BANGLADESH EDUCATION JOURNAL
A half-yearly journal published jointly by BAFED and IED-BRACU with financial assistance from UNESCO.

Editorial Board
Advisory Editor
Manzoor Ahmed

Editor
Abu Hamid Latif

Members
Sekander Hayat Khan
Siddiquur Rahman
Monica Gomes
Harunur Rashid Khan

Cover Design
Abul Mansur
Manan Morshed
Publication Information

*Bangladesh Education Journal* is published by Bangladesh Forum for Educational Development (BAFED) in collaboration with UNESCO Bangladesh, Dhaka and the Institute of Educational Development (IED), BRAC University of Bangladesh. Articles for publication in this journal are required to be of high standard and meet the criteria set by the editorial board. The articles are selected in two ways: either these are presented in the half yearly Educational Research Dissemination Conference organized jointly by UNESCO-BAFED or these can be sent directly to the editor. In both cases, the journal follows a peer review process and is edited by a board of editors. The journal is published from Bangladesh twice a year in English Language and the ISSN of the journal is **1811-0762**.

Another publication of BAFED is the *Bangladesh Shikhsha Shamoiki* (Bangladesh Education Periodical) published in Bangla. This is also published in collaboration with UNESCO-Dhaka and the Institute of Educational Development (IED), BRAC University. *Bangladesh Shikhsha Shamoiki* follows a peer review process. The journal is published twice a year (ISSN **1991-6655**).

Both the Journals are disseminated widely in print at national and international levels. They have a wide readership among those who are working in the area of education and development, both in the government and outside, as academics, researchers, policy makers, development partners and civil-society members. The contents of both are posted on the website: [http://www.bafed.net/Journal.php](http://www.bafed.net/Journal.php)
Notes from the Editor

This second issue of 2011 of the Bangladesh Education Journal focuses on inclusive education, both in its broader sense of bringing into school all children from varying circumstances and with diverse abilities, and in the narrower sense of serving children with special needs in the mainstream school.

Umesh Sharma makes the case for re-examining knowledge, beliefs and attitudes, and practice (hence, the reference to head, heart and hands) that can be inculcated in pre-service teacher education. Dr. Sharma argues that anchoring preparation of teachers to cultural and religious values in South Asia may be a way of coping with some of the challenges in this respect. He suggests that traditional and religion-based precepts of responsibility to and empathy for fellow human beings can be the inspiration for would-be teachers to practice effectively the inclusive approaches in the mainstream school. In this regard, it is noteworthy that in Bangladesh pre-service teacher education at the university level as part of the undergraduate degree is not the norm. Another issue is that religious and traditional values also can be divisive and contentious unless handled judiciously.

The theme of inclusive education is also addressed by Nasima Akter and Sodik A. Kuntoro in the context of the National Education Act 2003 of Indonesia and the challenges faced in dealing with education of children with special needs in mainstream schools. They note the lack of such a comprehensive law in Bangladesh which is proposed in the New Education Policy of 2010 and could provide a legal framework for implementing inclusive education.

Ahsan Habib looks at the role of the Educational Counsellor and Special Education Teachers in primary schools in Czechoslovakia. He proposes that a beginning should be made in Bangladesh by appointing counsellor-special education teachers as a pilot initiative in a limited number of schools.

The reflections on a visit to primary schools pursuing the Active Learning Approach (ABL) in Tamil Nadu, India by Janmajoy Dey and Mohammed Noor-E-Alam Siddiqee are also in a way a discourse on inclusive education about enabling all children to perform well in school. The authors argue for adopting and trying out the ABL methodology in Bangladesh schools as an activity under PROG3, the newly started third phase of Primary Education Development.
Notes from the Editor

This second issue of 2011 of the Bangladesh Education Journal focuses on inclusive education, both in its broader sense of bringing into school all children from varying circumstances and with diverse abilities, and in the narrower sense of serving children with special needs in the mainstream school.

Umesh Sharma makes the case for re-examining knowledge, beliefs and attitudes, and practice (hence, the reference to head, heart and hands) that can be inculcated in pre-service teacher education. Dr. Sharma argues that anchoring preparation of teachers to cultural and religious values in South Asia may be a way of coping with some of the challenges in this respect. He suggests that traditional and religion-based precepts of responsibility to and empathy for fellow human beings can be the inspiration for would be teachers to practice effectively the inclusive approaches in the mainstream school. In this regard, it is noteworthy that in Bangladesh pr-service teacher education at the university level as part of the undergraduate degree is not the norm. Another issue is that religious and traditional values also can be divisive and contentious unless handled judiciously.

The theme of inclusive education is also addressed by Nasima Akter and Sodik A. Kuntoro in the context of the National Education Act 2003 of Indonesia and the challenges faced in dealing with education of children with special needs in mainstream schools. They note the lack of such a comprehensive law in Bangladesh which is proposed in the New Education Policy of 2010 and could provide a legal framework for implementing inclusive education.

Ahsan Habib looks at the role of the Educational Counsellor and Special Education Teachers in primary schools in Czechoslovakia. He proposes that a beginning should be made in Bangladesh by appointing counsellor+special education teachers as a pilot initiative in a limited number of schools.

The reflections on a visit to primary schools pursuing the Active Learning Approach (ABL) in Tamil Nadu, India by Janmajoy Dey and Mohammed Noor-E-Alam Siddiqee are also in a way a discourse on inclusive education about enabling all children to perform well in school. The authors argue for adopting and trying out the ABL methodology in Bangladesh schools as an activity under PROG3, the newly started third phase of Primary Education development.
Teaching in inclusive classrooms: Changing heart, head, and hands
*Dr. Umesh Sharma*
7-18

Inclusive education in the National Education Act of Indonesia and its application in the primary school: Lessons for developing countries
*Nasima Akter, Sodik A. Kuntoro*
19-30

The Role of the Educational Counsellor in Meeting Special Education Needs (SEN) in Primary Schools of Prague, Czech Republic
*Md. Ahsan Habib*
31-41

Reflections on Activity Based Learning in Tamil Nadu, India
*Janmajoy Dey, Mohammed Noor-E-Alam Siddiquee*
43-51

Research in Early Childhood Development: Selected Abstracts
53-62
Teaching in inclusive classrooms: Changing heart, head, and hands

Dr. Umesh Sharma*

Abstract
Pre-service teacher preparation to teach in inclusive classrooms is a topic of great interest to stakeholders in teacher education. This paper presents a framework which could be adopted by teacher education programs in countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to better prepare pre-service teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms. A major emphasis of the paper is that we need to re-look at the way we have been preparing our teachers by focussing on the strengths of our socio-cultural system (e.g., historical traditions and religious beliefs) rather than looking for a model originating in the West. The paper identifies a few major issues that our teacher education programs are facing and suggests possible strategies to address them.

Inclusion of children with diverse abilities in regular school is always desired but never fully achieved. This is true in both developed and developing countries. A majority of the developing countries has made significant improvements in mandating inclusion of all children (e.g., children with disabilities, different ethnicity, and poor socio-economic backgrounds) through policies or legislation, but implementation of such policies or legislation at classroom level has not been achieved and remains a distant reality. There are many reasons for slow progress or no progress in this regard. One area that has been most neglected in this regard is the training of teachers. An examination of university teacher education programs from developing countries suggests that there is either no emphasis or limited emphasis on how to address student diversity in regular classrooms. It is not surprising that the key stakeholders (regular classroom teachers), who play the most significant part in successful implementation of inclusive policies at classroom level, are the least prepared and, therefore, reluctant to address student diversity in their classrooms. There is some research (Rouse, 2010; Shulman, 2004) which suggest that for a teacher to be inclusive, three things must change. These are a teacher’s heart, hands and head. How this change could be made operational in the classroom is a difficult question. This paper suggests a framework that could be used by university educators in preparing pre-service teachers who would become confident and willing to include students with diverse abilities in the classroom in developing countries, especially in South Asia, which share a common historical background.

* Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia
An important activity before university educators begin the task of preparing teachers for inclusive education is to agree on a definition of inclusive education. The reason to have a common understanding of inclusive education is to know what we want to achieve in our programs. If two professionals have completely different understanding of the concept, they could work against each other. I propose defining inclusive education at two levels. First, what it means in a layman’s term; and second, what roles different stakeholders need to undertake for inclusion to be implemented successfully in regular classrooms. Inclusion means bringing children who have been excluded (e.g., children with disabilities, the female child, children from poor families, and street children) from the mainstream school system into regular classrooms. This aspect of the definition relates to regular schools changing their teaching practices so that all students participate fully in academic, social and other activities of the school. The second part of the definition relates to roles school leaders, teachers, parents, policy makers and teacher educators need to play to make inclusion a realistic possibility for all students.

Inclusion for a school principal means that he/she would enrol any child who approaches the school, and that the school will endeavour to provide best possible education to the child. It also means that the principal will support all teachers and other school staff in the school to make inclusion a realistic possibility for all students. In other words, the principal will perform three key roles of welcoming the child, providing high quality education and supporting the school staff. Inclusion for a classroom teacher means that any child who enrols in the class, receives the best possible education. Many may wonder what the best possible education is? The litmus test to determine if we are providing the best possible education is to ask the question—would I teach and treat the child the same way if the child was my family member? If the answer is yes, then perhaps the best possible education is being provided to the child. High quality education has five characteristics:

- children would love coming to our classes,
- they would like to learn what we want to teach,
- their individual learning needs will be recognised and respected,
- they would learn something meaningful every day, and
- they would have a sense of belonging in our classroom (have friends).

Inclusion for parents means that their child receives education in a neighbourhood school by teachers who are willing to teach their child and ensure that their child would receive high quality education. Parents must also understand that they also play a critical role in supporting their child as well as the classroom teacher for the successful implementation of inclusive practices. Inclusion for policy makers means that families and children who have been excluded for many years (e.g., children with disabilities) approach a school to enrol their child. Most importantly, it also means that the school receives the necessary support to educate the child.
A close examination of the definition above would reveal that there is a cyclical process in the successful implementation of inclusion. If policy makers perform their roles adequately, school principals would be more willing to include students with diverse abilities. If school principals fulfil their roles of inclusive leaders adequately, teachers in their schools would provide high quality education to all children and ultimately parents will be satisfied because they know that their child is receiving high quality education. It is often forgotten that one of the most significant stakeholders in the process is the teacher educator. How should inclusion be defined for teacher educators or how should they define inclusion? Firstly, inclusion for teacher educators means that they are aware of how the principal, the teacher, parents and policy makers define inclusion. Secondly, they should know what high quality education is and what is requires of pre-service teachers (also called graduate teachers or prospective teachers) to become providers of such high quality education.

Think of your son, Hamid, who has poor language skills. When he is not challenged in the classroom with interesting teaching activities, he is likely to express his frustration by being aggressive (e.g., tearing his notebook). Hamid does not have a disability. We know that there is plenty of research (e.g., Peetsma, Verger, Roelveld & Karsten, 2001; Kalambouka, Farrelle, Dyson & Kaplan, 2005) in support of the argument that if Hamid is taught alongside his same age peers and if he receives appropriate education; his language skills will improve and his tendency to misbehave would also reduce. The question that teacher educators should be asking is: “are we preparing our pre-service teachers to provide high quality education to students like Hamid?” If we are not preparing our pre-service teachers to embrace student diversity then we have to question the value of the program and ask what can be done to improve it.

Let’s reflect on what actually happens in our teacher education programs. Based on our analysis in several universities (particularly in countries like India, Bangladesh, and China) as well as conversations with university academics, we know that the majority of teacher education programs seems to be unintentionally preparing their pre-service teachers to exclude rather than include students with diverse abilities (see Forlin, 2010; Sharma & Deppeler, 2005). Our graduates learn that inclusion is a good idea but impossible to implement in regular classrooms; that the special school is the best educational option for students with disabilities; that children with disabilities can only be taught by special teachers; and, that there is a special education pedagogy (i.e. children with disabilities need to be taught differently based on their labels). On the contrary, they learn very little about why children with diverse abilities should be included in the mainstream (research evidence and philosophical basis) and how they should be included (e.g., strategies such as co-operative learning, peer tutoring). In other words, our graduates get a message that children with diverse abilities (e.g., those with disabilities) are not their responsibility. Who is responsible for such poor preparation of our graduates? This is an important question in itself. Not many teacher educators would agree that they prepare pre-service teachers for
exclusion. However, it is evident that the skills acquired (or not acquired) during the program do not prepare our teachers to teach effectively in inclusive classrooms.

Shulman (2004) has proposed a useful model that could be adopted to prepare pre-service teachers. He proposes that teacher preparation programs must have three elements. He calls these three elements as “apprenticeship of the head” or cognitive knowledge and the theoretical basis of the profession; “apprenticeship of hand” or the technical and practical skills that are necessary to carry out the essential roles of the profession; and “apprenticeship of heart,” that is, the ethical and moral attitudes and beliefs which are reflected in one’s behaviour. Applying the Shulman model to teacher education within the inclusion framework would mean that 3Hs - head, hands and heart – would be critical influences on an inclusive teacher. Expanding on the Shulman model, Rouse (2010) states that if teachers are to support inclusion, then “there have to be changes in the ways inclusion is conceptualised and a realisation that it can only be achieved if all teachers are supported in the development of all aspects of knowing, doing and believing.” (p. 51) In other words, equal emphasis should be given to head, hand and heart or knowing, doing and believing aspects of inclusive education during teacher preparation.

The reality is that our pre-service teachers leave teacher education programs with ill prepared head, hands and heart. This situation could be equated to a child who has poor vision and, if not provided with appropriate remediation (e.g., spectacles), could become handicapped in an environment where he or she needs to use his or her vision. Many of our teachers graduating out of universities would find themselves handicapped when they have to teach in a classroom with children of diverse abilities. Some of the characteristics of a typical handicapped teacher coming out of the system could be as follows: they believe that if a student does not learn in their classroom then something is wrong with the student, they believe that not all students can learn; they know very little about how to motivate all students to learn, and how to make learning fun for all students; they do nothing about students who fail and are ultimately rejected by peers and excluded from the school community. Teacher educators must be concerned about this situation and must be committed to doing something about this.

We must first examine our beliefs and practices - are our head, hands and heart for inclusion? If, as a teacher educator, I don’t believe in inclusive education, I cannot prepare teachers who will believe in inclusion and teach effectively in inclusive classrooms. If a teacher educator has not taught in an inclusive classroom and lacks the skill to teach in such a classroom, how would he or she be able to teach the skills to pre-service teachers? An example from medical sciences would further clarify the point I am making here. Think of a university professor in a medical college teaching prospective medical practitioners (or doctors) about mental disorders. If the professor himself knows very little about treating mental disorders; can we expect the professor to teach his students the future medical practitioners about mental conditions? The professor needs to know (head) about various
mental conditions and how to treat them, be able to treat patients with mental disorders (hands), and must enjoy (heart) working with patients with such conditions. A professor who lacks any of the three attributes is not suitable for and is unlikely to be teaching in a medical college about mental disorders.

Unfortunately, we cannot say the same thing about university professors or lecturers in the field of education (or more specifically, inclusive education). There are two reasons that could explain this situation. Firstly, inclusive education has not been a priority in teacher education. University professors who teach in this area are likely to cover limited theoretical information about this topic in the course. Secondly, majority of teacher educators in this field (especially in the countries of the South) would not have taught in inclusive classrooms; and so would know very little about the practicum requirements to teach in such classrooms. They are likely to cover theoretical information largely available in the Western text books. However, they and their pre-service teacher trainees would find it difficult to translate the theory into classroom practice. There is a need to change this scenario if the national level policies of inclusion are to be truly translated into practices of our school teachers. We present below a possible framework that could be adopted in a country like Bangladesh to prepare pre-service teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms. The framework is built upon the model provided by Shulman (2004) and focuses on how heart, head and hands should be prepared for inclusion.

**Changing heart**

Research on changing educators’ attitudes to teach in inclusive classrooms has been extensive (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Forlin, Cedillo et al, 2010, Sharma, Ei, Desai, 2003; Sharma, Forlin & Loreman, 2008; Sharma, Moore & Sonawane, 2009). Many researchers have proposed that changing attitudes to teach in inclusive classrooms is not easy but essential nonetheless (e.g. Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Sharma, Forlin & Loreman, 2008). One of the most common approaches that researchers have suggested to change attitudes towards inclusion is to arrange for systematic contacts between students with disabilities and pre-service teachers in regular classrooms. It is important to highlight here that change in attitude in a positive direction will occur only if educators have positive experiences at the time of these contacts.

The following example will further clarify this issue. A pre-service teacher is placed for his practicum assignment in a regular classroom where there are three students with behavior problems. If the classroom teacher deals effectively with the students with behavior problems and create a positive learning environment for the three students and rest of the class, the attitudes of the pre-service teachers are likely to be positive. On the other hand, if the classroom teacher finds it difficult to deal with the students and identify the three students with behavior problems as difficult to manage, the pre-service teachers are likely to internalize the apprehensions of the classroom teacher. A major dilemma in this regard
would be to find classrooms or schools where positive practices are prevalent. Some ways to address this issue are presented below.

If practicum experience creates a barrier to the inculcation of positive attitudes towards inclusive practices, what do we do about it? I propose that we build on the strength of our social and cultural tradition to change hearts of our teachers. In countries like India and Bangladesh, we have not used effectively the values of our historical heritage and religion in our teacher education programs.

Caring for “the old, the sick and the disabled” has been a part of the cultural heritage of India (Karna, 1999; Singh, 2000). Exploring the roots of welfare services for persons with disabilities, Karna states:

“From time immemorial, it has been the part and parcel of the cultural heritage of India to provide help and sustenance to the poor and destitute. . . . The Hindu religion emphasised the value of compassion, charity, philanthropy and mutual aid. The guild system, as existed in ancient India, also contributed to the promotion of such practices for the disadvantaged strata of society.” (p.27)

The custom of joint family and kinship provides an in-built mechanism to support such practices. According to Miles (2000), rudimentary attempts to educate students with disabilities were made in India long before such attempts were made in Europe. He cites, for example, that specially adapted curricula was used 2000 years ago as evidenced by children’s toys which were excavated in diggings in Taxila. Also the ancient ‘gurukul’ system of education that existed in India for centuries was sensitive to the unique cultural, social, and economic needs of the students and their families and imparted life skills education recognising the potential in each student (Singh, 2001). However, these educational and rehabilitation practices were lost during the colonial period (Singh, 2001).

**Religion**

Several authors (e.g. Bazna & Hatab, 2005; Gupta, 2011; Miles, 1995, 2002) have written about how religion could impact on the practices of people. The authors cite several examples that indicate that religion could have powerful influence on the practices of people when interacting with people who are often excluded. It could be argued that more religious a person is, it is more likely that religion could influence change his/her behavior. For example, “Pakistanis adopt some innovations merely because they are told that these are good activities from advanced western societies, but there is naturally more enthusiasm for emulating worthy actions from Muslim history” (Miles, 1995, p. 51). Miles cites several other examples (e.g., vaccination) of how religion has been used to propagate some of the practices that could not have been easily implemented. This practice sometime is referred to as a “pious fraud.” It could be argued that if religion can help us to move the agenda of inclusion forward then it should be promoted even if there are inconsistencies from a purely rationalist point of view...
Bazna and Hatab (2005) undertook a systematic analysis of Quran to find out how Islam looks at disability. Their analysis was characterised by interpretation of the original source (i.e., the Quranic text) rather than relying on second hand interpretation made by religious scholars. Their analysis clearly revealed that Quran enjoins respect for individual differences and inclusion of people with disability in the mainstream of society. Two quotes from their analysis would further clarify this viewpoint.

“Physical conditions are viewed in Quran as neither a curse nor a blessing; they are simply part of human condition. The Quran removes any stigma and barrier to full inclusion of people with physical condition.” (p. 24)

‘Muslims, who constitute society, are constantly called upon to seek, improve the condition of, treat as sisters and brothers those who are, and give generously of one’s property and time, to the disadvantaged” (p. 24)

Islam requires its followers to be tolerant of people with disabilities. Allah sends a child in a given state and one should not complain. Allah also wants us to manage the child using available knowledge and resources (Miles, 1995). To ignore this would be considered a refusal of the help that Allah mercifully places at our disposal. Miles further quotes that persons with severe disability “who are unable to earn their living and have no means of support, appeal to Allah and to passers by, for Justice something to which they are entitled - not for charity. If Allah deprives some of the normal means to earn a living, it is clearly the duty of Allah and his servants to give such people their due. There should be no hesitation in demanding such justice.” (p. 58) Commenting on Islamic religion and culture Hassan (1990) states that needs of all children with disabilities be met not out of pity but as a gesture of seeking goodwill from God (Hassan, 1990).

Such examples are also prominent in other religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. Unfortunately, we have not used this strength of our religions to guide teaching practices of our teachers. University educators should, therefore, be looking into our historical traditions and religious beliefs to find solutions to the problems that we face in our education system rather than look exclusively towards West to find the solutions. I do not argue that looking at religious and cultural precepts and practices would guarantee that our prospective teachers will adopt inclusive behaviour in the classroom. I, however, believe that incorporating such practices in teacher preparation is likely to make them more positive about these practices. How much would they change as a result of revised curriculum focusing on the strengths of our cultural tradition is an important topic for researchers to investigate.

**Changing head**

What knowledge and skills do pre-service teachers need to acquire to teach in inclusive classroom is another critical question? The research on this topic is quite comprehensive. One of the most fascinating researches on this aspect was conducted by European Agency for
Development in Special Needs Education (2005). The agency undertook a comprehensive review of international literature, consulted various experts, visited schools in 14 countries, and made systematic observations of classrooms to identify best inclusive practices. One of the key findings of the research was that “what is good for students with special educational needs (SEN) is good for all students.” (p.4). There were five strategies that teachers in inclusive classrooms used. These strategies were:

- co-operative learning,
- co-operative teaching,
- collaborative problem solving,
- heterogeneous grouping, and,
- effective teaching.

Co-operative learning is a learning arrangement where small groups of students (less than 4) work in small groups and they help each other to learn. One critical feature of co-operative learning is that each member of the group is dependent on other members to perform well on a task. If one member of the group does not do well – performance of the whole group is affected. Co-operative teaching is a system of teaching where teachers work along with other educators from within or outside their school to teach students in their classes. This skill essentially requires teachers to use existing resources within and outside their school to create better learning opportunities for students in their classrooms.

Collaborative problem solving is a fundamental skill that all teachers must have irrespective of whether they teach in an inclusive classroom or not. This skill requires teachers to work alongside other colleagues, parents and policy makers, collaborating successfully to include students with diverse abilities in their classrooms. Two skills that could be classified under this category and are absolutely essential for teachers are conflict resolution and effective listening. Conflict resolution requires listening to the other person and looking at the problem from the other person’s perspective. Conflict resolution may result in positive or negative responses depending on how effectively the skills of conflict resolution are used. Morsink, Thomas and Correa (1991) emphasise that if a positive response is made to the conflict, people may be encouraged to search out effective ways of dealing with it. However, if a negative response is made to a conflict it results in hostility and destructiveness on the part of group members. Effective listening involves the other person and looking at the problem from the other person’s perspective. Conflict resolution may result in positive or negative responses depending on how effectively the skills of conflict resolution are used. Effective listening involves both active and passive listening. Passive listening is performed by remaining silent but still remaining involved in the interaction by demonstrating attentive behavior and giving words of encouragement. Gordon, (1970, cited in Morsink, Thomas, & Correa, 1991) has suggested that if performed effectively, listening helps people to express thoughts, assists in building relationships, and enhances effective problem solving.

The next category is heterogeneous grouping. The teacher must know how to group students so that students from diverse abilities and interests are grouped together. For example, a
student who has poor vision should be grouped with other students with adequate vision abilities, rather than placing him with other students who have vision impairment. This will also apply to students who display disruptive behavior. Students with disruptive behavior should not be placed in the same group. Similarly a student with high academic ability should be grouped with students of low academic ability. Most importantly, the groups should be dynamic and they should continue to change throughout the academic year.

The last category of the skills is also critical for inclusive teaching. The inclusive teacher must know how to be an effective teacher. Effective teachers know about the abilities of their students and they use this information to plan their lessons and evaluate student learning. These teachers have high expectations of all students. They know how the curriculum should be adapted and used to meet individual needs of a student who has a disability.

Two other skills that should be added to the list are teachers’ ability to motivate all students in the classroom and ability to question one’s own personal teaching approach. The first skill essentially requires teachers to have knowledge of individual students and their interests. For example, if a teacher knows that the majority of class students likes cricket, the teacher can use this knowledge to plan his or her lessons. This could mean asking students to write about their favorite cricket star when the lessons are related to writing exercises. The teacher can be confident that students will show more interest in learning about a concept if cricket (or any other interesting and meaningful topic for students) was associated in some ways with the teaching activities. The second skill requires teachers to reflect on their own teaching. Teachers need to be self-critical of their practices that do not promote learning. They should also be willing to learn from others, including their students, about the ways they can improve their teaching.

I have not included information about various disabilities as necessary knowledge for pre-service teachers to learn during their teacher education. There are two reasons for this. First we know that there is no special education pedagogy. In other words, we cannot say that children with one particular label (e.g., Down Syndrome) could best be taught in one possible way. The second and the most important reason is that knowing about a disability label is fundamentally a wrong way to start thinking about teaching children with disabilities. I use one example in my lectures frequently. I ask my students to “tell me everything possible about Hamid who is 14 years old and supposedly has intellectual disability”. Majority of my students will list several characteristics (mostly negative) associated with the label of intellectual disability. Rarely any of my students would list any positive characteristic of Hamid (e.g., he may enjoy watching movies, or he may enjoy riding bikes). This is a common phenomenon. We tend to think of the most negative attributes associated with a label when asked to think about it. When I ask my students how they would teach Hamid effectively, the list that they would come up with would not be very different from what I already described above. The important message that our pre-service teachers must learn during their teacher education program is that each child is different and as a
teacher they must find out how each child is different. Most importantly, they must learn to identify the strengths of each child rather than focus only on what a child cannot do.

**Changing hands**

The most challenging aspect of preparing pre-service teachers for inclusive classroom would be to find school settings where our graduates could practice what they learn at universities (or could undertake their teaching practicum). There are many reasons for this. The foremost amongst them is schools’ understanding of inclusion is quite different from what policy makers believe inclusion should look like. Many of the teachers who are teaching in primary or secondary schools are unlikely to have taken courses in inclusive education during their teacher education program. Expecting these teachers to use inclusive practices is unreasonable. However, we also know that some teachers, albeit very few, are “born” to be inclusive teachers. One of the important tasks we have to undertake is to find those teachers within our school system. The Education Department can run a campaign to nominate best inclusive teachers from across the country. The nominated teachers then can be rewarded by the department for using exemplary practices that embrace diversity. Some of these exemplary practices may be indigenous models of inclusive education rather than imported models from abroad.

I will not be surprised if we find classrooms practising inclusive approaches in a remote area where there is only one school for all children in a village. There should be such schools also in cities. But what should be done until or unless enough of these good examples of schools and teachers are found. One possibility is recruiting schools as practicum sites in close proximity to the universities or teacher education institutions. Teacher educators could work in close partnership with the school staff in implementing inclusive practices in the schools. The schools will benefit as they receive high quality on-the-job professional development that will improve the overall environment of the school. University educators will benefit as it will provide an environment where they can translate theory into practice and can undertake relevant action research. It is of course easier said than done. This approach cannot be operationalised unless university educators have a commitment to do it. At the same time they also need time and support from their administrative heads. Schools also need to be willing to work with universities to make this happen. Funding would be necessary for the partnership to be sustained. Funding agencies, such as bilateral and multilateral organisations should be willing to fund such projects. The impact of these initiatives will be long-lasting; they will benefit children, their families, teachers and schools; and they will also change society’s views about disability and disadvantage. Pre-service teachers who cannot be placed in inclusive schools could be asked to work on assignments that require them to reflect on what was happening in the classroom and what they would do differently if they were teaching the class.
Conclusion

UN policy documents (e.g., World Plan of Action for the International Decade of Disabled Persons, 1983) rest largely upon Western liberal views about disability and education. The policy documents are a fine reflection of the idealistic spirit; however, they also represent a kind of cultural colonialism, albeit unintended (Miles, 1995). They fail to recognize history and anthropology of disability outside the dominant culture of western educated classes (Miles, 1995). Is this one of the many reasons that such policies even though heavily endorsed by Ministers in Central Governments, fail to make any significant impact at the classroom or grass root level? It is time that international bodies as well as national governments recognize the huge potential that lies in our social and cultural system (i.e., the heritage and religious beliefs) which could propel the change that we have been striving for.

The change at the classroom level in our schools as a result of change in the university curriculum may not be huge or direct and immediate, but it would be a step in the right direction. It should also be recognized that such change in university pre-service program is unlikely to change the culture of our classrooms overnight, but it is a change that is necessary for long lasting and sustainable change of our schools and society eventually. The university educators have to take a new look at how we have been preparing our teachers. We have focused for too long on technical skills to be a good teacher. Let’s look beyond just technical skills and focus on changing the heart, head and hands of the teacher so that good teaching becomes an inherent part of what teachers do on a daily basis in the classroom. The status quo should not continue to prevail and the children in our societies who deserve respect, better education and dignity, should not continue to be ignored and excluded.

References


Inclusive education in the National Education Act of Indonesia and its application in the primary school: Lessons for developing countries

Nasima Akter*
Sodik A. Kuntoro**

Abstract
Countries are moving towards inclusive education and are undertaking reforms in their education systems according to their culture and socio-economic status. They are formulating education laws, policies and plans to implement inclusive education. This study looks at the National Education Act, 20/2003 of Indonesia and its application in the field. The intention is to examine the Indonesian experience and make suggestions for the inclusive education movement in Bangladesh. Relevant information was collected through document analysis; interviews with education supervisors and teachers; and observation of classrooms in three primary schools and two madrasahs. Having looked at the law and its implementation in schools, recommendations have been made for planning and implementation of inclusive education in Bangladesh.

Key Word: Reflection, National Education Act, Inclusive Education, Indonesia, Lessons for Bangladesh.

I. Introduction
Rationale and objective of the study
Each country has to develop its own strategy or model to transform the existing education system towards inclusion. It is presumed that as a developing country in the same region with high population attempting to reform national systems and move towards greater inclusion, the experience of Indonesia would be pertinent to Bangladesh.

The main objectives of the study are:
1) To examine the principles of inclusive education as reflected in the National Education Act (20/2003) of Indonesia; 2) To explore how inclusive education is incorporated into primary school; and 3) To discuss and make recommendations for inclusive education in Indonesia and Bangladesh

* Lecturer (part-time), Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka.
** Professor, Department of Non-formal Education, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
Methodology
This study followed three steps for data collection and analysis: 1) review of relevant documents (the Indonesian language documents were available in translation from IDP in Norway), 2) interviews with 20 purposefully selected knowledgeable informants - one education officer, six education supervisors, four resource teachers, six head teachers and three regular school teachers, and 3) classroom observation in three primary schools and two madrashas in Yogyakarta.

II. Background
Inclusive education (IE) is currently a universal concern that informs and challenges the processes of educational reform in both developing and developed countries in the world. It is an evolving concept that can guide strategies for educational change. It involves identifying and addressing the sources and consequences of exclusion in education, adopting the holistic framework of EFA goals and recognizing education as a human right (UNESCO, 2001).

UNESCO (2005) defines inclusion “as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education.” It requires a shift which involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies. Furthermore, as stated by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow (2002) in their proposal for an inclusion index, “inclusion is about making schools supportive and stimulating places for staff as well as students … it is about building communities which encourage and celebrate their achievements.”

In inclusive education, students, irrespective of their personal or group characteristics related to different abilities - gender, income status, ethnic and linguistic identity, and vulnerabilities of different kinds - will be included in the mainstream education (ibid.). Among these, children with ability-related special needs require extra support in the regular school environment. The term “inclusive education” has often been used to describe the education of children with disabilities in the general education classrooms in their neighborhood schools (Bryant, Smith, and Bryant, 2007). It represents a paradigm shift from a focus on the management of student deficits (i.e., the identification, classification and remediation of individuals with special needs) to a more holistic appreciation and cognizance of the different learning needs and creation of optimal learning environments for all students, not just those with disabilities (Stainback and Stainback 1990).

Education Act and inclusive education in some countries
Many countries are introducing education acts recognizing education as a right for all citizens. For example, in 2009 the Indian parliament passed the Right of Children for Free and Compulsory Education Act. According to this law, every child aged 6-14 will be provided 8 years of elementary education in an age-appropriate classroom in the vicinity of
The law also requires that all private schools should enroll 25 percent of the children from weaker sections and the disadvantaged community in their incoming class (Sharba Shiksha Aviyan, 2011). Ireland’s Education Act, 1998, aimed to “make provisions for the …education of every person in the State, including any person with a disability or a special educational need.” Specifically, Sections 6, 7 and 21 refer to the rights of students with special educational needs to education whether in mainstream schools or in separate settings (ASTI, 2011).

**The key issues of inclusive education and policy review**

Susan J. Peter (World Bank, 2003) proposes a conceptual framework for review of education policies related to inclusive education. She suggests that four domains of inputs, processes, outcomes, and contextual factors should be given attention in what she calls an “open system” of policy development. An open system not only accounts for external factors influencing inclusive education (e.g., policy, legislation, cultural and socio-economic conditions), but considers these ‘external’ factors as integral components of inclusive education development as a whole. The issues of curriculum content, teacher qualification and training, Braille and sign language support, evaluation plan, and diverse student characteristic are considered to be important input elements. The responsibility and authority of different actors and collaborative team support are taken into account as parts of the process. The national education policy and goal and education management system are the contextual factors which should be analyzed and reformed (if they do not support IE sufficiently). If the contextual factors (policies) are appropriate and applied effectively then the whole inclusive education process will work appropriately. Although this framework was proposed in the context of South America, it appears to have broader relevance for developing countries. The key issues for policy review and development are identified as:

- Responsible authorities
- Education provision
- Teacher qualification
- Student entrance
- Curriculum
- Medium of instruction, and
- Evaluation process

In this study, a guideline for reviewing education policies suggested by UNESCO (2003) was followed in considering the above key issues. The guideline, in the form of a set of questions, consisted of the following:

- Are the identified issues addressed in the policy?
- Does the existing curricular content support IE?
- How are the curricular content put into practice?
- What are the barriers to implementation of policy?
• What educational content will support special needs in the mainstream general education?

Questions and checklists were formulated in relation to the key issues to explore the exiting situation in Indonesia.

III. The Concept of Inclusive Education in Indonesia

Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world with a land area of 1.96 million km² and inhabited by a population of 220 million. It is situated in the south-eastern edge of Asia, in close proximity to Australia. About 1.48 million people in Indonesia are categorized as disabled, of whom 21.4% are school age children. Only 25% of these children are enrolled in special schools (Hadis, 2006). The special schools are designed to implement the 9 Year Compulsory Education System of the country. The philosophical motto of the country is “Bhineka Tinggal Ika” which means “Unity in diversity.” For education, the national philosophy is translated as “unity with diversity of learner’s characteristics and conditions,” which provides the philosophical underpinning for the inclusive education concept in Indonesia (Tarsidi, 2004).

The journey towards integrated education in Indonesia began in the early 1960’s with a few blind students in Bandung being provided educational service up to the junior high school level (Tersidi, 2004). Since 1986, the Ministry of Education started to include relatively capable children with special needs in regular schools together with other children. With the emergence of a new orientation in inclusive education, Indonesia adopted Act No 20/2003 for the National Education System. It was stated in Explanation to Article 15 of this Act: "Special Education is provision of education program for the disabled and/or the gifted learners, organized inclusively or exclusively at basic and secondary level of schooling”.

The 2003 Act marks the transition of the integrated schools into inclusive education schools, with a broad concept of inclusion going beyond children with special needs or “disabilities.” In 2003 the Ministry of Education ambitiously set the goal of increasing the number of inclusive schools to three in each municipality. Since then, over 1500 children with special needs have been placed in regular schools (Directorate of Management of Special Education, 2005).

The concept of inclusive education, underlying activities and plans of IE implementation in Indonesia contains the following elements:

1. A continuous process and effort to discover the means to cope with and respond to the various individual needs of children,

2. Paying serious attention on the methods to overcome the obstacles to a child's progress in learning,

3. Children participating actively in learning and obtaining knowledge that is essential for his/her future life, and
4. Designing and directing education programs for children who are marginalised, excluded, and need special education.

(Hadis, 2005)

Indonesia established “Bandung Declaration, in 2004 and “Bukit Tinggi Declaration in, 2005 on the implementation of inclusive education. These declarations pledged provisions of all facilities including equal education, health, social well being and security for person with special needs (JICA, 2005).

The System of Special Education in Indonesia

Special education is provided at primary and secondary education level and is part of the national education system (Directorate of management of special education 2005).

A. There are special school provisions at four stages of general education:

1. Kindergarten (2 years) 
2. Primary school (at least 6 years)
3. Junior secondary school (at least 3 years)
4. Senior secondary school (at least 3 years)

Separate (segregated) special schools of the following types exist:

1. SLB A – Special school for visual impairment
2. SLB B – Special school for hearing impairment
3. SLB C – Special school for mild intellectual disability
4. SLB C1 – Special school for moderate intellectual disability
5. SLB D – Special school for physical impairment
6. SLB E – Special school for emotional-social behavior difficulties and impairment
7. SLB G – Special school for multiple disabilities
8. SLB M – Special school for autistic children

Education administration and management

The Ministry of Education and Culture (now the Ministry of National Education, MONE) is responsible for the planning and execution of education. At the central level, the organizational structure of MONE consists of the following units: the Secretariat General; the National Institute for Educational Research and Development; the Inspectorate General; the Directorate General of Basic and Secondary Education; the Directorate General of Higher Education; the Directorate of Management of Special Education; the Directorate General of Out-of-School Education, Youth and Sports; and the Directorate General of Culture (SEAMEO, 2011).

At the lower level, MONE is represented by a Provincial Office of Education in each of the twenty-seven provinces, and by a District Office in each of the 305 districts. The major task of the provincial and district offices is to operationalize, manage, adapt and implement ministerial policies on education and culture in the context of distinctive local features and local and environmental needs (ibid.).
The Ministry of Religious Affairs is responsible for the Islamic primary school (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah or MI), which is equivalent to primary school, and for the Islamic junior secondary school (Madrasah Tsanawiyah or MT), which is equivalent to junior secondary school.

IV. Findings of the Study

Indonesian government has formulated Education Act 20/2003 in 2003. The education policy, planning, and strategies have been formulated on the basis of this law. In this paper, this law has been analyzed in relation to responsible authority, education provisions, teacher’s qualification, student’s entrance, curriculum, medium of instruction, and evaluation procedure.

Relevant Features of the Education Law

1. Responsible Authority

The responsible authority has been described in article 11 in Law Number 20/2003 on National Education System, Indonesia. It said that “The Government and local governments have to provide services and facilities, and ensure the implementation of quality education for every citizen without discrimination.” The government at the national level, the local government, and the regional division of education office have to work collaboratively in this regard. The local education officer in Yogyakarta province said the Ministry of Education gave the policy guideline about IE and each of the provinces implemented these according to their own strategies.

2. Education Provision

In section 1 and article 15 of Indonesian education policy it is said that, “all citizens will get good quality education and the citizen with special needs will receive special education.” In the explanation of article 15, the broad scope of inclusive education is recognized in these words: “Special Education is provision of education programs for the disabled and/or the gifted learners, organized inclusively or exclusively at basic and secondary level of schooling.”

The majority of the respondents (16 out of 20) supported the current education provision for implementation of inclusive education. Furthermore, 10 respondents commented that IE should be one of the provisions for special needs children under general education system, because IE is being implemented in general school, not in special school. In Yogyakarta city, in the course of field visit and classroom observation in three primary schools and two madrasahs, seven student with special needs were found; among them, four were visually impaired and three were hearing impaired.

3. Teacher’s Qualification

In Indonesia, according to the law, teachers from the stage of early childhood education to higher education are required to have training in their own teaching field. Moreover,
government regulations (peraturan pemerintah) require that the teachers of all levels and types of education should have a minimum qualification of the bachelor degree (Diploma 4 or S-1) with professional certificate of teaching in their field of teaching. It is a matter to be noticed that according to the law, only the teacher of special education will be required to have training on inclusive education as inclusive education is linked to special education under government policy. Teachers of general education who will be involved in teaching special needs students may not have the opportunity to get training on inclusive education unless there is special training program for them. However, it has been observed that in schools and madrasahs, the head teachers have had the training on inclusive education, who then served as guides to their staff. While interviewing the class teachers, it was found that they depended on resource teachers who come from the nearest special school. This resource teacher is selected by the regional education office and he or she visits inclusive school once in a week and give progress report to the education office.

4. Student’s Entrance

In Indonesian education policy, 2003, article 5 in chapter 4 pointed out that: “Citizens with physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and/or social deficiencies shall have the right to receive special education.”

On the other hand, in chapter 5, article 12, it is also said that “Every student will have right to get into any education unit according to their talent, ability and interest.”

According to the first statement special needs children will receive education from special schools, but the second statement implied that children with different abilities including those with special needs could go to any school according to their ability and interest. As the explanation of article 15 indicated, inclusive education as education opportunity is linked with and conceptualized in relation to special education. It appears that the policy is intended to allow some leeway and discretion to local education authorities and parents in deciding where a child should be enrolled and what may serve the “best interest” of the child. In the discussion with the interviewees, it was found that there was a divergence of views about the policy statement as it stood now. Eight out of 20 respondents were in favor of a stronger statement supporting the mainstreaming of children with special needs. The remaining 12 were equally divided between those who agreed with the present formulation and those who were against a strong mainstreaming effort.

5. Curriculum

Law 20/2003 on National Education System, Indonesia, (chapter 10, article 36) laid down the principle that “Curriculum development is conducted on the basis of standard of national education in order to achieve the objectives of national education.”

Furthermore, the government regulation required that the content of lessons is appropriate for learners and that the lessons are delivered holistically. Interviews revealed that curriculum development gave importance to identifying competencies to be achieved by
learners and followed the principle maintaining unity, yet allowing for diversity. One respondent observed:

This curriculum allows for provincial and local differences in subject matters as well as for differences in local facilities and students’ abilities. To make the most of the curriculum’s flexibility, there will be a planned introduction of school-based management concepts and principles. This will allow schools to choose and decide on the best ways to effectively use the available resources in meeting their particular needs, according to policies and priorities.

A majority of the respondents (12 out of 20) expressed the wish for the government regulations (Peraturan Pemerintah) to be more specific and clearer about “simplification and modification” of the curriculum to serve children with special needs in the general school. During class visits, examples of “simplification” was not observed; however, the head teacher said that they tried it in consultation with the resource teacher and the education supervisor.

6. Medium of Instruction
The Indonesian language as national language is the main medium of instruction in the classroom. In the law, chapter 7, article 33, clause 2, said that “Regional language can be applied as medium of instruction in the beginning of education of the learner on the basis of their need.”

This is an important provision for Indonesia, a country with great language diversity. Using the local language is a very practical idea for serving diversified students in inclusive education. Again, specific guidelines for special needs student were given. Discussion with the respondents indicated that schools took pragmatic decisions such as the use of the Braille or communication devices for the hearing impaired. Classroom observation showed use of Braille and magnifying glass for visual impairment, but no example of special device for the hearing impaired was seen.

7. Evaluation Procedure
Chapter 16, article 58, clauses 1 & 2 stated that “evaluation will be undertaken to assess continuous improvement of student’s performance … periodically, comprehensively, transparently, systematically and autonomously, by the institution”. A degree of discretion and flexibility is exercised at the school level. One comment was:

In Indonesia, national evaluation procedure is SBA (School Based Assessment). Besides, during the exam student with special needs get extra time. We also separate their answer papers [to permit necessary special consideration.].

Appropriate evaluation in an inclusive setting remains an issue which requires balancing the general standard of education and the individual needs and “best interest” of the child with special needs. There is no doubt that a rigid evaluation procedure contributes to drop out from school of children with special needs and varying abilities.
8. Managing IE from Central to Local Level
Managing inclusive schools is a critical issue. Discussion with education officials of the Yogyakarta province provided insight into the management practices followed.

The Ministry of Education of Indonesia established a Directorate of Special Education in 2000 which has the overall responsibility for policy and program design, development of curriculum, the evaluation process, provisions for facilities, and putting in place management and monitoring of special education as well as inclusive education. At the provincial level, education for special needs children is overseen by the Primary Education Division (PED) under the regional office of national education. The PEDs supervise and guide management of the special and inclusive schools. There are altogether more than 600 inclusive schools and 1,129 special schools under the Government of Indonesia (Hadis, 2005). The collaboration of the special teacher with the regular teacher is managed and overseen by education officers and education supervisors of PED of the provinces. Besides, it was found that each PED office has its own plan to implement IE in that province, based on the guideline from Directorate of Special Education and taking into account ethnicity, language, and culture of the province. Education officers in Yogyakarta said that the website of the Ministry of Education was a source of guidelines and messages on inclusive education for them.

V. Discussion and Recommendations
According to the UN Convention (2006), the state parties, that is, the governments, have to take the principal responsibility for implementing the convention. Besides, the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (BMF) adopted by an inter-governmental body of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP, 2002) mentioned as a target the formulation of plans to ensure the attendance of disabled children in local primary schools. The Ministry of Education accordingly has taken the responsibility for education for special needs in an inclusive and special education environment.

As presented above, the policies and regulations have been formulated, the organizational structures have been established, the tools and methods have been developed and a nationwide effort is underway to fulfill the right to education for all children. They include those with special needs who must have extra care and support, and the gifted, who have to be provided an environment of challenge and creativity.

Act Number 20 of 2003 is a landmark legislation that provides a legal framework for special needs children in the context of inclusive education in Indonesia. The law and regulations based on the law have guided the specification of authority and responsibility, and the development of the competency based curriculum. The law requires the creation of a flexible evaluation procedure, using local languages in the early stage of education, and administration and management of IE with a degree of discretion and pragmatic flexibility at the school and district level.
Relevant Lessons for Bangladesh

In the Education for All Development Index (EDI) of EFA global monitoring report, the ranking in terms of progress towards EFA of Indonesia was 56 compared to 107 for Bangladesh. (GMR, 2009). It may be mentioned that the adoption of a legal framework in Indonesia places it ahead of many developing countries. The absence of such a law and regulations and organizational measures based on the law in Bangladesh is typical of the situation of many other developing countries. Moreover, the lack of resources remains a major barrier to implementing inclusive education in Bangladesh (Ahsan, 2007). Drawing on the experience of Indonesia, ideas and possible initiatives can be suggested for Bangladesh.

- Principles, priorities and key strategies for inclusive education need to be elaborated in the national education policy. The Compulsory Education Act 1990, the present legal basis for primary education provisions, need to be re-examined in the light of IE principles. Part II of Clause 3 of the Compulsory Primary Education Act 1990 states that if there is a ‘valid ground’, a child can be kept out of education activities of a school. Valid ground is often interpreted as any physical disability or even a child’s appearance that can be seen as causing difficulty in participating in school activities. A child’s limited intellectual abilities as assessed by an education officer is often an excuse for exclusion (Ahsan & Tonmoy, 2002).

- The Ministry of Education should take responsibility of education (both in special institutions and in mainstream schools in an inclusive setting) for special needs children.

- There has to be better collaboration among the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Women and Children Affair to promote inclusive education and serve children with special needs.

- Positions of special education experts need to be created and people recruited at different levels of education administration from the ministry to the upazilla level.

- Curriculum development, content and implementation need to be looked at from inclusive education and special needs perspectives. It can be said that in the Asia Pacific countries, the existing curricula generally are rigid (both in terms of content and methodology of transaction), which need to be revised and made flexible, meaningful and responsive to needs of all children (Perner and Ahuja, 2004). According to the 2005 EFA Global Monitoring Report, one way to move towards a relevant, balanced set of aims is to analyze the curriculum in terms of inclusion.

- Methods, tools and procedures for assessment and identification of children with special needs should be developed and applied in the primary education system.

- Resource Centres for special needs students should be established at the district level.
• Special schools with adequate facilities should be established in each upazilla; these schools and their staff can also support the general schools in implementing the inclusive education approach and engage in collaboration among teachers and staff.
• A database in BANBEIS should be created about special needs students in Bangladesh.
• Regulations, plans and practices about using the local language in pre-primary and primary level, especially for the ethnic communities, should be examined in the light of IE goals and principles.
• Assessment and testing policy, regulations and practices should be looked at taking into consideration the needs of children with special needs and the policy objectives in this respect. The implications of public examinations introduced recently at the end of grade 5 and 8 for inclusive education objectives and practices and to what extent these examinations measure learners’ actual achievement of competence should be carefully evaluated.
• A program of increasing awareness about special needs, disabilities and inclusive education principles and educational policies and priorities in this regard should be launched through communications media and advocacy forums.
• A plan for developing human resources in education, including orientation and training of education officers at national and district and upazilla level should be carried out. Education supervisor and URC officers at local level should have training to monitor and supervise inclusive schools.
• Home-based education program for some children with special needs and how this can be supported through specially trained teachers should be considered (UNICEF, 2003). Mobile training unit, a training team which can go around to remote areas to train teachers, should be considered. This concept has been widely used in the remote areas of Thailand.

VI. Conclusion
The movement toward inclusive education practices can be expected to continue and grow stronger. Various constructive actions can be taken to promote the development of inclusive education. The policy makers need to consider if enough is being done to bring about the transformation and look at their own commitment to this end. One approach to overcome the constraints and resistances is to invest in pilot projects to support individual schools or clusters of schools committing themselves to serve all children in their local areas and implement the inclusive strategies and practices. (William & Jonsson, 2001). Another key action is to initiate changes in teacher education - in pedagogical practices and instructional strategies, as well as teachers’ knowledge and understanding about special-needs children. (Porter, 2001).

The Indonesian experience including the measures taken and the struggles that continue in serving children with special needs and articulating the interaction between special needs
and inclusive education provide useful pointers to relevant issues and challenges and ways of coping with them in Bangladesh.

Bibliography


The Role of the Educational Counsellor in Meeting Special Education Needs (SEN) in Primary Schools of Prague, Czech Republic

Md. Ahsan Habib*

Abstract
The movement for inclusive education has produced various innovations. One of this is special services coordinators (SENCOs) in the mainstream schools. When the schools start accepting children with special education needs, it becomes necessary to give someone with special training and knowledge the responsibility to look after these children in the mainstream schools. In the Czech Republic, the Educational Counsellors (Výchovný Poradce) were given this coordination responsibility by legislation. The present study explores the role of the Educational or Pedagogic Counsellor in relation to the children with special education needs, as this is stated in legislation and practiced in reality. The research also investigates the challenges the Educational Counsellors face and how they cope with the challenges. Data were collected for the study from 26 participants including teachers, educational counsellor, special educators and parents through interviews, questionnaire and focus group discussion. As an exploratory research, a sequential mixed method design was applied for data collection and analysis. The findings show that responsibility for serving children with special education needs is a team effort with the Educational Counsellor being a member of the team, playing a lead role. It was found that as Czech schools employed special education teachers in the mainstream schools, Educational Counsellors were not involved directly in education of children with disability. The Counsellor, holding a senior position in the education hierarchy, had the overall responsibility for integration and coordination of a number of related matters including school absenteeism, “social-pathological phenomena,” facilitating services for children with disability, and integration into school of children from ethnic groups. The conclusion included suggestions regarding the relevance of the the Czech experience for Bangladesh.

Key Words: Inclusive Education, Pedagogical Counsellor (Výchovný Poradce), Special Education Needs (SEN)

I. Introduction
The movement for inclusive education has produced various innovations. One of these is the role of special services coordinators (SENCOs) in the mainstream schools. When the

* Assistant Professor, Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka;
schools started accepting children with special education needs, it became necessary to assign someone with special training and knowledge the task of looking after these children in the mainstream schools. Positions such as the remedial teacher, the itinerant teacher, the special teacher and then the Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCo) have been created to support the children with special education needs in mainstream schools (Crowther et al, 2001). These roles primarily have been evolving to support the individual child; but with the notion of inclusion getting wider acceptance, they have begun to take lead in the inclusion movement within the school system (Gerschel, 2005; Layton, 2005). Along with classroom teaching, these teachers are required to assume responsibility for coordinating different activities for supporting the child with special needs, such as, guiding parents, helping classroom teachers, and organising sessions with itinerant/peripatetic teachers and other specialists. They are also responsible for capacity building of the schools in responding to children with special needs.

The diverse roles and the workload of people involved in supporting inclusive education create the potential for a conflict between their positions as a manager and a professional specialist. A number of studies in United Kingdom and elsewhere to understand the appropriate roles and functions related to supporting the inclusion policies in schools show the need for a coordinator's role as in the school system of Czech Republic. (Layton, 2005; Szwed 2007; Imants, Van Brabander & Ruijssenaars, 2011). The present study will investigate how the role of Educational Counsellor, called Výchovný Poradce in Czech, is played in supporting Children with Special Education Needs (SEN) in mainstream primary schools of Prague.

II. Objectives, Method and Background

In the Czech Republic Pedagogical Counsellor (Výchovný Poradce) was a long established post for facilitating education of students with different psychological and social problems. The new legislation added to the general responsibility the function of coordinating the education of children with special education needs. The present research explores how the double role of the Educational Counsellor and of coordinator of activities in relation to children with special education needs is managed in practice. A total 26 participants including teachers, Educational Counsellors, special pedagogues (mainstream school), special pedagogues (special centres) and parents provided information collected through interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions. A sequential mixed method design was applied where initial qualitative data collection and analysis was followed by a quantitative analysis of data.

The experiences of implementing inclusive education practices in the mainstream schools show that a position with coordinating responsibility needs to be established. For example, positions called Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and Special Services Coordinators (SSE) have been created respectively in UK and the Netherlands. As per the
state document Vyhláška 72/2005 of Czech Republic (MŠMT: 2005), a similar post known as “the pedagogical Counsellor (Výchovný Poradce)” has the role of coordinating the inclusion process in the mainstream school.

The position of the school counsellor in Czech Republic dates back to 1919 (Kopcanova:2000. Pacnerova. 2009). The aim was to offer career counselling or vocational counselling to students. (Kopcanova: 2000, Pacnerová: 2009). The scope of the counselling services extended to psychological diagnosis and counselling of the pupil in the 1950s (Kopcanova: 2000). Educational Counsellor, therefore, came to be associated with career and behavioural counselling. While counselling in general emphasized career and psychological counselling of the pupil, the Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) focused on children with special education needs (Szwed: 2007). The two somewhat different objectives were integrated in the role of the Education Counsellor in the mainstream schools which adopted the inclusive education agenda.

### III. Findings and Discussion

The findings from school-based evidence have been compared with the review of the legislative documents and cross cultural studies to see how the Educational Counsellor plays the role in inclusion practices of the mainstream primary schools and the challenges faced in theory and practice.

The descriptive statistics below gives a glimpse of background picture of inclusion in the study sites (figures 1 and 2).

**Figure 1: Teachers’ Support for Inclusive Education**

![Bar Chart](chart.png)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers' Support for Inclusion</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Výchovný Poradce</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1 shows only two out of ten teachers interviewed supported the idea of integrating all the children with special needs in the mainstream schools. Five teachers out of seven thought all the children could not be integrated into the mainstream school. On the other hand, two Educational Counsellors agreed that all the children with special educational needs could be included in the schools.

In answer to the question why they think inclusion is not possible, the following reasons are stated by both teachers and counsellors.

**Figure 2: Barriers of Inclusive Education in Mainstream Schools**

Figure 2 shows the barriers to integration as seen by teachers. Teachers mentioned these barriers as reasons for integration not being possible in mainstream schools. A large number of children in the classroom is identified as the biggest hindrance to inclusion. Teachers believe that children with special education needs needed small groups to facilitate their education and care. The second, third and fourth reasons were lack of teaching assistants in the class, deficient infrastructure, and insufficient learning materials. The commonly assumed hindrance to inclusive education, such as, attitudinal and belief systems, were mentioned by two teachers.

The data show that the majority of teachers have a negative view about inclusive education. This is not surprising, as the end user “the practical implementation of inclusion places considerable pressure on individual teachers” (Konza: 2008). Cross country studies, such as a 14 country study by Bowman, also show similar findings. (Bowman cited in Konza: 2008). As one teacher participant in the study commented:
Despite the attempts to enable SEN children join the general population, some children will still prefer a small study team and a strictly individual approach. Moreover, integration is only possible with an assistant teacher, which is expensive.

Perception about and attitude towards inclusion are obviously vital for implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools.

**Figure 3 Teacher Experience by type of Teachers**

Figure 3 shows that teachers with long experience are appointed as Educational Counsellors, who have an average of 22 years of teaching experience. In contrast, the special pedagogue has only 7.5 years of experience on average, which is half of the average years of experience for all teachers. It indicates the seniority of the Educational Counsellor and newness of the post of special teacher in mainstream schools.

**Key Findings**

1. **Role of the Educational Counsellor**
   The role played in respect of counselling by teachers can be summarised as follows:
   
   - The role of the Educational Counsellor regarding children with special education needs and inclusive education practices vary from school to school.
   
   - The Special Education pedagogue with guidance from the Educational Counsellor generally do initial diagnosis, discusses with parents about referring the child to specialists as needed, initiate preparation of individual educational plan (IEP) for the child, coordinate training for the teacher and students and keep record of the SEN children.
• Most of the teachers performing counselling duties act as behavioural counsellor rather than special educator specialist or coordinator

After the political change of the Velvet revolution (1989), change has also taken place in the tasks and in the organisation of educational counselling. Counselling care for handicapped children has been extended, especially in connection with the requirement of social and educational integration of these children. (Pacnerová: 2009). The new role of the Educational Counsellor has been codified by the Czech educational decree /Vyhláška 72/2005 titled as the “Decree on provision of advisory services at schools and at school advisory facilities.” (MŠMT, 72/2005:2009)

The understanding of the roles of the Educational Counsellor, the special education pedagogue, and how they interact and support each other remain an issue with regard to serving children with special education needs effectively. On the whole the school special pedagogue takes the responsibility for SEN children, though the new state decree entrusts the major responsibility to the Educational Counsellor. Both teachers and Counsellors appear to have unclear and sometimes contrasting views about their responsibilities regarding children with special needs.

2. Coordination of training regarding special education

• Some of the Counsellors arrange training sessions for students and teachers; training on IEP, documentation, and looking after legal issues, concerning pupil with learning disabilities and general pupils.

• Coordination role of the Educational or Pedagogical Counsellor also vary from school to school and person to person. Most of the teachers reported that the Pedagogical Counsellor coordinate training programmes for the gifted students, school absenteeism, violence in school, and ethnic minority.

Training in terms of knowledge sharing is one of the tasks of the Educational Counsellor—a part of the counsellor’s role of leadership and initiation of inclusive practices in the mainstream schools. But the data show this role has not been played adequately. As noted by respondents, the lack of time and being overloaded with classes are the barriers to executing the responsibility of the Pedagogical Counsellor.

The state documents assigned a wide range of coordination role to the Educational Counsellor; from coordinating the development and implementation of inclusive approach in the school to arranging training of teachers, preparing and implementing activities related to integration of pupils; referral of students to specialists; and prevention of racism, xenophobia and other issues related to cultural and ethnic differences. Interventions initiated by the counsellor were found in the survey and mentioned in interviews. Participants mentioned programmes on bullying, drugs, crimes, and sexual education initiated by the Educational Counsellor. However, whether these add up to an adequate response to special education needs is debatable.
3. Perception about and expectation of teachers regarding the tasks of Educational Counsellor

- Educational Counsellors are mostly perceived as behavioural and career counsellor.
- Educational Counsellors are not perceived primarily as coordinator of services for SEN children. The expectations are also derived from the general perception about counsellor’s role in coping with students’ behavioural problems.

Very few cases of major disabilities were identified in the schools which were included in the study. Furthermore, newly recruited special education teachers took care of the few cases with special education needs.

4. Challenges the Educational Counsellor faces

- Teachers reported challenges faced by the Education Counsellor in respect of evaluating children, teaching methodologies, inadequate training of Educational Counsellor and their interaction with assistant teachers.
- The Educational Counsellors themselves did not mention problems in respect of integrating SEN children academically into the mainstream, especially in the senior grades, though the teachers had somewhat different views.
- Constraint of time, work burden, and many teaching hours were noted as management challenges.

Participating teachers mentioned that the evaluation of children regarding their special needs and tests and evaluation procedures used were sometimes highly contentious. Part of this problem was not having enough knowledge of the children with special education needs. As the Government is promoting inclusive education, more children with special needs education are entering the mainstream schools. Therefore, the demand on special knowledge and expertise of Educational Counsellor is increasing. Few Educational Counsellors talked about their own challenges, but one was forthright about academic challenges in her task. She mentioned that when SEN children were promoted to second grade, she faced problems in providing adequate support for these children. This didactic challenge in integrating the children with special education needs into the mainstream classrooms has been observed in other European countries also. (Meijer, 2001).

However, the few responses from the Educational Counsellor regarding this issue implies that schools were either not facing problems in integrating SEN children or not having enough activities for the children with disability in the concerned schools. The later possibility is consistent with the point discussed previously that the integration process was yet to start rigorously in Czech schools. Furthermore, the special pedagogue rather than the Educational Counsellor was more directly involved in this effort.

5. Strategies to overcome the challenges for the Educational Counsellor

- Frequent meetings, courses and workshops and personal initiatives can play a positive role in preparing the Educational Counsellor for his/her role.
IV. Relevance for Bangladesh

At present Bangladesh is in dire need of counselling services as well as trained special educators in schools. Some concerns, which have been in much discussion recently, are “eve-teasing” (harassment of girl students by males), student suicide and attempted suicides reveal the need for psychological services in the school. Increase in school absenteeism, spreading of drug use among students, and distribution of pornography through information technology are also frequently cited problems. Corporal punishment or involving the law enforcing agency is not the best response to these problems. Careful psychological intervention is likely to be more helpful in confronting these challenges.

On the other hand, there is a recognition of the need to adopt inclusive education practices both by the government and non-government organisations. Funding for modifying physical...
facilities (e.g., building ramps) has been allocated and training has been arranged for teachers by different agencies. But a child with special education needs must have continuous and diversified support in the school. Many of them also need help for after school placement and rehabilitation. A teacher without adequate special education training and experience could hardly provide this kind of support.

The school system is not equipped at present to provide the support and services to children with special needs and to move in a significant way towards an inclusive education approach. Most schools probably cannot afford both an educational psychologist and special education teachers, when there is a shortage of regular teachers in the majority of mainstream schools. A beginning can be made by combining the role of the special educator and the school psychologist and appointing such people, with adequate qualification and training, in the school. It can be piloted in a small number of schools and can be expanded to all schools in phases.

V. Conclusion

Some of the findings of this study are in line with the findings of past cross country studies and some have emerged as new insights. It appears that the role of the Educational Counsellor is not a one-person coordination concern. It is rather a mechanism for establishing a team approach and school-wide and system-wide responsibility for building an inclusive system. In Czech schools, with a long tradition of the school counsellor, the role of the Educational Counsellor is not directly related to the education of children with disability. It is rather a senior position with the responsibility of guiding overall inclusion and integration embracing student absenteeism, social-pathological phenomena, disability, and ethnic and cultural diversity – supported by special education teachers and other teachers in the school. This overall responsibility of the Educational Counsellor requires the adoption of a whole school approach, going beyond just the pedagogic issues. The potential of the broad role of the Education Counsellor can be realised only with adequate management support from the school and higher levels and appropriate training for teachers and other personnel.

The relevance of the Czech experience for Bangladesh lies in recognising the need for taking appropriate initial steps for starting a process for piloting and expanding in phases the inclusive education methods and mechanisms.

References


Abstract

Activity Based Learning (ABL) introduced in the primary schools in Tamil Nadu, India has attracted wide interest among educationists. In November 2010, a team from the Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University had the opportunity to go to Tamil Nadu and observe ABL in practice. The team observed the program and spoke with people at different levels who have a role in the change making process. The team was on the lookout for elements that could be relevant for and reproduced in Bangladesh. The article presents reflections of the team about ABL in Tamil Nadu and suggestions are made about trying out the approach in Bangladesh.

Introduction

Activity Based Learning (ABL) introduced in the primary schools in Tamil Nadu, India has attracted wide interest among educationists. The pedagogic approach was pioneered at Rishi Valley in Andhra Pradesh by David Horsburgh, a British Officer, after the Second World War. The approach is founded on some of the popular learning theories which claim that children learn best when learning is linked to the surrounding environment and is aimed at providing optimum opportunities to learn (Gauthama, 2008). The Tamil Nadu education authorities did some tailoring to make the approach workable in their context. A number of teachers intensively worked as a core team for some years to shape it, develop necessary materials and train all the teachers. The initiative was launched to upgrade the quality of elementary education and to guarantee education for all (Anandalakshmy, 2007). Some of the features of ABL are innovative and have proven to be effective tools for meaningful learning. A large number of appraisal reports indicates that the initiative became quite successful in the state. To outsiders, ABL became known as the Tamil Nadu Model.

In November 2010, a team from the Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University had the opportunity to go to Tamil Nadu and observe ABL in practice. We arrived in a cyclone battered afternoon in Chennai. For the rest of the days of our trip, the weather was pleasant, as were the people we met. They were generous in sparing time for us and in responding to our countless queries. We spent time inside the classroom observing...
Reflections on Activity Based Learning in Tamil Nadu, India

Janmajoy Dey*
Mohammed Noor-E-Alam Siddiquee**

Abstract
Activity Based Learning (ABL) introduced in the primary schools in Tamil Nadu, India has attracted wide interest among educationists. In November 2010, a team from the Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University had the opportunity to go to Tamil Nadu and observe ABL in practice. The team observed the program and spoke with people at different levels who have a role in the change making process. The team was on the lookout for elements that could be relevant for and reproduced in Bangladesh. The article presents reflections of the team about ABL in Tamil Nadu and suggestions are made about trying out the approach in Bangladesh.

Introduction
Activity Based Learning (ABL) introduced in the primary schools in Tamil Nadu, India has attracted wide interest among educationists. The pedagogic approach was pioneered at Rishi Valley in Andhra Pradesh by David Horsburgh, a British Officer, after the Second World War. The approach is founded on some of the popular learning theories which claim that children learn best when learning is linked to the surrounding environment and is aimed at providing optimum opportunities to learn (Gauthama, 2008). The Tamil Nadu education authorities did some tailoring to make the approach workable in their context. A number of teachers intensively worked as a core team for some years to shape it, develop necessary materials and train all the teachers. The initiative was launched to upgrade the quality of elementary education and to guarantee education for all (Anandalakshmy, 2007).

Some of the features of ABL are innovative and have proven to be effective tools for meaningful learning. A large number of appraisal reports indicates that the initiative became quite successful in the state. To outsiders, ABL became known as the Tamil Nadu Model.

In November 2010, a team from the Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University had the opportunity to go to Tamil Nadu and observe ABL in practice. We arrived in a cyclone battered afternoon in Chennai. For the rest of the days of our trip, the weather was pleasant, as were the people we met. They were generous in sparing time for us and in responding to our countless queries. We spent time inside the classroom observing

* Research Associate, Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University.
** Senior Trainer, Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University.
the activities, talking separately with children and teachers, and in open discussions with training providers and top level administrative officers. One name that we must mention is Ms. Malathi, one of the consultants of ABL, ever smiling and friendly, who accompanied us to all the schools, resource centers and the offices we visited and was a source of valuable information all the time.

**Purpose of Our Visit**

In recent years the term active learning/activity based learning has been frequently discussed in Bangladesh. The traditional pedagogic practices in our school education have been questioned by experts, teachers, parents and policy makers. They have felt the need for a pedagogic shift towards a learner friendly approach that would be appropriate for sustainable learning for children at the elementary level. The Tamil Nadu initiative certainly generated a lot of excitement due to the fact that the pedagogic tradition there is quite similar to ours. Before the visit we read some writings on the ABL program. On paper the approach seemed to us to be quite radical. We were eager to observe the program and talk with some key role players in the change making process. We were on the lookout for elements that could be reproduced in our country. We wanted to know more about the pre-ABL context in details from people who were and still are involved in the reform process. We also expected classroom observation to help us comprehend better different aspects of the approach.

**Key Findings**

We had the opportunity to visit three primary schools in Chennai, Kancheepuram and Thiruvallur Districts. We observed Math, English, and Science classes. We talked with both children and teachers. We had an informal discussion session with a group of Teacher Educators in a Block Resource Centre (BRC) at Chitlapakkam in Kancheepuram district. Moreover, the State Project Director of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (as EFA is known in India) running the ABL program shared his insights and experiences with us. During our visit we kept field notes and journal to register crucial information. We elaborate below some of the features of ABL in the way we have seen these in real classroom situations and what we came to know from some key informants:

1. ABL has been in practice at the primary level. It covers at present grade I-IV. The total ABL package is used in teaching-learning practice from grade I to IV. Though grade V is within primary level, ABL has not been used for this grade. In Tamil Nadu, grades VI to VIII are regarded as the upper primary level. For upper primary they have devised what is known as the Active Learning Methodology (ALM), which has the same theoretical foundation as ABL. Grade V is considered a transitional phase when children get prepared to attain higher level skills.

2. ABL is intended to instigate a major departure from conventional classroom organization and learning process. The classrooms are multi-grade, that is, in a
classroom, there are learners from grade I to IV. The sitting arrangements follow a certain pattern enabling both vertical and horizontal grouping within a classroom. The class size is restricted to 40. The learners from different grades sit in six circular groups. One teacher oversees all the groups. Group 1 and 2 are teacher supported, where every child learns the given concepts from the teacher on a one-to-one basis. Group 3 is partially a teacher-supported group. Children work with the relevant practice cards but seek teachers’ help if needed. Group 4 represents reinforcement activities. This is a partially peer-supported group. Being multi-grade, children in classes 3 or 4 help those in the lower grades to perform the activities mentioned in the cards. So, as the younger children learn something new, the older ones get a reinforcement of what they learnt earlier. In the process, any child may seek the help of teachers also. Group 5 is a fully peer-supported one, where children work in their own pace, but with the help of others in the group. Finally, as children gain mastery of each particular competency, they move to Group 6, a self-support group, where they test their learning. The classroom organization reminds one of a family group in which members engage spontaneously in learning activities. As learning is the sole aim, the environment and teachers’ instruction and stimulus encourage coordinated learning efforts from all the learners. Instead of putting the learners in a competitive process in the early years of schooling, the ABL method promotes cooperation among learners to reach the desired learning point.

3. Tamil, Math, English, Social Science and Science are the main subjects at the primary level. In addition, there is the co-curricular area which includes storytelling, paper craft, drawing, collage and outdoor games. A classroom is allocated for only one subject, and the materials, cards, drawings by learners would tell you about the subject being practiced in a classroom. There is no bench or desk; instead the learners sit on the floor. It allows space for free movement and necessary sitting rearrangements. Learners use the walls inside a classroom as black board. The learners, therefore, get a chance to use the blackboard to practice different tasks.

4. Subject-wise learning targets or competencies are organized into learning units (known as milestones) and these units are placed on a vertical scale (a learning ladder) starting with elementary to advanced level learning units. For each of the learning units, separate sets of learning activities are designed and there are cards that carry the proper instructions for the activity. The printed learning ladders are available in every classroom for the learners. The ladders have separate color code and symbolic logos to indicate specific learning activities. We have seen a learner go to the ladder, identify his or her position and select the learning activity for the day. Then he or she goes to the shelf of trays that contain the cards. The student brings out the card and goes to her or his sitting group. The activities may be reading from story books, writing, story telling, drawing, singing, mind-mapping, simple experiments, role play etc. These are purposely designed to serve as introductory, reinforcement and evaluative activities for all the learning units. There are some local cultural elements like puppetry, drama and folk song which are included as learning activities considered appropriate in some subjects.
5. Translation of the Learning Materials from Rishi Valley Rural Education Center (REC) was the 1st initiative for developing learning materials for ABL. A core team who earlier visited REC and was trained there was involved in translating the materials. These team members were school teachers where this method was inaugurated. For about six months selected teachers worked hard in developing learning materials after school time. The learning materials used in ABL are meticulously developed, colorful and easy to handle. The learning materials are not only systematically stacked on the shelves, but they are color-coded for each class level. Learning materials include cards, charts, story books, puzzle box, letter box, text books etc. For mathematics, Montessori materials are being used by the learners. These materials help them internalize the mathematical processes. Audio-visual materials are used in some lessons on English. There are textbooks for learners which they use as required. Activity cards for Science and Social Science are based on the textbooks. Children have notebooks and workbooks, which are used to do copy work from the cards, or exercises as instructed in the cards or by the teacher.

6. The daily learning time for the learners is divided into two sessions/slots. For one session, a learner does the activity from a single subject area like the Tamil language. So the daily contact hours are designated for only two subjects. The learners take an extended time to complete the activities and can move to the next unit of learning. So there is adequate curricular weight given to all the subjects.

7. The learners are encouraged to engage in self-learning. For some tasks, the learners do the problem-solving individually after gaining learning experience from participatory learning. For more advanced learners, there are vacant spaces in the learning ladder where he or she can do activities for sustained leaning.

8. ABL enables children to internalize the process of learning. They get the experience of the various learning processes through involvement in activities. Teachers provide the help to learners in concept building and understanding rules and theories. The learners take it on themselves from that point to application of those concepts and rules in real-life situations.

9. There is nothing like a terminal or annual examination. After the learning activities for a unit are covered, the learners take the assessment card for self evaluation, do the tasks and get evaluated by the teachers. If a learner does the tasks satisfactorily, he or she moves to the next unit. Otherwise, he or she does some reinforcement activities to achieve the specific learning target. For the learners, there is no failure and therefore no fear of failure. Teacher for a subject maintains an achievement chart to keep track of the progress of each of the learners. The teachers do this in the presence of the learners so that learners know about their position. The achievement chart shows the positions of the children in each area. So there is no ranking, and no child is better than or worse than another. The entire system allows diversity and differential rates of progress. Absenteeism doesn’t thwart a learner’s progress too much, because a learner can resume from the point he or she left off before the absence.
10. All the directorates in the state education department are prompt in implementing quality improvement measures. Teacher grants and training facilities have been on the top in the priority list. There has been a quality support chain that links the teachers, teacher educators and supervisors. Teachers receive mandatory 2 year Diploma in Education as pre-service training. They also receive 1 week basic training on ABL. The master trainers, Block Resource Teacher Educators (BRTEs) and the teachers are all trained through direct hands on experience in ABL classrooms with children, allowing for intensive and experiential learning. The training is in a cascade mode, but provides enough checks and balances to avoid message loss. BRTEs act as academic supervisor and each BRTE has not more than 6-7 schools in his/her charge, allowing for at least a visit to each school per week. In service, teachers make constant efforts to improve the lesson contents and other materials. Schools arrange one day refreshers every week. BRTEs attend these refreshers to offer suggestions. The schools get various support from the Block Resource Centre (BRC), the District Education Office and the Local Education Committee. The BRCs are highly functional with computer facilities, satellite connectivity and most importantly, adequate staffing. Resource books have been provided to all BRCs which are used by BRTEs and teachers.

11. Community has been a part of the school management structure approved by the state school education authority. A provision, namely, the Village Education Committee (VEC) has allowed local community to engage in management, monitoring and school improvement programs. VEC is a 20 member body comprising of representatives from teachers, PTAs, local panchayat, administration, local clubs and organizations. This committee monitors academic activity and performance of teacher and student. It assists school in transparent and effective utilization of grants, funds, construction and maintenance work. It also organizes awareness campaigns and events to create awareness among the community about the importance of education.

More Facts and Figures

The approach entails a dedicated effort, and hard work from individuals and all the stakeholders. One thing that helped the process is that there were some ongoing instances of near-similar practices in other states nearby. But most importantly it was a few individuals who felt the need for the shift in approach and worked as the catalyst in the initial preparation and implementation phase. M.P. Vijayakumar, IAS, working in Tamil Nadu School Education Department, was one of the firm believers and an architect of the reform program. He successfully motivated the experienced teachers who extended their hands to prepare all necessary materials. They provided training to other teachers. Along with training, it was crucial to convince teachers that the new method could be an effective way of achieving learning targets for the children.
Assuming a new role on the part of the teacher was difficult. There was reaction from different forums regarding the new pedagogy of learning and the new role of the teacher. It was tried out on a limited scale in 13 corporation schools in 2003, and the result clearly showed that the children’s learning achievement was higher than before. This approach was extended to all 264 schools in Chennai Corporation during 2004 and finally to all 37,000 schools in the state in 2005/6 (Ramchandar, 2010). Whole hearted support from the state government of Tamil Nadu smoothened this large up-scaling task. We had the opportunity to talk with the State Project Director of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mr. R. Venkateshan, who mentioned that teachers were skeptical about the apparently new method of learning. He reminisced, “It seemed to them full of complexity in contrast to the traditional textbook based lecture method. Again the same sort of response was also shown by local society and the parents’ community.”

It is natural that when something new is tried out for the first time, there is skepticism. The elements of doubt around ABL disappeared as the teachers got used to the new pedagogy, even though it was not a smooth transition. As visiting observers we felt a bit puzzled to see the classrooms on the first few occasions. With the presence of multi grade students, learning ladder, activity cards, materials, unconventional sitting arrangement, and multi-level groupings in the classroom seemed a bit chaotic at first sight to outsiders. More so to the eyes of those used to see teacher standing in front of the class lecturing from a book and children passively listening. The Head Teacher of a Corporation School in Chennai told us, “It took quite a while and conscious efforts to get used to the new mode of schooling. We gradually realized that young children are very animated and conscious about their role.”

A series of research studies carried by external bodies and university scholars found improvement in the achievement level of children. Sample achievement tests revealed that compared to the baseline scores there was an increase in average achievement by 25% to 29% in Tamil, Mathematics and English in Class II and in Class IV (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, 2009). The new approach has given children the opportunity to get actively involved in the learning process. The classroom organization promoted learning through hands-on experience and interaction with peer groups. There was tangible improvement in primary completion rate and decrease in the repetition rate. (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, n.d.).

Inclusiveness is consciously built into the approach and teachers are encouraged to create and maintain an inclusive environment in the classroom. Teachers within a cluster meet once in a week to discuss issues and problems they encounter and make a constant effort to enrich the approach by applying new strategies and materials. Moreover, a strong support mechanism has been active and a network connects the remotest of areas across the state. Administrative and supervisory bodies are prompt to take necessary supportive measures.

In the past, before ABL was introduced, classroom activity was limited to one way lecturing with much emphasis on rote learning. Focus was on teaching rather than learning. Flawed
traditional assessment encouraged rote learning and contributed to poor learner achievement. A teacher of Thiruvallur District School summed up the situation, “Earlier, even if a child didn’t do well in class, he or she was promoted to the next grade. That’s why, shockingly, even fifth-graders struggled to read a simple sentence in Tamil, their mother tongue.” This is all too familiar to us in Bangladesh. The pre-ABL Tamil Nadu schools are similar to what is still the common scenario in Bangladesh.

Shift towards a Learner Centered Approach in Bangladesh

What are the prospects of a reform program in Bangladesh similar to the one in Tamil Nadu? It is probably the right time for it because we are entering into the 3rd phase of Primary Education Development Program (PROG-3). The PROG-3 has proposed quality intervention measures to lift the standard of primary education. It has identified the need of improved pedagogic practice inside classroom that could guarantee stronger learner participation leading to better learning outcome. It has been said that PROG-3 will consider new perspective on school improvement with focus on the interactions between teachers and students in the classroom through effective instructional strategies that will engage children in activity-based learning (DPE, 2010). Essential elements of the Tamil Nadu model may be relevant for changing the pedagogic approach in the Bangladesh classrooms. All the stakeholders involved in the development and delivery of the primary education sector have to work in co-ordination to detail out a practicable work plan for such a purpose. PROG-3 has kept the option of Public-Private Partnership (PPP), which would allow private organizations and NGOs to play important roles in the process (DPE, 2010). Some necessary steps are suggested below.

- A core working group may be formed to consider the lessons from the ABL approach and how these can be applied in Bangladesh. The group should include subject and curriculum specialists and trainers and teachers from primary school. The group may have sub-groups and share the responsibilities for different aspects of the exercise.

- Curriculum for primary level is now under development. The proposed core working group has to work in coordination with the curriculum development process. The new pedagogic approach should fit in with the new curriculum. Apart from the selection of competencies and subject areas, the question of defining the pedagogic approach is very crucial in curriculum development. The new curriculum should have a clear delineation of the new pedagogic approach for classroom teaching-learning activities. The working group will detail out the approach on the basis of the review reports prepared by the sub-groups.

- Textbooks could be designed in a different manner. The textbook will contain the learning contents as before, but it should also contain instruction for learning activities. In ABL in Tamil Nadu, instructional cards are being used by learners. We can develop instructional cards for the learning activities or can add the instructions for activities in our textbooks. The intention should be to reduce the exclusive dependence on textbooks.
Learner centered pedagogic approach requires the classrooms to have a learner-friendly environment. The classroom needs to facilitate multi-grade grouping and active engagement of students in the learning activities.

Piloting and Scaling-up. The new approach and methodology have to be tried out in a pilot phase before it can be considered for wider application. A pilot may be undertaken in a small number of government model and other primary schools in 10 Upazilas.

One of the key concerns in Bangladesh would be to limit the class size to 35 to 40 students to permit multi-grade grouping and meaningful group activity. Under the current practice of double-shift schooling, multi-grade grouping followed in Tamil Nadu cannot be applied unless students of all grades are included in both shifts.

Teacher Support System. We have to strengthen our teacher support system for proper implementation of the new approach. The training of teachers and their supervision have to be re-oriented to support the reform. We can bring together government and non-government resources such as expertise, infrastructure and technology to build an effective support system. Besides the teachers, we have to orient our Education Officers (DPEO, UEO, AUEO) to the new approach and the new supervisory role. The training activities themselves must provide the trainees a taste of what the children will be doing in a classroom. The training package may include a general part on the new pedagogic approach as well as subject based content.

Assessment System. For ABL piloting in Bangladesh, special attention has to be given to learning assessment with an emphasis on formative assessment. Effective formative system is an essential complement to the activity based learning pedagogy and practice. PROG3 has also emphasized the need for classroom based formative assessment. Feedback from learners to teachers and from teachers to the school and supervisory authorities as well as parents and responses to these on a continuing basis have to become an active loop of learning for all. The implications for public examinations at the end of grade five and eight introduced recently have to be considered. The main concern is to what extent the public examinations as they are designed now actually measure competencies of students and how they support or hamper activity-based learning.

**Conclusion**

The pedagogic shift we propose has been long due and is consistent with our goals of educational development including PROG3. It will require resources, imagination, effort and most importantly, support from policy making authorities. Parents and community also have to be involved from the beginning. It is important that the parents accept the new pedagogy.
Learner centered pedagogic approach requires the classrooms to have a learner-friendly environment. The classroom needs to facilitate multi-grade grouping and active engagement of students in the learning activities.

Piloting and Scaling-up. The new approach and methodology have to be tried out in a pilot phase before it can be considered for wider application. A pilot may be undertaken in a small number of government model and other primary schools in 10 Upazilas.

One of the key concerns in Bangladesh would be to limit the class size to 35 to 40 students to permit multi-grade grouping and meaningful group activity. Under the current practice of double-shift schooling, multi-grade grouping followed in Tamil Nadu cannot be applied unless students of all grades are included in both shifts.

Teacher Support System. We have to strengthen our teacher support system for proper implementation of the new approach. The training of teachers and their supervision have to be re-oriented to support the reform. We can bring together government and non-government resources such as expertise, infrastructure and technology to build an effective support system. Besides the teachers, we have to orient our Education Officers (DPEO, UEO, AUEO) to the new approach and the new supervisory role. The training activities themselves must provide the trainees a taste of what the children will be doing in a classroom. The training package may include a general part on the new pedagogic approach as well as subject based content.

Assessment System. For ABL piloting in Bangladesh, special attention has to be given to learning assessment with an emphasis on formative assessment. Effective formative system is an essential complement to the activity based learning pedagogy and practice. PROG3 has also emphasized the need for classroom based formative assessment. Feedback from learners to teachers and from teachers to the school and supervisory authorities as well as parents and responses to these on a continuing basis have to become an active loop of learning for all. The implications for public examinations at the end of grade five and eight introduced recently have to be considered. The main concern is to what extent the public examinations as they are designed now actually measure competencies of students and how they support or hamper activity-based learning.

Conclusion

The pedagogic shift we propose has been long due and is consistent with our goals of educational development including PROG3. It will require resources, imagination, effort and most importantly, support from policy making authorities. Parents and community also have to be involved from the beginning. It is important that the parents accept the new pedagogy.

References

Various initiatives in the field of Early Childhood Development (ECD) have been taken in a scattered manner in Bangladesh since the 1980s. According to the latest directory of Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN), about 250 organizations are engaged in various ECD activities and programs. Many of them have developed innovative models and have carried out evaluation and research. The Early Childhood Development Resource Centre (ECDRC) at the Institute of Educational Development of BRAC University designed and started the first Post Graduate Diploma and Masters Degree Program in ECD in the country in 2008. So far two batches of students have successfully completed their degree and have conducted studies as a partial requirement of the degree. ECDRC also has been involved in research.

Bangladesh ECD Network took the initiative to organise a research dissemination seminar on 20-21 December, 2011. The goal was to share the knowledge generated by research with BEN members and the larger ECD constituency. A selection of the abstracts of research presented at the seminar is given below.

1. Understanding the Required Capacity in ECCD and DRR for Particular Communities in a Disaster Prone District of Bangladesh.

Researchers: Syeda Rezwana Akhter, Mahmuda Akhter, Altaf Hossain, Ratan Kumar Sarkar, Md. Tariqul Islam Chowdhury, Mohammad Nuruzzaman, Tamanna Taher, Matiur Rahman, and Shahidullah Sharif

Abstract: The Asia Pacific region represents a ring of fire or a geographical area that is at high risk for natural disasters (Hayden & Cologon, 2011). Cyclone, flood, drought, riverbank erosion, landslides, tornado, earthquakes and arsenic toxicity in drinking water are major hazards for Bangladesh. In April 2010, Bangladesh has approved the National Plan for Disaster Management 2010-2015. In the plan the government acknowledged need for pre-disaster mitigation and preparedness of the people as a necessary as well as a cost-effective approach. Though one of the goals were ‘Empowering at risk communities’, unfortunately it did not address social variables of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) for 0-8 year’s age group children, who as a group are highly vulnerable and often bear the brunt of disasters.
Various initiatives in the field of Early Childhood Development (ECD) have been taken in a scattered manner in Bangladesh since the 1980s. According to the latest directory of Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN), about 250 organizations are engaged in various ECD activities and programs. Many of them have developed innovative models and have carried out evaluation and research. The Early Childhood Development Resource Centre (ECDRC) at the Institute of Educational Development of BRAC University designed and started the first Post Graduate Diploma and Masters Degree Program in ECD in the country in 2008. So far two batches of students have successfully completed their degree and have conducted studies as a partial requirement of the degree. ECDRC also has been involved in research.

Bangladesh ECD Network took the initiative to organise a research dissemination seminar on 20-21 December, 2011. The goal was to share the knowledge generated by research with BEN members and the larger ECD constituency. A selection of the abstracts of research presented at the seminar is given below.

1. Understanding the Required Capacity in ECCD and DRR for Particular Communities in a Disaster Prone District of Bangladesh.

Researchers: Syeda Rezwana Akhter¹, Mahmuda Akhter¹, Altaf Hossain¹, Ratan Kumar Sarkar¹, Md. Tariqul Islam Chowdhury², Mohammad Nuruzzaman³, Tamanna Taher³, Matiur Rahman⁴ and Shahidullah Sharif⁴

Abstract: The Asia Pacific region represents a ring of fire or a geographical area that is at high risk for natural disasters (Hayden & Cologon, 2011). Cyclone, flood, drought, riverbank erosion, landslides, tornado, earthquakes and arsenic toxicity in drinking water are major hazards for Bangladesh. In April 2010, Bangladesh has approved the National Plan for Disaster Management 2010-2015. In the plan the government acknowledged need for pre-disaster mitigation and preparedness of the people as a necessary as well as a cost-effective approach. Though one of the goals were ‘Empowering at risk communities’, unfortunately it did not address social variables of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) for 0-8 year’s age group children, who as a group are highly vulnerable and often bear the brunt of disasters.

¹ Institute of Educational Development BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh
² Bangladesh Shishu Academy, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh
³ UNICEF Bangladesh
⁴ Save the Children Bangladesh
Research suggested that selected actions in the area of early childhood care and development (ECCD) could be an important DRR factor for young children (Shores, Grace, Barbaro, Flenner & Barbaro, 2009 in Hayden & Cologon, 2011). Furthermore, it was suggested that children in emergency situations benefit from being informed and involved in their community (Mitchell, Haynes, Hall, Choong, & Oven, 2008; Morris, van Ommeren, Belfer, Saxena, & Saraceno, 2007 in Hayden & Cologon, 2011). Hence the objective of this study was to identify the strength and gap of capacity for the families in ECCD and DRR for particular communities in disaster prone region of Bangladesh. The study took place in four communities of a coastal district. The respondents were representative of ethnic groups, cluster villages, fishermen and general population, selected randomly from families who had children of 0-8 years, habitant for five years and experienced in facing disaster. In total 120 household were surveyed, 4 focus group discussions were held and 12 interviews were conducted in the communities. The study found that the people in general gave priority to the safe shelter for the children in disaster. Besides that every other matter children faced during or later were seen as normal and less initiatives and services present. Although the communities believed in helping each other especially at the time of disaster but there was no indication of any initiative as a group/whole. It was also found that the services during the disaster and later were inadequate but people had their own way of facing disasters and reviving from that. It was also found that the people suffer because of weak collaboration between GO and NGO. Hence the data gathered through the study constituted evidence which can inform advocacy activities for enhancing services for -8 year’s age group children in terms of social variables of DRR at the community level. The study also supported the proposition that ECCD activities should be incorporated into DRR Policy by initiating mapping of ECCD in DRR program for the country.

2. Children's Exposure to Television Advertisement-Exploring the Bangladesh Context

Research: Md. Iqbal Hossain

Abstract: The effects of television advertisements on children have become a growing concern in many countries since the first extensive research in 1970. In Bangladesh, there has been no research to date that has examined the effects of television advertising on young children. Considering international experiences and the significance of the issue in Bangladesh, as a first step, this study aimed to provide preliminary clarification of the possible effects of television advertisements on children.

A qualitative, mixed methods approach was used to estimate children’s probable exposure to TV advertisements, analyzing selected TV advertisements by experts to identify areas of the effect and explore the responses of parents towards children’s exposure to TV advertising.

1 Advisor, Learning Program, Plan Bangladesh
The study found that the average probable exposure of children to television advertisements is 21.19% (34.79%) of total watching time during any weekday and 32.55% (37.72%) during the weekend. Through expert’s analysis, it was found that most of the ads contain social class and gender bias and implicate morals, ethics or values and lifestyles. The ads also mislead children and manipulate their logic or reasoning. Some of the ads have potential to challenge thinking, create curiosity and introduce a new concept. Overall, virtually all of the advertisements directly or indirectly targeting children have the potentiality to provoke them, affect food habit, health and attitude or behavior. The study also took into account the parent’s perception of the effect of children’s exposure to television advertisement. Overall a large number of parents agreed that their children influenced by ads differently that have different affects on children food, lifestyle, demand, choice and preference.

This was an inaugural exploratory study on children’s exposure to television advertisement in Bangladesh. The results of this study give a reflection on the probable amount of exposure children receive, the potential areas the advertisement may affect children and parents perception on their child’s exposure to television advertisements.

3. Exploring the State of Educational & Care Giving Services for Autistic Children in Dhaka City: A Case Study of Two Schools

Researcher: Arpita Majumdar

Abstract: Autism is a neurobiological based developmental disability which is manifested during the first three years of life. Children with ASD displays marked impairment in communication and social relationship, demonstrates restricted range of interests and behaviours, including significant deficits in language and socialization skills. Bangladesh has a high percentage of disabled children. According to the WHO, 10 percent of population of developing countries are disabled, and Bangladesh is one of them. (Priestly, 2001). This means 1 in every 500 children is affected in this country (Rahman, 2010). There are very few institutions working for the autistic children and they do not come under government’s concern in terms of funding, care, curriculum, evaluation, monitoring and training. There has been practically nil research on autism.

The study attempted to fill in this knowledge gap through a case study investigation of autistic school’s teachers’ knowledge, perception and motivation for working with these children, parents’ knowledge on autism and perception of the schools, school authority’s perception, and expectation from their respective schools and through examination of physical resources of the schools. This study was an attempt to explore the existing educational and care giving facilities in Dhaka city. The case study was exploratory in nature and used both qualitative and quantitative methods to get maximum information from

1 Values are inclusive of TV promotions, which is also an advertisement but not for any commodities.
the parents, teachers and school authorities to understand the overall situation of the educational and institutional care available for autistic children in Dhaka. The two schools were selected purposively for the study was SWAC and AWF. Semi-structured interviews of parents and teachers, in-depth interviews of the school authorities, review of school’s documents, classroom observations were done to get maximum inputs. Quantitative data was analyzed by calculating Frequency Distribution and Percentage whereas Grid Analysis and Thematic Coding were done to review the qualitative data.

The study had some very interesting findings. Lack of awareness and infrastructure was found in respect to training, schooling, awareness, diagnosis and care. Children with autism were found lacking quality education, restricting their holistic development. Parents were found less motivated and knowledgeable on the disability. Teacher’s knowledge was limited and was not sufficient to move these children ahead of their disability. The school authorities were found dedicated but due to lack of funding and infrastructure, they were not able to match up to their intentions. In conclusion, the autistic schools in Dhaka city were found not apposite to the requirements of the autistic children and their families.


Researcher: Ratan Kumar Sarkar

Abstract: Parents’ literacy levels are usually related to children’s literacy development and parent–child engagement in literacy activities in the home has been found to help children develop oral language. This study explored the relationship of the verbal skill and cognitive performance of children with the education level of parents in rural and urban residential context. This cross sectional study compared the verbal skill and cognitive performance of children of low educated parents with that of high educated parents. The participants were 100 preschool age children, 49 from rural areas and 51 from urban areas. The WPPSI was used for measuring children’s verbal skill and cognitive performance and a pre-tested questionnaire was used for getting socio-economic and demographic information. Children’s mean (SD) score of verbal, performance and full scale IQ were 83.13 (9), 80.23 (10.57) and 79.78 (10.46) respectively. The scores were 4-5 points higher (p < 0.05) among urban children than their rural counterparts. Children’s IQ scores were found strongly correlated with fathers’ and mothers’ educational level individually. Mothers’ education contributed to 18.6% of variation in Verbal IQ, 15.6% of performance IQ and 23.5% of full scale IQ. The impact of mothers’ education on IQ scores is more prominent. Fathers’ education has also linear relationship with IQ scores. The relation is more prominent in case

---

1 ECDRC, IED, BRAC U.
of 0-5 years and again in 9 years + strata. IQ scores also has significant linear relation with socio-economic status of parents.

Recognizing the adult’s tone and experiencing the situation, a child becomes able to speak as the situation demands. High level of education could enable the parents in providing inputs and making diversified examples. Low socio-economic status is associated with lower language promoting experiences. Children living in urban areas get more exposure to diversified situations, more learning opportunities than children from rural areas that affect their development.

The policy makers, educators and practitioners should think about raising parent education level to ensure scaffolding.

5. Safe child friendly environment in hospitals and Day care centres of Bangladesh: An Early Learning For Child Development (ELCD) Project Initiative

Researcher and Presenter: Dr S M Shahnawaz Bin Tabib

Abstract: Early childhood environment is those spaces that are designed to accommodate young children and stimulate their senses in away that both pleases them and teaches them. This environment can be in an early learning centre, kindergarten, hospital outdoor and indoor, day care center, preschool and park or garden. It may even be in a shopping centre of a city centre. In our country fixed facilities like hospitals, schools, daycare centers are built in such way that the environment is not child friendly, neither the structure & design nor the activities that prevail there. The purpose of this study is to prepare a guideline in our country perspective, which may act as a guiding tool to assess the environment of fixed facilities like hospital outdoor and indoor and also the daycare centre. This guideline will help managers of health and daycare centre to build their centres in such a way that these become safe and child friendly and promote early childhood development.

Initially four workshops were held involving members of various organizations such as Institute of child And Mother Health, Save the Children, Dhaka Shishu Hospital, Protibondhi Foundation & others who are experts in this field. Through intense work, searching literatures from internet, and review of relevant materials and discussion, a draft guideline was prepared. A checklist containing indicators for rating daycare centers was developed through workshops. Field testing of the checklist indicators for daycare centers was done in the ICDDR B daycare centre, daycare centre of PHULKI at Shekertek, Mohammadpur, and daycare centre of Jatio Mahila Shagstha under Ministry of Children and Women Affairs. The centers were observed and data were gathered according to a checklist derived from the draft guideline.

1 Institute of Child and Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka
The checklist and indicators were further refined based on the field testing. Statistical calculation and reliability and validity of the field testing results were also done and final guideline prepared by checking internal validity. Internal validity of the seven subscales was also tested. Based on the field-testing, it is proposed that a minimum score of 28 for hospital outdoor and a score of 48 for hospital indoor as well as daycare centers is necessary. A range is also proposed for each type. For outdoor the range was: <28=unacceptable, 28-42=Bellow average/poor, 43-55= Inadequate, 56-68=Average, Above 68=Good; for Indoor facility, the range is: <28= unacceptable, 28-42= Poor quantity, 43-55= Inadequate, 56-75= Average, Above 75= Good. For day care the proposed range is: <48= unacceptable, 48-70= Unacceptable, 48-70= Poor quantity, 71-95= Inadequate, 96-115= Average, 116-144= Good. Based on the test results and further review by experts, the guideline including indicators was developed and a training manual was prepared for training the managers of hospitals and day care centres. A manual for training the supervisors of play corners of medical colleges was also prepared. This guideline will be helpful primarily to promote early child friendly learning environment in hospitals and day care centers of Bangladesh. Establishment of play corners in medical college hospitals of Bangladesh can be considered a success story in creating safe and child friendly environment in fixed facilities initiated by the Early Learning for Child Development Project (ELCD) and the Institute of Child and Mother Health (ICMH).

6. Action Research on Efficiency and Effectiveness of Indigenous ECD Materials

Researcher: Anup Kumar Kar

Research Abstract: Dhaka Ahsania Mission as part of implementing an ECD project has been undertaking an action research project on the use of indigenous or local materials for early childhood development since 2010. The overall objective of this research is to explore and assess effectiveness of locally available indigenous materials used in the ECD programmes of rural Bangladesh. The field work is done in three Unions in three Upazillas of Barguna District. The field data were collected through qualitative research method used a number of qualitative data collection methods.

The action research is spread over a year (November 2010-December 2011) with a split in three phases, where the phase I attempted to know the opinions about the use and application of the indigenous materials for childhood development. This presentation is prepared based on the findings of first two phases and reflections on the preliminary findings of the last phase.

The findings show that the indigenous play materials are more suitable and sustainable for appropriate childhood development. These are more attractive to the children and the raw

---

1 Coordinator (Research), Dhaka Ahsania Mission
materials of such kind of materials are locally available. The survey found that local indigenous play materials contribute to learn better and faster. Production and marketing opportunities of these materials also has some livelihood prospect. These are low cost and have good prospect for income generation activities in Bangladesh. Initial findings of the third stage action research indicates that required skills for mass production and marketing indigenous toys materials can be an effective measure to promote entrepreneurship.

7. Cultural Adaptation of Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence-III (WPPSI-III) in Bangladesh.

**Researchers:** S Yesmin¹, M. Ahmed¹, M Akhter¹, F Khanom¹, SS Zaman¹, N F Rahman¹, R Khanom¹, S Sharif¹, W Parvin¹

**Background:** There are very few tools to assess mental development of child that are culturally appropriate in Bangladesh. Although WPPSI –III has been used for 4-6 years old children in Bangladesh by an international research organization, there is no validated version for younger children.

**Objective:** To do reliability and validity of WPPSI-III as a culturally appropriate psychological assessment tools for 2.6 to 3.11 years old children.

**Method:** Forward and backward translation and back translation were synthesized and face validity was done by the expert reviewers. Thereafter the test was administered on 115 children age 2.6 to 3.11 years in two upazilas for item analysis. Then the final version was administered on 62 samples to get validity. The test-retest reliability study was conducted on 46 children after a gap of 15 days.

**Results:** Receptive Vocabulary ($r=.64$, $p=.01$), block design ($r=.63$, $p=.01$), information ($r=.64$, $p=.01$), object assembly ($r=.85$, $p=.01$) and picture naming ($r=.66$, $p=.01$) were reliable after a short period. Internal reliability was confirmed by a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.79. The full scale IQ ($r=.65$, $p=0.01$) was highly reliable. Verbal IQ ($r=.64$, $p=0.01$), performances IQ ($r=.66$, $p=0.01$), General Language IQ ($r=.61$, $p=0.01$) were also reliable. Inter-correlation of subtests and composite scale were significant. Convergent and discriminate validity was satisfactory in Bangladeshi population.

**Conclusion:** The WPPSI-III becomes a useful tool to assess cognitive development of children and is sensitive for younger children in Bangladesh.

**Acknowledgement:** Acknowledge the financial support of Aga Khan Foundation Bangladesh and logistic support of IED, BRAC University in conducting the study.

¹ ECD Resource Center, Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University.
8. Effect of psychosocial-stimulation on cognitive, motor and behavioral development of iron deficient anaemic and non-anaemic children in rural Bangladesh- A randomized controlled trial

Fahmida Tofail¹, Jena D Hamadani¹, Fardina Mehrin¹, Debora Ridout², Syed N Huda³, John Beard³ and Sally M Grantham-McGregor²

Background: Iron deficiency anemia (IDA) is associated with poor infant development. Iron-supplementation mainly benefits motor function and children with IDA generally do not catch up to non-anemic (NA) children. The addition of psychosocial stimulation may facilitate catch up.

Objective: To compare the effects of psychosocial-stimulation, on cognitive and motor development, of IDA and NA children.

Methodology: This cluster-randomized controlled trial was conducted in 30-villages (15 stimulation and 15 control villages) in Bangladesh. All available 1237 children, aged 6-24 months, were screened for IDA. Total 223 children from stimulation-villages (117 IDA and 106 NA) and 211 children from control-villages (108 IDA and 103 NA) were enrolled. All IDA children received daily iron-treatment for 6 months. Stimulation comprised 9 months of weekly play sessions at home. We assessed children’s development at baseline and after 9 months using Bayley Scales of Infant Development-II and stimulation in the home with the Family Care Indicators (FCI).

Results: Iron treatment benefitted anemia and iron status. After receiving iron-treatment non-stimulated IDA and NA groups had similar mental development index (MDI) scores but the IDA group had lower PDI scores and was less responsive to examiner. Stimulation significantly improved children’s MDI (multiple regression analyses; B±se 5.9±1.9; 95%CI 2.2, 9.7, p=0.002). The interaction between iron status and stimulation on change in MDI approached significance (p=0.095). NA children significantly benefitted from stimulation (5.6±1.9; 95%CI 1.7, 9.2; p=0.004) whereas IDA group did not (2.0±1.9; 95%CI -1.7, 5.7; p=0.28). Stimulation improved the FCI in both groups (1.1±0.3; 95%CI 0.5, 1.7; p=0.001).

Discussion and Conclusion: With iron treatment alone, the IDA-group caught up to the non-stimulated NA-group in MDI but not PDI. There was an overall benefit from stimulation on children’s mental development but the IDA group tended to improve less than the NA group in spite of similar improvements in home stimulation. Acknowledgements: Nestle Foundation.

¹ International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh
² Institute of Child Health, UCL, London, UK
³ Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, Dhaka University, Bangladesh.
9. Essentials of ECCD Interventions for 0-4 aged children in rural Bangladesh: Introducing two promising program models based on a comparative study

Researcher and Presenter: MI Nahl

Abstract: Development of effective ECCD intervention strategies for reaching infants and toddlers is the critical issue globally given the high rates of malnutrition and lack of stimulation opportunities facing most children living in low resource settings. This paper aims to describe two innovative ECCD interventions targeting 0-4 aged children in rural Bangladesh- 1-Service-based 2-Community-based as well as compare the relative effectiveness, challenges and implications of these two promising models. This study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research methodology. Children’s health & cognitive status as well as mothers’ social status, child rearing knowledge and practices were assessed through a cross-sectional survey (n=474) using structured questionnaire. The two intervention models will be comparatively discussed in terms of implementation, coverage, potential for scale up and knowledge & care-giving practice outcomes based on the regular program monitoring data and semi-quantitative survey.

Over 40% of children had been sick in the past week and 90% had no adequate dietary diversity. Cognitive and language scores were very low. Maternal education and their autonomous decision-making skills (e.g., 35% could decide what to feed her child) and mobility were very low. The service-based and the community-based model had 22% and 65% coverage respectively. Comparatively, maximum number of caregivers (68%) in the community-based model could remember the key program messages. On the other hand, caregivers’ child development knowledge and practices improved relatively better in the service-based model. Distance, caregivers to service provider ratio, working schedule, quality of services, competencies of service providers and community participation were the key determinant factors of the outcomes of the intervention.

In context of rural Bangladesh, the community-based model was comparatively more effective in coverage whereas the service-based model was relatively better at service quality. Nevertheless, more investigations need to conduct emphasizing on child’s development outcomes and cost-effectiveness to determine the relative and comprehensive effectiveness of these two models as well as feasibility of combination of these two models.

---

1 Deputy Manager, P-3 Years Intervention, Save the Children, Bangladesh
10. School Readiness: the Effectiveness of Preprimary Education in Bangladesh

**Researchers:** Kerrie Proulx\(^1\), SMM Kabir\(^2\)

**Presenter:** Ms. Rabeya Hossain\(^3\)

**Research Summary:** The findings of this research demonstrate the effect of pre-primary education on children’s school readiness skills in the following domains: (a) literacy and language development; (b) cognition and early math skills; (c) social and emotional development; (d) gross and fine motor development; (e) approaches to learning; and (f) knowledge of Bangladeshi culture and heritage. The study draws on original data from 243 children entering Grade 1 in 2011 across 11 districts in Bangladesh. It includes an intervention group of 121 children who attended pre-primary and a control group of 122 children who did not attend pre-primary. The study explores “who” benefits most from pre-primary education and “what” specific quality indicators in the pre-primary classroom promote children’s school readiness.

The results provide evidence that participation in pre-primary has a significant effect on children’s school readiness, with stronger positive effects for children of mothers with limited education, particularly related to language and literacy skills. Observed classroom practices related to the learning environment were related to school readiness skills. These findings contribute further evidence of the influence of quality pre-primary education on children’s development and skills at the start of primary school and indicate a need to target high-quality interventions for children from more at-risk backgrounds. Follow-up studies are planned in 2012 and 2013 to assess the effect of pre-primary on achievement in the early years of primary school, retention and dropout.

\(^1\) Research Associate, Aga Khan Foundation (Bangladesh)

\(^2\) Monitoring, Evaluation & Research Specialist, Aga Khan Foundation (Bangladesh)

\(^3\) Aga Khan Foundation (Bangladesh)
School Readiness: the Effectiveness of Preprimary Education in Bangladesh

Researchers: Kerrie Proulx, SMM Kabir

Presenter: Ms. Rabeya Hossain

Research Summary: The findings of this research demonstrate the effect of pre-primary education on children's school readiness skills in the following domains: (a) literacy and language development; (b) cognition and early math skills; (c) social and emotional development; (d) gross and fine motor development; (e) approaches to learning; and (f) knowledge of Bangladeshi culture and heritage. The study draws on original data from 243 children entering Grade 1 in 2011 across 11 districts in Bangladesh. It includes an intervention group of 121 children who attended pre-primary and a control group of 122 children who did not attend pre-primary. The study explores "who" benefits most from pre-primary education and "what" specific quality indicators in the pre-primary classroom promote children's school readiness.

The results provide evidence that participation in pre-primary has a significant effect on children's school readiness, with stronger positive effects for children of mothers with limited education, particularly related to language and literacy skills. Observed classroom practices related to the learning environment were related to school readiness skills. These findings contribute further evidence of the influence of quality pre-primary education on children's development and skills at the start of primary school and indicate a need to target high-quality interventions for children from more at-risk backgrounds. Follow-up studies are planned in 2012 and 2013 to assess the effect of pre-primary on achievement in the early years of primary school, retention and dropout.