mrs. Fatima where we experienced that:

It was a class for the students of Humanities of class XI where 18 were present among 150. It was a class on 'Right form of Verbs: Conditional Sentences and the Use of Since'. The teacher used Bangla as medium of instruction but while writing down on board, she used English. The teacher explained the rules by examples taken from their own context and real life experience. The teacher explained a situation to the students and later on involved the students to write similar examples and then read the examples aloud. At the same time she involved the students in active discussion. She went to each individual student, monitored them, and engaged them in activities.

The students were attentive while listening, took notes, and followed the instructions given by the teacher throughout the class. The teacher finished the lesson within the allocated 40 minutes and pre-announced what would be learned in the next class. (Researcher's field note, Mrs. Fatima's class, English 2nd paper, 12.11.2019)

In the same research setting, we observed two simply different sessions that throw lights on the existing practices.

Tension around class-size

A discussion on class size came again and again in our interview and debriefing session where we encountered a kind of tension arising around the problem of class size. Mr. Karim shared during the interview that:

Large class size poses as a hindrance to the way of English speaking development. In a large class, the speaking activities cannot be practiced properly. I have tried to conduct a class thoroughly in English, but to my surprise, I have found that it decreases students' attendance. (Mr. Karim, Teacher, Face to face interview, 12.11.2019)

While at the debriefing session, a very interesting but contradictory comment came from Mrs. Fatima:

It is true that large class size makes it impossible to practice speaking skill but if using English as medium of instruction decreases students' attendance, I will take it as a chance to practice English speaking in the class properly. (Mrs. Fatima, Teacher, Debriefing, 11.11.2019)

It should be noted here that in the observation session, we got average 25 students present in the classroom. So, Mrs. Fatima was not ready to get tensed about class size as her context did not possess the problem.

Monolingual reality

During the interview with Mr. Karim, he shared with us that our country is a monolingual one. So, students do not feel the obligation to learn another language. On the other hand, the tourism industry is yet to get flourished in our country. As very few tourists came to their area, girls and boys never felt that demand to know other languages. He himself once worked as a teacher in Asam (India) where students felt obliged to develop English speaking as a common medium to convey their ideas as India is a multi-lingual country. (Researcher's field notes, Mr. Karim's interview, 12.11.2019)

The textbook needs more incorporation of literature

The idea of incorporating more literary pieces to the existing textbook was conveyed at the debriefing and interview session. Mr. Karim shared that:

When I was a student of HSC level, our English textbook was enriched with literary pieces like short stories or fiction. Those literatures were too much interesting to hold our attention continuously in the class. Moreover, we listened to those stories with eagerness which in turn, developed our speaking skill or at least encouraged us to share those stories in English with our friends. (Mr. Karim, Teacher, Face to face interview, 12.11.2019)

Similar idea was voiced by Mrs. Fatima during debriefing. Meanwhile, a student expressed at FGD that: “I like the textbook very much especially the sections of memorable speech made by Bangabandhu, our father of nation and the African leader Nelson Mandela. I have tried to memorize them.” (Sumi, Focus group discussion, 11.11.2019)

The tendency to go back to Grammar translation method

In the focus group discussion, the students repeatedly shared one thing that they wanted to speak in English but could not produce the right word in the right moment for lack of vocabulary and knowledge of grammar. They thought that they needed more grammar classes to speak accurate English. Similarly, Mr. Karim stated that:

We should not throw away Grammar translation method right now. The curriculum needs to incorporate some direct grammar and translation items in the syllabus. Our students are not ready for skill development in speaking in English. That is why we have to go back to teach grammar in the class. Besides, their Bangla is yet to develop a lot. When I use some literary Bangla words to convey meaning to some English words, I have to step down to jargons at last because they could not grasp the Bangla word even. (Mr. Karim, Face to face interview, 12.11.2019)

However, the curriculum for HSC level emphasized graded grammar teaching through communicative approach (National curriculum 2012, p. 25)

Peer censoring

During the FGD the students reiterated the fact that:

Even if they wanted to speak in English with their friends or inside the class, they were censored by their fellows as their friends thought that speaking in English was a kind of show of one’s knowledge. They counted it as ‘snobbery’. On the other hand, they did not use it before teachers in the classroom because if they made a mistake, the class might burst out laughing. (Researcher’s field note, FGD, 11.11.2019)

Keeping that view same, Mr. Karim affirmed that:

Girls have the tendency to make sub-groups among them that limits sharing. In certain contexts, they are instructed to be calm and quiet from their infancy. For being a member of sub-groups, they cannot get mixed with other groups which limit communication. It poses a potential danger to their speaking skill development in English and even in Bangla. (Mr. Karim, Teacher, Face to face interview, 12.11.2019)

Gap in the previous levels learning

This idea was shared by both teachers and students. At the FGD, students pointed out that:

Their schooling was not same. Some of them studied in urban autonomous institutions where some came from primary and secondary schools situated at remote areas. Not everyone’s schooling was up to their expectations. So, all of them did not share the same knowledge or learning in English. (Researcher’s note, Focus group discussion, 11.11.2019)

At the interview session, Mr. Karim took the similar note where he said:

There is problem in our primary teachers’ recruitment system. We had a student who was

doing Master's in English, got the post of primary teacher through the recruitment and came to me one day to take some help in writing an application that she needed to submit to our principal. I was totally annoyed at such inability. (Mr. Karim, Face to face interview, 12.11.2019)

He believed that this gap in our primary recruitment system had created a kind of learning gap between our students in their previous levels. That's why, learners felt more challenged at the HSC level during learning a foreign language.

Lack of proper motivation

Language skills development needs proper motivation and this fact has got focused many times during the data collection by all the participants. During the FGD, the students affirmed that:

One of the teachers of their institution tried out different innovative methods to teach English in the class. That teacher gave them group works and practiced presentation classes. The group which wins received small token of appreciation from the teacher. Moreover, they tried to use formal English in that particular teacher's class, for example, they used full sentences to answer that teacher as she would not allow using single words in the class. (Researcher's field notes, Focus group discussion, 11.11.2019)

However, they pointed out the fact that they did not have any English debate club in their institution.

During the debrief session a question emerged between the practitioners that, "Whether it is more important that a student should possess an inherent interest to the subject or to the skill development, or whether the teacher should be the one who injects and promotes interest inside the student". The answer was not a unified one and Mr. Karim and Mrs. Fatima did not voice the same idea. Mr. Karim believed that there should have some inherent desire and capability within a student to learn a foreign language. A student should have that demand within to learn or develop skill. On the other hand, Mrs. Fatima believed that:

It is the teacher who is solely responsible for injecting the desire within a student. The enlightenment and encouragement should come from the teacher. Then the students will be able to understand his/her challenges and face it boldly. (Mrs. Fatima, Teacher, Debriefing, 11.11.2019)

Furthermore, Mrs. Fatima believed that:

Students had not got and still are not getting the proper stimulation from teachers. I myself was a student of this institution and had experienced how a new idea is difficult to apply in this locality and context. I believe that the challenges of the students' should be shouldered by the teachers as any learning difficulty is actually ensued from teaching system. (Mrs. Fatima, Face to face interview, 12.11.2019)

The themes that got developed through the data collection process had been presented above. The next section tried to unfold the meanings that were not fully interpreted in this section.

Discussion

The above account added after methodology depicted our exploration with the research tools where the participants' views and actions have been presented. The ongoing reflections made by the participants as well as the emerging understanding have also got reflected in the above section.

However, this part of the report tried to weave the broken threads together that were lying here and there in the study, so that the readers can get a whole picture of what has been done actually.

Through the literature review, methodological framework and the findings, we got three types of lenses for interpreting and discussing the meanings that got unfolded during the data collection process. The literature review gave us the theoretical lens through which we can look into the previous and existing practices prevailing in this field. Meanwhile, we got the contextual lens from the research setting and participants' actions and views.

However, using the contextual lenses, we found out that the curriculum has been designed keeping in mind the CLT method and each section focuses on teaching-learning English as a skill-based subject and the implementation of this curriculum has been conferred on the shoulder of 'skilled and competent teachers with proper training'(National Curriculum 2012, p. 24). But getting every teacher trained on CLT method is a matter of long time and keep waiting for that will intensify the problems related with learning. Though the curriculum shows the intension of developing speaking skill in English, it is yet to go a long way to materialize its intensions.

Similarly, the methodological framework was done according to the context that resulted in a lens through which we could see the existing practices and could break through them if they were not working. Through the framework, we tried to apply PAR- a new research paradigm, in that situated context and the actions targeting at bringing about a change in understanding the existing teaching- learning process and its nature. This change can complement teachers' understanding of the learners' challenges. The whole process of data collection, tried to convey a message to every practitioner that we can effectively research our own practice and the insight we gain by doing so can be useful to other practitioners.

Keeping that target of gaining insight into our own practice, the debriefing session was conducted. In the previous section, we have seen that both of the teachers bore the same idea of the problems faced by the students of that college but they were separate in their procedures of treatment to the problem. Mr. Karim thought that students needed inherent desire for speaking skill development in English where Mrs. Fatima believed in motivating the students to develop the skill. Both of them were very much different in their practice. Mr. Karim avoided speaking in English in the class to increase their attendance where, on the contrary, Mrs. Fatima used it as an opportunity to practice speaking in English in the classroom effective as she could successfully monitor a small size class. We went there to bring about an understanding about our own practices through reflective conversation and we would be happy just with a glimpse of that understanding emerging in us as we got the wider exposure to that context only for three days. But Mrs. Fatima surprised us by materializing that reflective understanding to her session that she got as an insider in the observation. She tried to fill in the gaps of the previous session through her 'facilitator' role-play. We count this reflective change brought by Mrs. Fatima as the observable outcome of our research.

After analyzing the data, it became fairly easy for the researchers to comprehend a connection between the lenses which were conceptualized for getting the deeper and greater view of the existing context. Evidently, to cope with the global demand, the new curriculum- 2012 opted for a paradigm shift and the incorporation of CLT marked that shift. But the ideals and intention of the curriculum can get subverted, although not intentionally, at the operational level where the curriculum is put into action (Alam, 2013). Now the shift needs to be complemented by other adjoining forces where we, as practitioners, can bring innovations in our practice for betterment.

The three parallel lenses here, in fact, are directing towards one direction -understanding students' learning challenges cannot be done in isolation. In fact, learning is completely interwoven with teaching and that teaching must be interesting, enjoyable and innovative at a time. For language skill development, we need a developing teacher who is ready to break his own teaching rules or norms by trying out new ideas. Simultaneously, practitioners need to be informed with the existing practices. Bringing change in our practice and outlook seems more feasible right now. PAR tends to be a focus by a group of stakeholders on the way they collectively strategise towards change (Greenwood, 2013). The incorporation of PAR in this study really signals a new direction to exploration of such challenges the study tried to understand. This research was a kind of mapping the facilitation of change. The implications and recommendations of the study have been given keeping in mind this reflective practice.

Implications and Recommendations

What we have found at the field was noteworthy as they gave us in-depth understanding of those challenges faced by the students of that particular institution. This discovery may not have greater implication for policy and practice but it implied a lot for the next cycle of PAR. To be honest, the philosophical intent of PAR is to transform the existing practice and for that purpose we need to understand, at first, what the existing practice is. Through the completion of the 1st cycle of PAR, we have tried to find the good bits of the existing practice basing on which the next cycles will plan the upcoming actions. Therefore, the next cycle holds the implication of this cycle. By facilitating dialogues between the practitioners, we tried to understand the existing scenario without going for the intervention. So, the implication of the understanding we gathered necessarily lies in the next cycle where intervention is awaiting for policy and practice and at the same time to modify our own practices as well.

In fact, through replicating the same procedure to different institutions of our country, we can get a better understanding of the problem and can complete the first cycle of problem exploration in the real sense. The understanding can guide practitioners to further problem exploration in language skill development and can provoke more situated case studies involving reflective practice and participatory investigation.

Thus, recommendation for policy and practice depending on the findings of this study is a far matter for us. If we suggest anything, it can be applicable for that particular institution only. The positive side of our finding was that both the teachers and students possess same ideas of the challenges and they were very much eager to cope with that. This eagerness needs to be motivated by the administration and complemented by the infrastructure. To keep the eagerness of the students ablaze, the teachers need to apply new techniques of speaking skill practice in the classroom time to time. More presentation classes in English can be arranged based on the students' real life experience. English debate club should get started in the college. Meanwhile, speaking in English can be encouraged more between the students as friends to stop peer censoring. The reflective practice can help the teachers step into learners' shoes and become learners themselves for the time being which can complement the whole process of understanding learners' problems in the long run.

Conclusion

Through this educational research, we wanted to affirm that change cannot be brought overnight, and thinking out of the box is merely a challenge to many of us. But we would also like to affirm that this completion of a mini cycle embedded in PAR had discovered ways of change that were dormant within us and we were unaware of that. And it is very much evident in Mrs. Fatima's emerging understanding of her own practice through reflecting on other's practice.

It cannot be disregarded fully that we, as teachers and practitioners, own our students and therefore, the students' voices reflect the teachers' voices as well. It is like separating the voice of Socrates from the dialogues of Plato. Within the boundaries of that particular institution we did participants' observation, semi-structured interview with the teachers and debriefing between the observers and researchers just to explore what is our understanding of the existing practices. Through the document analysis we got to know that the new curriculum for classes 11-12 of English language has intention for speaking skill development for making our learners resourceful global citizen. Meanwhile, the students' voice reflected what they deemed to be the challenges and what possibly could be done to address the challenges. The teachers' voice, at the same time, got similar note with the students where they showed their familiarity with the instructions given in the curriculum but got hindered implementing them as infrastructure and context did not complement those practices of skill development.

This reflective practice can be furthered by us in our own institutions more efficiently as we have learnt how to research our own practice. The 1st mini cycle of PAR has got started holding our hands and the next cycles may hold the solution to such challenges of speaking skill development

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Inclusive Education for the Children with Autism at Primary Schools: Situations and Challenges

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Mourin Barua²**

Abstract

The aim of the study is to explore the situation of educating children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (henceforth autism) in an inclusive classroom which can be a logical discussion for the context of Bangladesh. Here the context is mainly about the classroom of primary level where minorities of children with autism are taking part under the control of inclusive education with normal children. In order to explore such challenges qualitative data have been collected through semi-structured interview questionnaire on mentioned issues, parents interviews have also been conducted comprised seven differently able children among five selected schools, five experts' or education specialists' opinion from University of Dhaka to clarify concepts and challenges in social context, cognitive ability test for the children with high functioning autism (using DSM-IV for screening) and using observation schedule (for classroom behavior both of the teachers and the learners with autism). The findings of the study revealed that autism is manageable where trained teachers' and parents' consciousness is must. However, except a few, almost all the teachers are not trained enough to facilitate in inclusive classroom. Besides, most of the teachers think that in these purposes normal learners have to support them for the development of their social and communication ability. Even teachers try to maintain frequent communication to the parents of the learners with autism but the problem is high expectations of the stakeholders. Moreover, the evaluation system for inclusionary practices is another issue to rethink for better outcomes. Teachers are not habituated to use individual education plan or applied behavioral analysis (ABA) even teachers rarely use lesson plan in the classroom to support special need learners. The study comes up with some important suggestions for the learners with autism among inclusive classrooms.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Children with Autism, High Functioning Autism, Cognitive Aptitude

Introduction

This study aims at exploring the logical situation of educating children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (henceforth autism) in an inclusive classroom. Under mainstream education, in an inclusive classroom, vast range of students like: ethnic learners, slow learners, disabled child, weak learners might be available. Here in this research we have studied only the children with autism.

According to Giffen (2011) “Inclusive education is the practice of teaching disabled students alongside their non-disabled peers in regular classroom settings, instead segregating them in special classrooms”. The term ‘inclusive education’, have already been established in the context of world education system from the last two decades through many international declarations, like the UNESCO Declaration on Education for All (1990), the Dakar Framework (2000) and the Salamanca Declaration on Inclusive Education (1994) highly claimed education of children with special needs (Ahsan & Burnip, 2007).

The term inclusive education is equally applicable for children with autism especially those who are high functioning autistic children. Moreover, autism is not a curable disability as it affects the typical functionality of the brain but it can be controlled. The research title has been designed for study; where we wanted to observe the present situation of inclusive education for the children with autism (high functioning autism, particularly able in one or different sectors) in Bangladeshi context on the basis of different merit level.

Definition of Key Terms

- Autism: Autism is a neuro-developmental disorder that affects the normal functioning of the brain.
- Intelligence Quotient: It is a measure of the intelligence of an individual as compared to the statistical norms taken as 100.
- High Functioning Autistic Children: It is part of autism spectrum disorder and children having an IQ of 70 or greater.
- Low Functioning Autistic Children: Children with mental retardation and level of IQ is less than 60.
- Inclusive Education: Education of children with special needs integrating with normal students in a general classroom.
- Child Psychology: Special branch of psychology that focuses on the development and behavior of a child.
- Cognitive Aptitude: Cognitive aptitude measures an individual’s ability to think and perform critically.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

- To explore the present situation of learning ability and cognitive aptitude for children with high functioning autism

- To find out main challenges for implementing inclusive education to facilitate the children with autism under the context of Bangladesh
- To determine some strategic approaches as part of inclusive education to serve the autistic children in Bangladesh

Rationale of the study

It is possible to assume that parental involvement and teacher's facilitation can make high functioning children with autism, efficient for their self-development and our society could consider them as a true asset of our country. Even government can take necessary measures to reduce such challenges for both teachers as well as parents. Besides a few studies with some loopholes have been conducted in this area and these studies do not correlate any specific issues like we have chosen for our study. The issue not only needs to be addressed from a social view-point, government level, but from families as well. It has also been viewed from an inclusive pedagogic context.

Scope of the Study

Inclusive education for children with autism at primary level is comparatively a new area of study in Bangladesh and therefore, there have been a lot of scope to explore many important areas in this field. Inclusive education is one of the key factors that determine success in the context of children with autism

Background of the Study

Autism is a genetically developed spectrum disorder and curable over time. The characteristics of autism is not fixed as they show abnormal eye contact, unusual social communication, verbal communication disorder, repetitive use of words or phrases and different modes of response. As autism is not an incurable disability thus proper intervention and care may help the children with high functioning autism to learn well as well as to maintain effective communications with peers and society (Powers, 2000). Through inclusive system of education, the children can get the opportunity to interact with and teach from his/her fellow mates that can help them to interact fruitfully and develop their social and personal skills gradually. But the teachers should play a very important role in managing the communication amongst the children with disability and the peers, where in an inclusive classroom the teachers must have the skills to understand the students' level of maturity. Therefore, the classroom discussion must be on a level based of the learners to ensure their comprehension (Wagner, 1999).

In (2006) Ahuja & Ibrahim stated that, like many other teaching-learning processes inclusive education has many challenges as it depends on various contexts of both inside and outside of the school facilities. Thus, the teachers have to face same barriers to support the differently able children specially the children with high functioning autism in a same classroom with normal children. The new teachers have to suffer much if they have no training and guideline from the respective authority regarding teaching-learning of the children with autism.

Very few researches have studied about the inclusive education in the context of autism in Bangladesh. Thus, this study intended to investigate the present scenario of inclusive education for the children with autism at primary level in Bangladesh. To mainstream autistic children,

inclusive education is essential because most of the parents think that their children are not capable to perform individually (Barnard, 2000).

Different researchers demonstrate that, three major areas must be introduced to implement inclusive education effectively. According to Huang (2007), those are the complete team of special education professionals, clear concept about inclusive schooling and proper time for planning and training. Without these three major steps it is really tough to improve with inclusive education. Mullick (2012) stated that without empowering the local school authority it is not possible to provide quality support to the children with special need.

Very few researches have worked on inclusive education in the context of autism in Bangladesh. This study intended to explore the present scenario of inclusive education for children with autism at primary level in Bangladesh.

Conceptual Framework

Analyzing the reviewed literature the study was preceded based on the conceptual development considering the main areas of the study. The following conceptual framework guided the whole study.

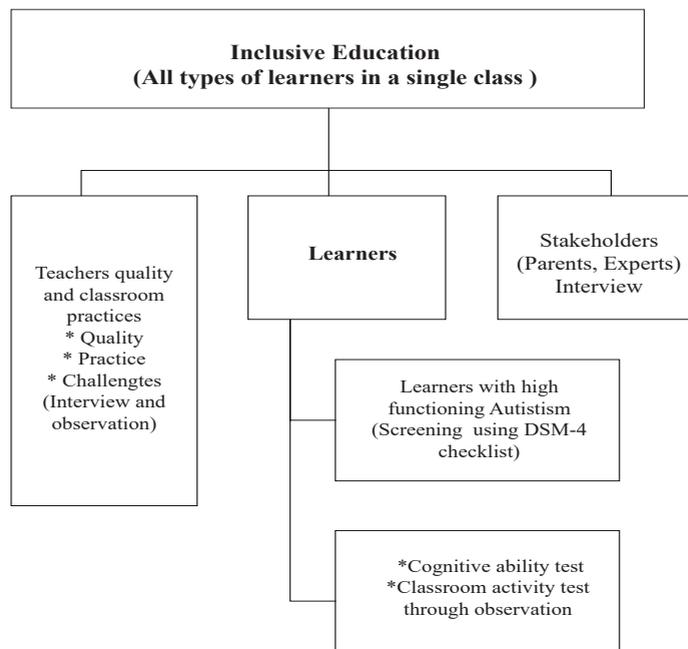


Figure 1: Conceptual framework at a glance

Methodology

This study is based upon DSM-IV scale which is known as ‘Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder’. The present research is designed to explore the present situation of learning ability of high functioning children with autism and challenges faced by the teachers to facilitate the children with autism. The research team has visited primary schools several times, to observe children with autism and collect data from the primary school’s teachers and from the learners with autism. Some Expert opinions was taken through interview schedule.

Research Questions

1. What is the present situation of inclusive education for the children with autism at primary level?
2. How does inclusive education assist the autistic learner’s self-development in Bangladesh?
3. What are the main challenges faced by the teachers to facilitate the children with autism in the context of Bangladesh

Sampling

Selection of Schools:

Five Primary schools were selected from central and remote areas of Dhaka district and also from Manikganj district, which were established to facilitate the children with autism in a normal classroom atmosphere.

Selection of teachers:

We have selected one teacher in each primary school so from five schools, we got 5 (five) teachers, who were involved in inclusionary practice.

Selection of children with autism:

Seven students were selected for learning aptitude part from different grades, where children with autism have been selected purposively, including learners of different merit level and various backgrounds of primary sections (class 1-5) from five different schools. Moreover, 7 autistic children were selected from 5 primary schools purposively.

Selection of Parents:

We have collected data from each parent of children with autism at the same schools. So from 5 schools we have taken interview of 5 parents.

Selection of Experts:

We have selected total five (5) experts from University of Dhaka from the department of Linguistics, Communication Disorder and Special Education, Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka.

Level of Students:

The learners of ages ranging from 3 years to 7 years were purposefully selected from 5 (five) public and private regular schools of Dhaka and Manikgonj district. The given numbers of teachers were selected from the same schools.

Research Tools	Participants	Sample Size	Sampling	Modes of Data Analysis
Interview for Parents	Parents of children with autism	5x1=5 Parents of the Sampled children with autism	Purposive	Thematic Analysis
Interview for Teacher	Teachers (primary school)	5x1=5	Purposive	
Class Observation	Primary school Classroom	5x2=10 Classroom observation (grade 1-5)	Purposive	
Learning Aptitude Test by Picture Stimuli	Primary School	2+1+2+1+1= 7 (Children with autism found from the Sampled Schools)		
	University of Dhaka	5x1=5	Purposive	Thematic Analysis

Table 1: Sampling, data collection tools, sample size and analysis technique at a glance:

Tools of Data Collection

The data were collected through questionnaire from teacher's interview, parent's interview, expert's opinion, learning aptitude test (using picture stimuli) as well as classroom observation schedule in the above mentioned selected institutions. The proposed data collection tools and their attributes are given below:

Three (03) research questionnaires, one picture stimuli checklist for learning aptitude test and one observation schedule were used to conduct this study. These are-

1. Checklist for screening Children with Autism
2. Classroom Observation Schedule (According to RQ- 01& 03)
3. Interview questions for Teachers (According to RQ -02 & 03)
4. Interview questions for Parents (According to RQ- 02 & 03)
5. Interview of the educationalist or expert on Autism (According to RQ-02 & 03)
6. Learning aptitude test (According to RQ- 02)

Findings and Data interpretations

This study explicated all the information and evidence congregated for the study. Based on objectives the main themes are exploring the context, identification of the learners with autism, some inclusionary practices and challenges. The detail findings are described below.

Identification of the learners (children) with autism

From the sampled schools total 7 students were identified as learners with autism. The sampled students were marked according to their behavioral expressions justified by their class teachers using DSM-IV checklist. The following characteristics were agreed by the class teachers-

- They cannot complete their sentences
- They cannot maintain eye contact during oral communication
- They repeat the same word again and again
- They cannot understand analytical questions
- They like to stay alone or isolated
- They are very slow in knowledge perception

In the interviews of the experts on autism, they marked almost the same characteristics of the learners with autism. The problems of the learners with autism have been categorized according to following characteristics:

Social Communication

Weak social interaction, inappropriate eye contact, augmented behavior etc.

Language Developmental Disorder

They cannot use age appropriate language, unable to effective use of the four components of language, they cannot understand sign language. They need augmentative and alternative communication.

Repetitive and imaginary pattern/behavior

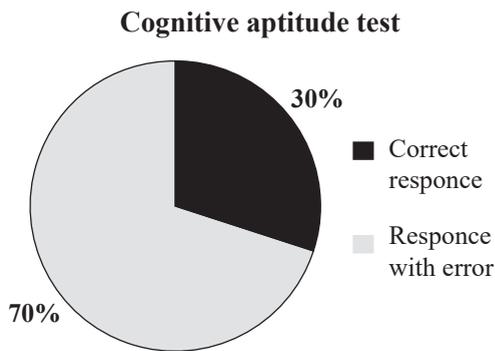
Children with autism create their own world and they like to think by themselves. They do the same work repeatedly. They decorate their own world according to their own interest. At times the can talk aimlessly.

Learners with autism in the inclusive classroom

From the sampled schools, total 7 learners were found as high functioning autistic children. From classroom observations the following scenario was found-

- They like to keep calm and can be oblivious to their surroundings. Although they listen to their teachers but could not respond properly and they were found showing some arrogance and they leave their classroom frequently

- They feel pleasant when teachers use colorful materials or video clips in the classroom
- They feel more pleasant to interact to their peers than their teachers
- They cannot focus properly on the given class tasks. So that whenever s/he asked to do anything they feel uneasy and very few of them can complete a full sentence
- At times they tear up their textbooks and notebooks. They prefer to write than to speak
- They feel better when teachers go to them and asked them especially with motivation but their expression during appreciation are not as expected
- To check the validity between teacher’s interview and classroom observations, a cognitive ability test questionnaire (based on pictures perception test) was applied to the learners with autism and the result found was not as satisfactory because only 30% of the learners with autism (in accurate 2 of them) gave the correct response where rest of them provided wrong response.



Only 30% learners responded correctly in the applied matching pictures based cognitive aptitude test questionnaire.

Rest of the respondents makes error in their responses.

According to the expert the physical and mental growth of the learners with autism never growth parallel.

According to a respondent, the mental growth keeps at same for the age of 2 when the learner’s actual physical age become 10 years

Figure 3: Cognitive Aptitude Test

The scenario was clear from the responses of the experts. According to the experts, autism is such a disorder that affects the main six sides of the learners. Those are as follows-

- Cognitive development
- Motor development
- Physical development
- Cultural development
- Social development
- Emotional development

Among the learners with autism the degree of problems (DoP) are being classified into four classes. Those are as follows-

- Mild problem: Condition normal and below average
- Moderate problem: Condition medium
- Severe problem: Condition unmanageable
- Profound problem: Condition unmanageable

Teacher's role in the inclusive classroom

Two classrooms from 5 sample schools of the each of the 5 teachers were observed. The classroom scenarios were mentioned through some specific theme as observed.

Classroom Management

In the inclusive classroom the size of the entire observed classroom was large and the instruction of the education policy about class size was contradictory. The teachers were found very much traditional in teaching. No specific techniques were noticed to manage the classroom. The following issues were identified from the teacher's interview:

- No training about teaching the learners with autism
- Misconception about inclusive education
- Poor support from administration-School and govt. bodies
- Unavailability of teaching aids
- Inappropriate instructional materials
- Poor community support and poor involvement of the parents
- Lack of motivation and monitoring
- No refreshers training facilities
- Class size is large but time is very short
- No therapy facilities
- Extra case load and no opportunities to support the learners with autism separately out of class time
- Lack of proper and participatory co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

Collaboration with peers:

Teachers try to engage the learners with autism to interact with their fellow mates. But they are weak in social communication and normally they do not feel any interest to communicate with others.

One of the teachers said,

‘Peer support is very much effective because there is an impact of age difference on learner's behavior. They feel comfort to interact easily and freely with their peers rather than their teachers’

Involvement of parents:

Teachers try to have a discussion with the parents of the learners with autism on a regular basis. The parental support is needed because the learners stay major parts of the day at their homes. During discussion with the parents of the children with autism we suggested them to be technical to support their child at home. From parents interview some behavioral patterns at home of the child were found. Those were:

- They like to keep alone
- They make unnecessary loud sounds
- They cannot do critical work but like to do what they prefer
- They use slang languages

- They do not feel confident to perform a given job
- They do not follow any direction properly
- They become very angry and destroy home ornaments
- They laugh by themselves without any reason
- They like to watch cartoons on TV or any video clip and try to copy

Involvement in Co-Curricular Activities:

Learners with autism get impressed by involving with different co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. An autistic learner basically keeps themselves away from others to interact fruitfully. But whenever they involve in games and sport inside or outside of classroom environment like- dancing, drawing, chorus singing, running, field cleaning, eating together, participation in excursion and picnic etc. it help the learners with autism for their social interactional development as well as their mental development.

Strategies for teaching the learners with autism in the inclusive classroom:

Classroom observation and interview with the teachers and experts makes a clear scenario about the teaching strategies of the learners with autism in the inclusive classroom. One of the teachers said,

‘In the inclusive classroom learners with different needs are present. As facilitators we have to be very strategic to select the techniques of teaching by satisfying all the learners in a class’.

Therefore the teachers were found trying to address each and every learner in the class. The following strategies were observed to follow in the inclusive classroom.

- Lecture method
- Discussion method
- Peer Work
- Group Work
- Demonstration Method
- Brain storming method
- Question-Answer method

They are visual learners and they like to learn by visualization. Therefore the major approaches of teaching for the autistic learners are:

- Visual learning
- Routine development
- Grabbing attention

Autism is manageable but not curable:

If there is no intervention then the problem of autism will definitely increase. According to an expert, *Parents, civil society and other stakeholders should clearly be reminded that from the learners with autism, 100% feedback cannot be expected but if we determined on our belief that they will do the correct thing always then they will become uncontrolled. So first we need to change our attitude and outlook to manage the learners with autism.*

Autism should be managed using the following approaches:

- Therapy
- Interventions
- Rehabilitation
- No high expectation from them and provide attractive support

The frequency of disorder should be minimized by applying the above mentioned approaches to the learners with autism.

Materials for children with autism:

They like to learn through visualization. The present prescribed textbook for primary learners is very supportive for the learners with autism because of its colorful and reflective images. They feel comfortable to learn from those pictures.

Evaluation of the learners with autism:

Inclusive education emphasizes on the same curriculum, textbook, techniques and materials in a classroom for all the learners. But from the classroom observation and interview of the teachers and the experts we found a different situation.

According to an expert,

Ordinary evaluation system is not suitable for the learners with autism. They need especial settings and more flexible question patterns with some known faces. Otherwise they will never perform even if they are capable of performing.

Triangulation of the Research Tools and Findings

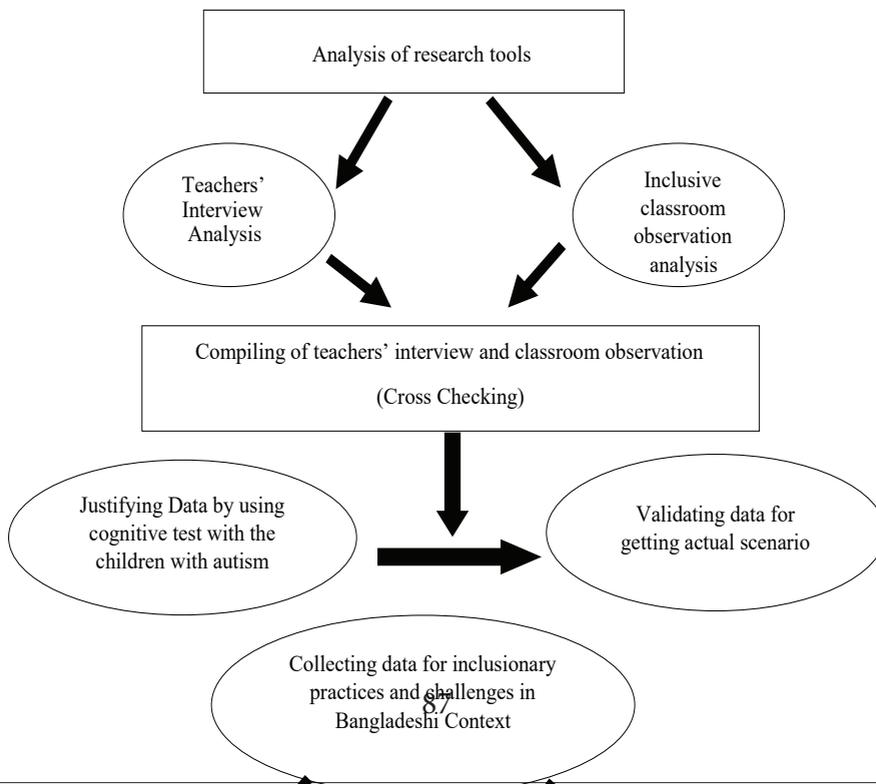


Figure 4: Triangulation of Research Tool

Discussion

According to Powers (2000) autism is not a curable disorder rather it is manageable if proper interventions are applied. The findings of this research revealed the same outcome that if no intervention is provided then the problem of autism will rise gradually. But through proper intervention this problem could be managed and minimized.

The education system of Bangladesh is centralized where very few south-Asian countries have followed the same administrative system. (Ahmed & Gabinda, 2010). Beyond this, the role of professional learning community (PLC) is very meaningful as it helps the teachers to develop their professional skills, collaborative and collegial practice helps the teachers to carry out their skills in a sustainable phase, it helps to get continuous support from their fellow colleagues therefore they can develop them gradually (Servage, 2008). Networking and collaboration among the schools is very important for the successful implementation of the inclusive education policy especially for the autistic children (Ainscow & Howes, 2007; Ainscow, Muijs, & West, 2006).

(Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey (2010) stated that, democratic process is essential to address the diversified social issues and the active participation of the different stakeholders i.e. teachers, parents, students and other community leaders to identify the main challenges and to find out the possible solutions of implementing fruitful inclusive education for autistic children. In this study emphasis has been given on attitudinal change of different stakeholders and govt. bodies regarding autism, capacity of the learners with autism and civil society.

Very few researches worked on the inclusive education in the context of autism in Bangladesh. Thus, the recommendations and findings of this study will definitely help the future researchers for further extensive research on this issue the govt. should consider the recommendations during policy making on inclusive education in Bangladesh.

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted in a small group which represents the overall scenario of Bangladesh. For getting the actual information we could cover some other divisions. But due to the limited time and funding, it was not possible to conduct the study on a larger scale. Even our team took huge time to identify the children with autism before piloting. Another limitation of the study was that our team visited several schools to identify children with autism in an inclusive classroom.

Conclusion

The issue autism is a grim concern at present time. As our Government is committed to provide quality education for all including inclusive education. Therefore, the children with autism are also the potential stakeholders to receive education for their self-development as well as to work for the society. Autism is not as like other disabilities therefore teachers, civil society, and other stakeholders have to pay keen attention on the right diagnosis of the children with autism and provide quality treatment to them. The findings of this study expose that the teachers are not qualified enough to facilitate the learners with autism properly as well as facilities in the educational institutions are very inept and not friendly for the learners with autism. The inclusive education is not the challenge there but the quality of the service providers and expectation of the community and parents are the issues.

Recommendations

The study found that to implement quality inclusive education the teachers and the stakeholders should change their outlook and attitudinal behavior towards the learners with autism. The following suggestions are of real importance:

Qualified and Trained teachers: Designated and qualified teachers should be appointed, quality training should be provided through teacher's education and teachers training for appropriate teaching techniques. The learners with autism are advised to take outside of classroom for 2/3 hours with therapist for developing their socialization, food intake system, toilet system and sport.

Collaborative learning approach: Collaborative learning approach should be applied. Co-teaching and expert teachers with teaching pedagogies for inclusive classroom should be implied for taking classes. The regular teachers should get a good opportunity of training and motivation from them.

Parental involvement: Parents know better about their child. They should inform the class teacher about the child's daily activity. Appropriate methods should be applied by parents and they should be sensitized about the capacity and behavior of their children with autism. Parental involvement should be functional.

Autism council: Establish an autism council in Bangladesh to certify the autism institutes. A new institution Autism Academy in Bangladesh is establishing under Ministry of Education supervised by department of secondary education. It will help the teachers of the inclusive education like NAPE (National Academy for Primary Education) and NAEM (National Academy

for Educational Management) for better professional services. Besides, the department of special education, Institute of Education & Research (IER), University of Dhaka should get involved in the training process of the teachers of inclusive education system.

Using materials: Materials must be colorful and related to practical objects. For evaluation of the learners with autism, questions related to abstract and reasoning should be avoided, because children with autism have no ability to understand. Even books should be provided with especially printed colorful pictures. Also laminated and colorful books for the learners with autism should be printed.

Extensive research: Extensive research on this issue for further action and progress should be conducted.

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Perception Of Teachers On Performance Appraisal In Private Secondary Schools Within Chittagong, Bangladesh

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Abstract

Bangladesh has an attractive remark in enhancing access and equity in education; with outstanding achievements in primary education sector also make gender equity at the primary and secondary education levels. Bangladesh also shows the ability to reduction in repetition and dropout rates education sector. Now, Bangladesh is at a crossroads, given its educational development and growth pattern. Teacher's performance is the major issue in educational sector. This study focuses on to find out the perception of teachers on performance appraisal conducted in their institution. Researcher took 50 teachers as sample and data were collect through standard questionnaire. In this study researcher strive to examine the way of executing performance appraisal in private secondary schools. Researcher also identifies the perceptions of teachers on performance appraisal and explore the other work related factors which affecting performance appraisal in private secondary school.

Keywords: Performance appraisal, Private secondary schools, Perception of teachers.

Introduction

Appraisal and feedback have a strong positive influence on teachers and their work. Teachers report that it increases their job satisfaction and, to some degree, their job security, and it significantly increases their development as teachers (OECD, 2009). Birgen (2007) included in his research as performance appraisal is a process of review by teachers, school heads, deputy school heads and other senior teachers of individual competencies, performance and professional needs. During performance appraisal process an individual teacher and a senior teacher collaborate in evaluating the teachers work as a professional person. It involves appraising all aspects of teaching including teachers organization of their classroom, how they manage the classroom activities, including the use of time and resources, how they behave towards the pupils, other teachers, school head, parents and the community. Kandie (2008) states that performance appraisal is conducted for the purpose of obtaining information that would enable the management make personnel decisions such as

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identifying training needs, promotions, transfers, salary increments, motivation and counseling. Performance appraisals begun in China in 222 AD and later on were introduced in the United States of America in 1883. In India performance appraisal was introduced after World War II and since then companies around the world have embraced it (Biswanath, 2010). Malos (1998) notes that the latest approach to performance appraisal system is use of 360 Degree feedback which provides performance feedback from a full cycle ranging from employees to managers within the organization. In this latest development the performance of an employee is measured against set objectives and is usually called Management by Objectives (MBO). Private primary schools appoint teachers through school management committees. The student-teacher ratio at the primary level was 43:1. The private secondary schools appoint teachers through school management committees. However, since establishment of the Nongovernment Teachers Registration and Certification Authority (NTRCA) in 2005; teacher candidates have been required to obtain registration from the NTRCA, which registers aspiring teachers for the secondary institutions annually through examinations. Only NTRCA-certified teachers are appointed, but since the NTRCA does not consider the pedagogical background of the candidates, many certified teachers are without a B.Ed. The NTRCA was supposed to be a national teacher registration and certification authority, but it was changed in terms of name and function. Such registration practice should not apply only to the private school teacher's but to all teachers and as a national standard. Promotion of school teachers is very much restricted. Career paths are limited for both primary and secondary school teachers. In Bangladesh, the working conditions in government schools in general are better than in the private schools. For instance, the Secondary Teachers' Service Regulations of 1979 of the Ministry of Education (MOE) state for recognized nongovernment secondary school teachers their duties and functions are: Teach the students in accordance with the curriculum, syllabus, and class routine by means of lesson notes, group discussions, demonstrations, etc.; Make personal contacts with the students for their individual guidance; Assist the school authorities in conducting examinations, organizing laboratories, and other curricular and co-curricular activities; Supervise student extracurricular activities; and Perform such other functions as may be assigned by the school management committee, or the headmaster, in the interest of the school.

Statement of the problem

Performance appraisals generally don't receive positive ratings from anyone involved in an organization. As a result employees who are directly affected by the Performance Appraisals are less than enthusiastic about participating in them (Schultz & Schultz, Duane, 2010). Further employees who are aware that their work performances have been less than perfect will not be willing to be evaluated. They also note that most workers just don't appreciate constructive criticism or any criticism as a result employee tends to be hostile knowing they could be given bad news on their performance. If indeed this is true then of what value are performance appraisals in the school system? (Stephen, November, 2014). Performance appraisal has improved efficiency in the public service which has experienced changing attitudes in working styles that are characterized by improved service delivery, intense competition among employees and high staff motivation towards attaining performance targets (Gacheru, 2010). Okoyo (2010) highlighted in his study on factors affecting the implementation of performance appraisal in Migori teachers training college found that there was lack of officially designed appraisal documents in the institution, lack of clear policy framework on which to implement the performance appraisal process, lack of executive support and failure to show serious concern for performance appraisal by the management of the institution. Literature findings raise the question about the state of performance appraisal in private

secondary schools if teacher training institutions have no specific policy on appraisal for private secondary schools? In this study researcher tries to explore the perception on performance appraisal in private secondary school.

Significance of the study

This study will deliver beneficial knowledge on this issue that should form the basis for reference to other researchers and readers. This study also anticipated to suggest significant policy statements through its recommendations for policy makers.

Objectives

The objective of this study is to discover the perception of teachers on performance appraisal feedback in private secondary schools in Bangladesh.

Key insights derived from this study include:

1. To examine the way of executing performance appraisal in private secondary schools.
2. To identify the perceptions of teachers on performance appraisal in private secondary Schools.
3. To explore the other work related factors which affecting performance appraisal in private secondary schools.

Methodology

In this study researcher use descriptive research design and the population of this study are private secondary schools. So the design was suitable for this research because the objective of study was to identify the relation and define how these determinants are supported each other. The target population of this study was the teachers who are providing service in private secondary schools in Chittagong City. Bangladesh. A total of 50 teachers who were respondents for questionnaires participated in the study from some selected private secondary schools. Both primary & secondary sources of data have utilized in this research & the information generated from it can be used widely by the organization itself to update its proceedings & make further progresses. Data has been collected by applying the standard questionnaire. Questionnaire has been adopted from the research project report of (STEPHEN, NOVEMBER, 2014). In questionnaire general questions are about gender, age and professional qualifications. Researchers have used Likert scale of fifth continuum from 1 to 5. 5= strongly agree, 4=agree, 3= uncertain, 2=disagree and 1= strongly disagree in this questionnaire.

Result and Discussion

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender of the respondents		
Male	22	44%
Female	28	46%
Total	50	100%
Age Distribution of the Respondents		

18-25	14	28%
25-35	16	32%
35-40	17	34%
40& above	3	6%
Total	50	100%
Professional qualifications		
Diploma	6	12%
Graduate-BED	4	8%
BA-PGED	5	10%
BSC-PGED	5	10%
M.ED	3	6%
BSC-AGED	5	10%
M.A	11	22%
Other	11	22%
Total	50	100%

Source: Survey 2018

In this study most of the respondents are Female. The females are 46% where the numbers of male are 44%. 28% respondent's age less than 18-25, 32% respondent's age 25-35, 34% respondent's age 35-40, and 6% respondent's 40 & above. From the among respondents 12% respondent's complete Diploma, 8% respondent's complete graduate-BED, 10% respondent's complete BA-PGED, 10% respondent's complete BSC-PGED, 22% respondent's complete M.A & 22% respondent's in Others.

3.2 Head teachers' responses regarding on the way of executing performance appraisal in private schools.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weighted Importance	Ranks	Total
	5	4	3	2	1			
You regularly conduct self-appraisal?	2	1	0	0	0	4.67	2nd	03
	66.67%	33.33%	0%	0%	0%			100%
You discuss with teachers on what needs to be done & jointly set targets achievement?	0	3	0	0	0	4	3rd	03
	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%			100%

You ensure that feedback provided during the interview confidential?	3	0	0	0	0	5	1st	03
	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%			100%
You appraise teachers based observation assessment of ability readiness & their potential?	1	1	1	0	0	4	3rd	03
	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	0%	0%			100%
The teachers leave the interview room knowing specifically what s/he's doing right or wrong?	2	1	0	0	0	4.67	2nd	03
	66.67%	33.33%	0%	0%	0%			100%

Source: Survey 2018

Head teachers regularly conduct self-appraisal in their institute and the teachers leave the interview room knowing specifically what s/he's doing right or wrong; these two issues ranked at 2nd position. Head Teachers said that they discuss with teachers on what needs to be done & jointly set targets achievement and also Head Teachers appraise teachers based on observation assessment of ability readiness & their potential but one of them had no opinion regarding this issue; these two issues ranked at 3rd position. Head Teachers ensure that feedback provided during the interview confidential. Researcher found that this issue ranked at 1st position. The teachers leave the interview room knowing specifically what s/he's doing right or wrong,

3.3. Teachers responses regarding on the way of executing performance appraisal in private schools.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weighted Importance	Ranks	Total
	5	4	3	2	1			
You are encouraged to make self-appraisal?	12	10	4	12	9	3.09	4th	47
	25.35%	21.28%	8.51%	25.53%	19.13%			100%
You discuss with head teacher on what needs to be done & jointly set targets achievement?	4	12	12	12	7	2.87	5th	47
	8.51%	25.53%	25.53%	25.53%	14.33%			100%
The head teacher ensures that feedback provided during the interview is confidential?	6	8	17	12	9	3.12	3rd	47
	12.76%	17.02%	36.17%	25.53%	19.13%			100%

The appraisal interview is based on observation, assessment of ability, readiness & potential of teacher?	12	7	14	8	6	3.23	2nd	47
	25.53%	14.89%	29.78%	17.02%	12.76%			100%
You leave the interview room knowing specifically what you are doing right or wrong?	9	10	17	9	5	3.38	1st	47
	19.14%	21.27%	36.17%	19.14%	4.25%			100%

Source: Survey 2018

Most of the respondents (46.63%) said that they are encouraged to make self-appraisal but some respondents (44.66%) said that they are not encouraged to make self-appraisal, where 8.51% had no opinion regarding this issue; it is ranked at 4th position. Most of the respondents (39.86%) said that they don't discuss with head teacher on what needs to be done & jointly set targets achievement. Where (33.68%) said that they discuss with head teacher on what needs to be done & jointly set targets achievement; it is ranked at 5th position. Most of the respondents (44.66%) said that the head teacher does not ensure that feedback provided during the interview is confidential. (29.78%) agreed but some respondents (36.17%) had no opinion regarding this issue; it is ranked at 3th position. Most of the respondents said that the appraisal interview is based on observation, assessment of ability, readiness & potential of teachers; it is ranked at 2th position. Most of the respondents (40.41%) said that they leave the interview room knowing specifically what they are doing right or wrong. Second largest (36.17%) respondents had no opinion and (23.39%) disagreed; it is ranked at 1th position.

3.4 Head Teachers' responses on their perceptions on performance appraisal feedback.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weighted Importance	Ranks	Total
	5	4	3	2	1			
You have regular discussions with the teacher about their job performance?	3	0	0	0	0	5	1st	03
	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%			100%
You create an enabling environment for feedback with the teachers.	2	1	0	0	0	4.67	2nd	03
	66.67%	33.33%	0%	0%	0%			100%
The teacher feels comfortable with the comment you give during the appraisal?	1	1	1	0	0	4	3rd	03
	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	0%	0%			100%

There is a consensus on the action plan to be implemented after appraisal?	0	2	1	0	0	3.67	4th	03
	0%	66.67%	33.33%	0%	0%			100%
The comments are made in a respectful manner that is constructive for feedback?	0	0	3	0	0	3	5th	03
	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%			100%

Source: Survey 2018

All Head Teachers argued that they discuss regularly with the teachers about their job performance; it is ranked at 1th position in this study. All Head Teachers argued that they create an enabling environment for feedback with the teachers; it is ranked at 2th position. Most of the Head Teacher said that teachers feel comfortable with the comment they (Head Teacher) give during the appraisal. But one of them had no opinion and it is ranked at 3th position. Head Teachers said that, there is a consensus on the action plan to be implemented after appraisal. But one had no opinion about that and it is ranked at 4th position. No opinion found from all head teachers about the comments are made in a respectful manner that is constructive for feedback and this analysis found that it ranked at 5th position.

3.5 Teachers responses on their perceptions on performance appraisal feedback.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weighted Importance	Ranks	Total
	5	4	3	2	1			
You have regular discussions with the head teacher about your job performance?	12	14	10	9	2	3.53	1 st	47
	25.53%	29.78%	21.27%	19.14%	4.25%			100%
The head teacher creates an enabling environment for feedback?	10	12	14	8	3	3.38	2 nd	47
	21.27%	25.53%	29.78%	17.02%	6.38%			100%
You feel comfortable with the comment you are given especially when you have not attained targets?	7	9	10	8	3	2.55	3 rd	47
	14.89%	19.21%	42.55%	17.02%	6.38%			100%
There is consensus on the action plan to be after appraisal?	8	7	8	6	7	2.36	5 th	47
	17.02%	25.53%	27.66%	12.76%	14.89%			100%
Comments are made in a respectful manner that is constructive for feedback?	7	8	10	10	2	2.53	4 th	47
	14.89%	17.02%	21.77%	42.55%	4.25%			100%

Source: Survey 2018

Most of the teachers (55.31%) said that they have regular discussions with the head teacher about their job performance and this issue ranked at 1st position. Most of the teachers (46.80%) said that head teacher creates an enabling environment for feedback; it is ranked at 2th position. Maximum teachers feel comfortable with the comment they are given especially when they have not attained targets; it is ranked at 3th position. Teachers said that there is consensus on the action plan to be after appraisal; it is ranked at 5th position. Most of the teachers said that feedback comments are not made in a respectful manner and this issue ranked at 4st position.

3.6 Head teachers' responses on other work related factors affecting Performance appraisal

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weighted Importance	Ranks	Total
	5	4	3	2	1			
You provide required resources to facilitate teaching & learning in the school?	1	2	0	0	0	4.33	1 st	03
	33.33%	66.67%	0%	0%	0%			100%
You facilitate teacher to attend training & other professional development course?	1	1	1	0	0	4	2 nd	03
	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	0%	0%			100%
You incorporate the views of the teacher how to improve standards in the school?	1	2	0	0	0	4.33	1 st	03
	33.33%	66.67%	0%	0%	0%			100%
You provide teachers with appraisal forms during the interview?	0	2	1	0	0	3.67	3 rd	03
	0%	66.67%	33.33%	0%	0%			100%
You keep a diary to record daily activities in the school?	0	1	2	0	0	3.33	4 th	03
	0%	33.33%	66.67%	0%	0%			100%

Source: Survey 2018

All head teachers provide required resources to facilitate teaching & learning in the school and they also incorporate the views of the teacher how to improve standards in the school; these are ranked at 1st in this analysis. Head teachers facilitate teacher to attend training & other professional development course; it is ranked at 2th position. Head teachers provide teachers with appraisal forms during the interview, but no opinion found from one head teacher; it is ranked at 3th position. From among respondents one head teacher keeps a diary to record daily activities in the school, but others have no opinion regarding this issue; it is ranked at 4th position.

3.7. Teachers' responses on other work related factors affecting Performance appraisal

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weighted Importance	Ranks	Total
	5	4	3	2	1			
You are provided with required resources to facilitate teaching & learning?	17	10	8	7	5	3.57	1 st	47
	36.17%	21.27%	17.02%	14.89%	10.63%			100%
You are facilitated to attend training & other professional courses?	15	7	10	10	5	3.36	3 rd	47
	31.91%	14.89%	21.27%	21.27%	10.63%			100%
You incorporate the views of the head teacher on how to improve standards in the school?	5	10	19	8	5	3.04	5 th	47
	10.63%	21.27%	40.42%	17.02%	10.63%			100%
You are provided with appraisal forms during the interviews?	10	7	14	13	3	3.17	4 th	47
	21.27%	14.89%	29.78%	27.65%	6.38%			100%
You keep a diary to record daily activities in the school?	10	15	11	10	1	3.49	2 nd	47
	21.27%	31.91%	23.40%	21.27%	2.12%			100%

Source: Survey 2018

Most of the respondents (57.44%) said that have required resources to facilitate teaching & learning but 25% respondents are not satisfied about the required resources to facilitate teaching & learning; it is ranked at 1th position. Most of the respondents (46.80%) said that they are facilitated to attend training & other professional courses but (32%) said that they are not facilitated to attend training & other professional courses; it is ranked at 3th position. Maximum teachers (40.42%) had no opinion that they do incorporate the views of the head teacher on how to improve standards in the school; it is ranked at 5th position. Majority (36.16 %) of the respondents agreed that they are provided with appraisal forms during the interview. Where (34.03%) respondents disagreed that they are provided with appraisal forms during the interview; it is ranked at 4th position. Maximum teachers (53.18%) keep a diary to record daily activities in the school and it is ranked at 1th position in this analysis.

Recommendations

From the overall findings of the study, the following recommendations are made on how to improve performance appraisal.

Head teacher must encourage all teachers to make self-appraisal. Head teacher must work with all teachers in determining the performance goals for the school and they should encourage teachers in determining the performance appraisal policy for the school. This would integrate the teachers' efforts towards a shared vision for the school. The head teacher is recommending developing a pleasant working relationship with the teachers where both can gain confidence in working with each other. The performance appraisal should be carried out regularly. Appreciation should be given to those who have excelled and those who have not should be encouraged positively. Though head teachers provide required resources to facilitate teaching & learning in the school and they also incorporate the views of the teacher how to improve standards in the school but must maintain or keep diary to record daily activities in the school. The teachers are also not provided with appraisal forms before the interview and therefore believe that the confidential reports written by the head teachers are appraisal forms. The government should ensure that all schools have established performance appraisal policy to facilitate professional growth of teachers. A good and relaxed working relationship between the head teacher and teachers is the main component to effective performance appraisal. The head teacher is recommending enlightening a pleasant working relationship with the teachers where both can achieve confidence in working with each other in order to achieve enhanced results.

Conclusion

The study revealed that performance appraisal is conducted in private schools where teachers are not encouraged to conduct self-appraisal. Sometimes the teachers are not jointly with the head teacher set targets for achievement and performance appraisal interview is based on observation, assessment of ability, readiness and potential of the teacher. On the perception of teachers on performance appraisal feedback, the study established that majority of the teachers do not like being appraised. They consider performance appraisal as a direct attack on their autonomy and do not feel comfortable with the comments they are given especially when the targets have not been attained. The teachers are also not provided with appraisal forms before the interview and therefore believe that the confidential reports written by the head teachers are appraisal forms. The government should ensure that all schools have established performance appraisal policy to facilitate professional growth of teachers.

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Practicability of the Module “Ethics in Public Administration” of Foundation Training Course Conducted by National Academy for Educational Management

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Abstract

National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM) conducts Foundation Training Course (FTC) for the BCS (General Education) Cadre officers in Bangladesh. In the course there are 22 modules, among which the 20th module is ‘Ethics in Public Administration’. The research team accomplished a study on “Practicability of the Module ‘Ethics in Public Administration’ of Foundation Training Course Conducted by National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM)” in 2017. The objectives of the study were to assess the practicability of the module, find out the limitations and assess the usability of ethics learnt by the trainees. Practicability was assessed by the suitability of the objective, training methods, duration of each topic, trainers` competency and evaluation method of the training course. The usability of ethics learnt by the trainees was assessed by a comparison of expectation and application of ethics learnt by the on-going and ex-trainees respectively. The study followed survey and content analysis methods. Data were collected from the on-going and ex-trainees using questionnaires and from the trainers and coordinators through FGD. It was found that, in spite of all its merits, the module on ‘Ethics in Public Administration’ cannot be termed as “practical”. Ten recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

Keywords: Parcticability, module, ethics

Introduction

Training on integrity, ethics and anti-corruption is provided in many countries around the globe for government officials, including countries with relatively high level of integrity in public

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administration as well as countries where corruption is widespread. Designing and delivering training on ethics is a long term investment; it can be expensive, especially when it targets thousands of civil servants. It is also a high risk investment, as training alone will not be able to increase integrity. It is therefore important to know which programmes have the best design and produce the best results. In Bangladesh, Foundation Training Course (FTC) is compulsory for all new entrants to the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS). Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC), National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM), National Academy for Planning and Development (NAPD), Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), National Institute of Local Government (NILG), Rural Development Academy (RDA) etc are engaged in providing Foundation Training to the different Cadre Officers of Bangladesh Civil Service. NAEM is imparting Foundation Training to the BCS (Education) Cadre officers. In this four month long course, there are 22 modules among which the 20th module is 'Ethics in Public Administration'. The module has 10 topics for 15 hours duration. Five different methods are used by the trainers to conduct the sessions.

Statement of the problem

Usually, the newly recruited officers of BCS (General Education) Cadre lack proper training on ethical codes. Foundation Training Course (FTC) conducted by NAEM is supposed to overcome this lacking as FTC has a dedicated module on "Ethics in Public Administration" in the course curriculum. But the module is found to lack some important aspects of ethical issues concerned with BCS Education Cadre officers coupled with some practical limitations in training scope. The present study intends to explore the practicability of ethics learnt in the module of FTC of NAEM. Practicability refers to the suitability of the module in all its aspects.

Rationale of the Study

It was found that not a single study had been conducted earlier on the practicability of the module titled "Ethics in Public Administration" of FTC imparted by NAEM. So, there exists huge knowledge gap in this area. The main justification of the present study is to fill-up this knowledge gap. The study attempted a comprehensive assessment of all the aspects of the module. Doing so, it unearthed many suitability issues of the module regarding objectives, topics, training methods, time allocation for each topic, evaluation methods, competence of the trainers, application of the lessons learnt etc. These findings are highly significant as NAEM authority can initiate effective revision of the module based on these. Other institutions engaged in imparting similar training programs can also benefit from the findings. So, this study has the potential to contribute in turning the newly recruited officers of BCS Cadres especially of BCS (General Education) Cadre into more ethical public servants to the nation.

Objectives of the study

General objective

The general objective of the study is to explore the practicability of ethics learnt by the participants in Foundation Training Courses offered by National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM).

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. to assess the practicability of ethics learnt in the module of Foundation Training Course,
2. to find out the limitations of the training on ethics,
3. to assess the usability of the ethics learnt from the module.

Methodology

Selection of method

Two methods viz., survey method and content analysis method have been followed to accomplish the present study.

Sources of data

Data in this study have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. Details of the sources are given below:

Primary sources

Primary sources of data comprised of the following respondents:

- On-going trainees (148th FTCs),
- Ex-trainees (142nd to 147th FTCs); and
- Course coordinators and trainers.

Secondary sources

Secondary data have been collected from various sources including brochure of FTC conducted by NAEM, published articles of different researchers and scholars, the official websites and papers of different training institutes. The study team went through different training documents available at NAEM and other training institutes.

Sampling and sampling procedure

A systematic method of sampling has been followed in the present study. Detail of the sampling procedure has been presented below:

On-going trainees

On-going trainees were selected from 148th FTC which was ongoing at the time of conducting the present study. The respondents were selected on the basis of purposive random sampling. Sample size of this criterion is 32.

Ex-Trainees

Ex-trainees were selected from immediate past six FTCs on the basis of their working stations. Here at first three former divisions viz., Barisal, Chattogram and Rajshahi were selected randomly. Then three districts viz., Barisal, Cox's Bazar and Rangpur were selected randomly from among

the previously selected divisions. Then purposive random sampling was followed to select the respondents. Sample size of this criterion is also 32 consisting of 14 from Barisal, six from Cox's Bazar and 12 from Rangpur.

Course coordinators and trainers

Eight Faculty members comprising of Course Coordinators and trainers⁴ of the module have been selected purposively.

Total sample size

Total number of sample size is 72.

Instruments of data collection

Two instruments of data collection from primary sources have been employed. Those are (a) Interview schedule for on-going and ex-trainees and (b) Focus Group Discussion (FGD) for the faculty members of NAEM.

Findings and Discussion

Major findings and discussion have been presented below:

Suitability of Objectives of the module

Most of the on-going trainees (65.62%) opined that the first objective of the module is 'Partly suitable', whereas around one fifth of the trainees (21.87%) found it 'Suitable'.⁵ On the other hand, according to most of the ex-trainees (68.75%) the objective is 'Suitable'. 31.25 percent ex-trainees perceived this objective as 'Partly suitable'. Majority of both the groups (53.12 percent and 78.12 percent respectively) mentioned the second objective as 'Suitable'. The faculty members have supported this view with the observation to omit the word "correctly" from the first objective.

Suitability of Training methods

Specific training methods are assigned for each topic in the course brochure.⁶ Most of the on-going and ex-trainees found the training methods as 'Suitable' for all the topics except the fourth topic. Highest 56.25 percent on-going trainees mentioned the training method "experience sharing" for the fourth topic as "Not suitable". Same notion was found among the ex-trainees. The faculty members also mentioned that the method for the fourth topic is not appropriate. The respondents also mentioned that "hand's on practice" should be followed as a dominant method for the topic titled "Table Manner & Dress Code".

Suitability of Time allocation for the topics

Four topics (code: 20.04, 20.09, 20.10 & 20.13) have been found by the on-going and ex-trainees to have insufficient time allocation. One topic (code: 20.02-03) is found to have more time allocation than required. Time allocation for the remaining topics is found practical.

⁴Mentioned hereafter as faculty members.

⁵See Annexure for the objectives.

⁶See Annexure for the topics and the training methods.

Suitability of the Evaluation Process

The module has only one evaluation method to evaluate the achievement of the trainees and that is “group exercise”. 37.50 percent of the on-going trainees opined the method as ‘Suitable’. Equal percentage of the same respondents mentioned the method as ‘Partly Suitable’. On the contrary, most of the ex-trainees that is 53.12 percent found the method as ‘Not Suitable’. The faculty members suggested for employing some other methods like individual exercise, observation and workshop.

Efficiency of the trainers

The efficiency of the trainers was assessed basing on three criteria viz., (i) capability to conduct the sessions effectively (ii) practice of following the training methods mentioned in the brochure accurately, and (iii) using proper training aids to conduct training session.

It is found that, according to 34.37 percent on-going trainees 81-100 percent trainers are capable to conduct the sessions effectively. Maximum 37.50 percent on-going and that of ex-trainees mentioned that the percentage of trainers of this criterion is 61-80. Among the respondents, 3.12 percent on-going and 6.25 percent ex-trainees mentioned that only 21-40 percent trainers meet this criterion.

According to 34.37 percent on-going trainees 81-100 percent trainers follow the training methods mentioned in the brochure accurately. Maximum 37.50 percent on-going and that of ex-trainees mentioned that the percentage of trainers of this criterion is 61-80. Among the ex-trainees 9.37 percent refrained from responding in this criterion.

According to maximum 46.87 percent on-going trainees 61-80 percent trainers use proper training aids to conduct sessions. The same percentage of trainers is mentioned to meet this criterion by maximum 31.25 percent ex- trainees. Equal 6.25 percent on-going and ex-trainees found only 21-40 percent trainers to follow proper training aids. 18.75 percent ex-trainees refrained from responding in this criterion.

The faculty members hold the opinion that the guest speakers are fully capable to conduct the sessions effectively in all respect. According to them the in-house trainers need professional development in some respects.

Application of ethics learnt

To assess application of ethics learnt by the trainees, three successive questions were compiled in the questionnaires for the on-going and ex-trainees. Findings based on the responses are presented in the following three sub-sections.

Expectation and experience about application of ethics learnt

For the on-going trainees the first question was on the expectation about application; the corresponding question for the ex-trainees was on the experience of application. Significant difference has been found between the expectation about and experience of application of the

ethics learnt. 84.37 percent on-going trainees expected to be able to apply the learnt ethics in their personal and professional life. But 62.50 percent ex-trainees have the experience of applying ethical lessons in their personal and professional life.

Expected and experienced areas of application of ethics learnt in personal and professional arena

The second question was on the expected areas of application in personal and professional life for the on-going trainees, whereas the corresponding question for the ex-trainees was on their experienced areas of application. Maximum on-going trainees expected to be able to apply the ethical lessons learnt in seven areas out of 16 areas identified from the course brochure. Likewise, maximum ex-trainees experienced to apply learnt ethical lessons in seven areas, where five areas are common with the on-going trainees. The common areas are 'Performing departmental activities', 'Following institutional norms and customs', 'Following office manner', 'Following dress code' and 'Identifying unethical issues in workplace'. Minimum on-going trainees identified two areas to be able to apply ethical lessons in. Likewise, minimum ex-trainees identified those same two areas to have been applied. These two areas are 'Managing undue pressure' and 'Combating corruption'.

Reasons for the expectation and experience of practical application of the ethics learnt

The third question was for the respondents who answered 'Partly' or 'No' to the first question regarding expectation and experience, where the reasons of answering so were intended to identify. It is found that, most of the on-going trainees identified 'Undue political influence in work place' as the reason of expected partial application of their ethical learning. This was followed by 'Socio-economic factors' and 'Low status of teachers'. Most of the ex-trainees experienced 'Socio-economic factors' as the reason of partial application of their ethical learning. This was followed by 'Undue political influence in work place' and 'Low status of teachers'.

The faculty members hold the opinion that, practicing ethics depends on many socio-economic and cultural factors and it is quite difficult to ensure application of the lessons learnt by the trainees depending only on training of a single module on ethics. However, they are convinced that, the module will certainly be able to sensitize the trainees to apply the lessons in their personal and professional life.

Limitations of the training

It is found that there is similarity between both the groups of trainees in mentioning the limitations with minor variations. The most significant limitation identified by both types of trainees is large class size followed by insufficient time allocation for the sessions. The following limitations of the training module were found:

1. Class size is too big
2. Allotted time for some topics is inappropriate
3. Practice sessions are absent
4. Most of the sessions are lecture based
5. Some topics remain not conducted
6. Some trainers are not competent.

Suggestions provided by the respondents

The measures suggested by the trainees to improve the training module are:

- i) Class size should be smaller;
- ii) A topic titled “Professional Ethics” should be included in the module;
- iii) The topic titled “National Integrity Implementation Strategy (NIS)” presently included in module-22 should be shifted to module -20.

These suggestions were supported by the faculty members also in the FGD.

From the above mentioned findings and discussion it is clear that, in spite of all its merits, the module on ‘Ethics in Public Administration’ cannot be termed as “practical”. The issues need to be addressed at the earliest possible time. The situation deserves more attention considering the trainees of this course- the teachers of tertiary education in Bangladesh.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The importance of training on ethics for the public servants is needless to mention. When the trainees are the teachers- architect of the nation, the whole issue gets more importance. The module on ethics in the Foundation Training Course for the newly recruited officers of BCS (General Education) Cadre conducted by NAEM is certainly a well-developed module considering the limitations like time and resources. But, the changed needs of the changing situation demand some significant modifications in the module in respect of both content and conduct. The present Government is also placing due importance on ethical practice of the public servants which is reflected in National Integrity Strategy (NIS). These modifications will certainly contribute to grooming up the newly recruited officers of BCS (General Education) Cadre to become more ethical in their personal and professional life which will benefit our students and in turn the whole nation.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study the following measures are recommended to make the module under consideration more effective:

1. The first objective of the module should be rephrased as ‘Distinguish between ethical and unethical practices’;
2. Training method “experience sharing” for the topic code: 20.05-06 is to be changed from present D/PD method to more participatory method. Hands’ on practice should be followed as a dominant method for the topic code: 20.14-15. Moreover, the trainers should be encouraged to adopt contextual blend of methods and become innovative in applying them;
3. Time allocation for four topics (code: 20.04, 20.09, 20.10 & 20.13) should be increased

- to two hours. The same for a topic (code: 20.02-03) should be reduced to one hour;
4. To make evaluation process more effective, individual exercise, workshop and observation methods should be employed along with the currently used group exercise method;
 5. In-house trainers of the module from NAEM should be provided more subject based and professional training;
 6. The class size should be reduced to 40 instead of 60 following the current standard of class size in Bangladesh;
 7. A new topic titled ‘Professional Ethics Related to Teachers’ may be included in the module;
 8. Considering its nature and content, a topic titled ‘National Integrity Strategy (NIS)’ presently included in module 22 should be shifted to module 20;
 9. Necessary workshop(s) should be arranged combining experts, NAEM faculty members and stakeholders to find out the ways to make the module more practical and effective;
 10. Further research is recommended to pursue especially to identify the reasons of difference between the expectation about application of ethics learnt and the reality as well as to suggest the remedial measures.

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