

Classroom Situation at Primary Level

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Executive summary

In the recent past Bangladesh has achieved considerable improvement in enrolment, attendance and school completion rate but little success has been wrought in improving the quality of education. There are many primary school systems in Bangladesh that provide primary education to the children of 5 to 10 years of age using different curriculum and administrative structures. The variety of offered primary education, aimed at eradicating illiteracy, is appreciable if the quality of education remains above an acceptable level. But some recent studies indicate that the quality of primary education is not up to the mark for some school systems and variations among the systems are glaringly obvious. This low level of performance may be due to a number of internal and external factors including classroom culture and the administration process of the relevant school system. As learning takes place in a classroom and as the teachers are the hubs of all the classroom activities, these case studies intended to delve into the matter to improve understanding of the factors responsible for differences in performance in different school systems. It is obviously easier to conjure up and blame the different curriculums of the various school systems as the main culprit for the differences in performance. However, the real causes of substandard performance and possible explanations of the differences can only be identified through classroom observation.

Methodology

This study selected four types of primary schools for classroom observation. There are more primary education systems in Bangladesh, but this study in particular is interested in these four kinds because of their palpable presence in rural Bangladesh. The schools systems are:

- Government primary school,
- Non-government registered primary school,
- *Ebtedayee madrasah*, and
- Non-formal primary school.

Kindergarten and high school attached primary sections are deliberately excluded from this study due to their limited presence in rural areas. The study areas were selected according to their presence of all four types of school. All the schools were taken from rural settings to avoid the rural urban performance biases. Two schools, a 'good one' and a 'not so good' one, were selected from each system yielding a total of eight schools exclusively. The concerned local education authority of the relevant systems selected these two schools using their own criteria of 'good' and 'not so good' depending on the different indicators which were obviously different for different systems. The *upazila* education officer (UEO, widely known as *thana* education officer, TEO) selected government and non-government registered primary schools. During the pilot study it was found that except BRAC there was no other organization with non-formal primary education programme up to grade iv or v. Therefore, BRAC schools were included as representative of the non-formal primary education programme. The Area Education Office (AEO) of BRAC selected two BRAC schools from the same area. Due to the lack of full-fledged multi-grade *madrasah* in the same area (where other government, non-government and BRAC

schools were observed) this study had to shift to other area. *Upazila Nirbahi Officer* (UNO) selected two *madrasahs* as a local authority *ex officio* using their own criteria.

Instrument

Two two-member research teams spent five consecutive days in a school from beginning to end, observing Bangla, English, mathematics, science, and social studies classes. This study followed a non-participant classroom observation strategy to collect information. The teachers were asked to continue their normal class schedule and continue teaching undisturbed. Although there were no preconceived criteria for selecting good or not so good schools, the study team concentrated on some issues that influence the teaching- learning process. A checklist was prepared to aid the observation and notes were taken in the classroom. Before the final observation a pilot test using the checklist was done to fine-tune the instrument as well as the issues investigated. The teams spent two months in the field observing the classroom situations at different primary school systems. The information was analyzed and presented under the five broad headings:

- Classroom condition
- Classroom teaching
- On going evaluation
- Classroom management and
- Performance of the learners.

Findings

Classroom condition

Physical facilities of the government primary schools were satisfactory in terms of sitting arrangements, lighting, and ventilation. However, considering the total enrollment of the children in class five it would not be easy to accommodate the learners if all attended regularly. A considerable number of learners in the government primary schools remained absent from school. The non-government-registered primary schools maintained inadequate physical facilities compared to the government primary schools. Students of the not so good school of this type had only the bare minimum of facilities. BRAC schools did not have as many physical facilities as government primary schools had, but were better than 'not so good' non-government primary schools and much better than any of the *ebtedayee madrasah*.

Instructional materials

The learners of government and non-government registered primary schools did not get their English and science books even at the end of March 2000. One of the *ebtedayee madrasahs* did not use books of the Madrasah Education Board and most of their students were 'hired' from nearby government primary schools with books. The non-formal primary school did not face such problem as the books and *khata* were supplied by BRAC. On the other hand, some of the learners of both 'good' and 'not so good' government and non-government primary schools and most of the learners of *ebtedayee madrasahs* came to the school without writing *khata* and most of these learners were from the poorest families.

Teacher's training

In good government schools the teachers were comparatively more qualified and trained than those of 'not so good' schools. In the case of good government school all the four teachers had C-IN- ED training from the primary teachers training institutes while only one of three teachers of 'not so good' government primary schools received this training whereas two of eight teachers of non-government registered primary school had C-IN-ED training. On the other hand, none of the teachers of *ebtedayee madrasah* received training from any formal training institute. BRAC school teachers had had a 15-day teacher's training and in addition received a cluster training every month throughout the year. None of the teachers in any system except BRAC schools used a lesson plan regularly. None of the teachers made preparations at home, acceded in informal discussion, those who would not prepare a lesson plan. Although enrollment rates in all systems were higher than in BRAC schools (more than 40 except in the case of 'not so good' *ebtedayee madrasah*), the attendance rate was higher in all BRAC schools whereas the attendance rate of *ebtedayee madrasah* was the worst.

Classroom teaching

The relationship between teacher and student was quite frank in government and BRAC schools and stiff in non-government registered schools. It was found to be regimented and hierarchical in *ebtedayee madrasahs* where teachers were not easygoing in any sense. Only few teachers in any system asked the learners about their personal matters before entering into the lesson. Exceptions are the BRAC schools where it was very important to make a benign classroom environment that encouraged learners' sense of belonging to the classroom. None of the teachers of any system, except BRAC schools, presented their lesson in a uniform and sequential way such as by reviewing the previous day's lesson, introducing a new lesson, presenting, evaluating and encapsulating the lesson. Rather, reading in the classroom by both the teachers and the learners followed by a load of questioning and answering was the only style of lesson presentation. Contextualization of the lesson and summarization at the end, as a part of lesson presentation, were absent in all education systems. Rather the class usually came to a close in the middle of a reading or writing activity with the ringing of the bell.

Classroom management

Classroom management was very poor in every primary school system including the BRAC system. Humor, constructive criticism and reward for good performance were used seldom during the lesson presentation. Individual attention towards slow learners was not observed rather the teachers paid full attention to the good learners and were quite oblivious of the slower learners. In most cases *madrasah* teachers beat the learners who gave the wrong answer to their questions.

Ongoing evaluation

Ongoing evaluation for remedial teaching was very poor in all systems investigated. Due to the lack of an ongoing evaluation system, teachers were unable to recognize which children were lagging behind and who should be taken care of. Oral evaluation was predominant and only the BRAC schools used a written evaluation in Bengali, science and social studies to a certain extent.

Introduction

In the last decade Bangladesh has made conspicuous progress in increasing enrollment and attendance rates and reducing gender gaps, the prime problems of primary education in the recent past. This success is the result of the government's commitment and extensive effort towards achieving Education for All, a declaration made at the World Conference on Education for All in March 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand. Now the primary education system of Bangladesh is going through a transition period from enrolment-attendance to quality education. There is no substitute to education for developing human resources, which starts in the classroom. The demand of the new millennium is to provide quality education by satisfying the changing needs of the learners and making them real human resources. Therefore, it is important for the education providers, policy makers as well as the civil society to know whether the schools are providing quality primary education and meeting the needs of the learners. In the recent past some studies on learner's performance revealed low scores in achievement levels which suggests that the schools are not providing quality education (UNICEF, 1992, DPE and UNICEF, 1999, Vincent Greaney et. al. 1998). Quality of primary education depends upon multiple factors including educational planning, national curriculum, management, teacher's training, classroom culture, etc. The classroom teaching-learning situation is an important determinant of the expected output from an education system. To improve the quality of education it is thus important to understand the classroom teaching-learning situation.

Objective

Objective of the study was to observe the classroom situation at primary level to understand the classroom climate, teaching style, classroom management, and ongoing evaluation patterns of different school systems and explain the different achievement levels in different primary school systems.

Methodology

This study selected four types of primary schools for classroom observation. There are more primary education systems in Bangladesh, but this study in particular is interested in these four kinds because of their palpable presence in rural Bangladesh. The systems are:

- government primary school,
- non-government registered primary school,
- *ebtedayee madrasah*, and
- non-formal primary school.

Government primary school

The primary school system in Bangladesh is free and predominantly government run. The government took over the primary education to ensure a common basis of basic competency to all of the school-aged children irrespective of race, gender, and religion. The state designs the curriculum, publishes the textbooks, and distributes them to the students free of cost, recruits the school teachers and pays their salary, and constructs and repairs physical facilities such as building, stool, table, *Almira*, etc., (Education Watch 2000). The government is the sole authority for planning, financing, managing, supervising, and controlling quality in this education system.

Registered non-government primary school

The community people usually set up non-government registered primary schools and the management committee of the school, recognized by the education department, is responsible for overall management of the school. The community or a local donor usually donates a plot of land to the school and puts up a structure to accommodate classes. Affiliation of the school with the education department is the next important step for the school to come into being which confers rights to get government benefits (salary subvention) for the teachers and free books for the pupils. The rules and regulations germane to the government primary education govern these schools.

Ebtedayee madrasah

Ebtedayee madrasah is a formal primary education system in addition to other general education systems. Almost all the *ebtedayee madrasahs* have been established by the community and are operated by a managing committee recognized by the Bangladesh *Madrasah* Education Board. *Ebtedayee madrasah* usually enrolls children of age 6+ years. The *madrasah* curriculum resembles the general primary education curriculum and incorporates NCTB* material for 'secular' subjects viz. Bengali, English, mathematics, science and social studies and has its own material for 'religious' related subjects (Ahmed, 1997). Usually *madrasah* management committee collects the books by stumping up money from the *Madrasah* Education Board. The affiliated teachers receive Tk. 500 per month subvention from the government.

Non-formal schools: BRAC model

Education implies learning, no matter how, and where it takes place. It is recognized that some non-governmental organizations are operating non-formal primary education programmes to cater for the learning need of children who cannot be covered by formal schools due to their over age and costs involved in full-time schooling. The non-formal approaches are flexible and innovative which enables them to design special programmes for those out of school, over-aged and indigent children. The non-formal primary schools were included in this study along with other primary education systems but the study team did not find any other non-formal primary schools with four or five grades except for BRAC schools. Therefore, the study used the BRAC school as a representative of the non-formal primary school system which covers 76.1% of the total enrolled children in non-formal primary schools (Education Watch 1999). BRAC has developed two

* National Curriculum and Text Book Board

different school models directed at two different age groups. The NFPE (Non-formal Primary Education) is a four-year schooling for children in the target group who are 8-10 years old, who have never attended school or have dropped out in the first grade. The aim of NFPE schools is to provide primary education with the hope of bringing back the children in the formal system. Basic Education for Older Children (BEOC) is another model for children aged 11-14 years. The BEOC schools are three years long but cover five academic years of curriculum. This is possible since the students are older and are more able to grasp the material. The BEOC model is designed to provide basic education to students who have already crossed the age of enrollment in primary schools. The basic difference between the NFPE and BEOC models is that the BEOC curriculum contains more 'life skills' including awareness on health, nutrition and some other social issues. Seventy percent of the students in BRAC schools are girls, 97% of the teachers are women, and the schools are convenient in terms of timing and distance (BRAC, 1998). The schools have no fees and all learning materials for the students are provided by BRAC.

School selection

Four types of primary school systems were selected observation. For classroom observation eight schools were selected taking one good and one not so good school from each system. The reasons for selecting good and not so good schools were to understand the determinant factors of a 'good' or 'not so good' classroom and to compare 'good' and 'not so good' schools both within one system and among systems. *Mymensingh sadar upazila* was selected where all the four types of schools were available. However, the team had to shift to another area to observe the *madrasahs*. The concerned education officer of the different schools identified two schools from each system, one 'good' and one 'not so good' according to their criteria. The *upazila* education officer selected two government primary schools and two non-government registered primary schools. The area education officer of BRAC selected two schools from the same area using the same criteria. The *upazila* office of the substitute area selected two *madrasahs*.

Information collection

Information was collected using the non-participant classroom observation technique. Two two-member research teams observed Bengali, English, mathematics, science and social studies classes of the fifth grade of each school system for five consecutive days. A checklist was developed to aid the observation and notes were made. Informal discussions with teachers and learners were also used to collect additional information. No selection criteria were determined to select 'good' or 'not so good' schools. Rather the relevant local education authority decided. During classroom observation the study team concentrated on some operational issues directly related to the teaching-learning process. The issues are discussed below.

Classroom condition

Although no clear-cut correlation between classroom environment and student outcome was found, almost all the education specialists maintain that classroom conditions always play an important role in teaching-learning process, especially with children. Psychologists suggest that young learners bve to learn in a commotion-free, not too crowded, clean, open and benign

environment. Therefore, it is always expected that physical facilities should be ensured for the sake of learners' greater interest.

Teaching aids

Instructional materials, including books, exercise books, pens, chalk, dusters, charts, etc. are very important in any lesson. Textbooks can have a strong influence or even dominate the nature and sequence of the course and thus profoundly affect the learning experience of students (Allan 1990). In BRAC schools all the learning materials are provided by BRAC. In government schools the government provides all materials except writing pads and pens. The government provides books for the registered non-government primary schools, but *madrasah* students are not provided with any learning material free of cost, not even a textbook. Therefore, to understand the classroom situation and to link it up with learning achievement, this study considers teaching aids to be one of the input variables.

Lesson plan preparation

The main object of lesson planning is that all activities and processes provide an educative environment for the learners (Orlich et al, 1990). The main focus of the lesson plan is to set instructional objectives. Usually instructional objectives result in more effective teaching and testing and help teachers focus on what students should know at the end of the lesson. These objectives help teachers plan their teaching and organize instructions, stating expected behaviour, content, and outcomes, and provide clear direction for testing (Allan 1990).

Teaching staff

The teacher is the hub of any learning process. It is unanimously accepted that teacher's experience, education, attitude, and subject knowledge influence the whole teaching-learning process. A lot of quantitative studies have been initiated to corroborate relationships between learning achievement and teacher's training, experience and education (Dalin 1994, Harvey 1999, World Bank 1995, Roelofs et al, 1994). But in our country, few studies have investigated how teacher's training, education, attendance, and attitude influence the teaching learning process in classroom situation.

Class size and sitting arrangement

In the learning process every little adjustment can bring about a huge change in the overall learning environment and it can be encouraging or deterring to children's learning. Therefore, this case study has chosen class size and sitting arrangement issues as investigation points for determining how the learning achievement of one system could possibly be different from others and which the possible impacts of the classroom climates are on the student's learning.

Establishing rapport with the students

The relationship between the teacher and students is very important in the classroom teaching-learning process. Although classroom practices generally count on the overall school environment and school culture, still it depends greatly on the concerned teacher. It is very important to

establish rapport with the learners before entering into the lesson or academic discussion. According to Ornstein (1990) the students react first on a personal basis, than on a cognitive basis. Therefore, teachers should keep up the interest of the students by establishing rapport with them at the beginning of any academic discourse.

Lesson presentation

A. Introduction

It is very important to explain the main idea of the lesson in advance to prepare the learners to think about the issue. The teacher should provide means for the students to organize the ideas to be presented by telling them in advance what the lecture or explanation will focus on and how it will be structured. It enables the learners to envisage and examine the logical structure and relevance of the issue in terms of their own thoughts.

B. Contextualisation

One of the very important objectives of education is to absorb the knowledge of the lesson and apply it in the real life situation. It is therefore very important for the teacher to contextualize the facts and moral of the lesson to instigate them to be more eclectic in absorbing intended learning objectives.

C. Summarize the text

The classroom discussion should always end with a final summary or conclusion. It is more important to incorporate remedial summaries for low-achieving and younger students than high-achieving or older students. This summarization also reinforces the learning by evoking reminiscent and internalizing the matter as a whole. The best type of summary briefly reviews the presentation and gives students a chance to see whether they understand the material by asking them to explain ideas, provide examples, evaluate data, and do some exercises (Allan 1990).

D. Evaluation

Evaluation is an important part of the learning process. Where proficiency has not been demonstrated, remedial instruction aimed directly at those deficiencies can be instituted. Evaluation can provide the kind of information that will make it possible to overcome failure. If evaluation is to help the teacher and student, it should take place not only at the end of the instruction, but also at various points during the lessons while modifications can still be made (Allan 1990). The present study only focuses on ongoing evaluation that teacher followed in the classroom as a remedial measure.

Classroom management

Classroom management is important to ensure the quality of education. It includes the overall environment of the classroom (whether it is autocratic or democratic in nature), strategies to maintain class discipline through reward and punishment, keeping the classroom lively using humor and bringing the slow learners into the teaching-learning process by using different strategies. During observation the following techniques of classroom management were boked into along with other aspects as discussed below.

A. Reward and punishment

Students need some information from teachers to set their own goals, examine their current status, map out a plan for action, assess their actual progression, and to make necessary changes and revisions. It is certainly one of the teacher's duties to provide reward to reinforce student's progress and development (Yamamoto 1969). In education reward and punishment are usually used to maintain class discipline and encourage the good performers. However, excess use of punishment sometimes disrupts the normal class environment and pushes the learners into a depressive mood, which is detrimental to learning. Corporal punishment should not be used; the negative side effects out-weigh the temporary advantages of squashing inappropriate behaviours. It tends to demoralize the class (Allan 1990). Therefore this issue was also investigated during school observation.

B. Use of humor

Good humor creates a benign learning environment and therefore the teachers should always keep their class lively and jovial. It is definitely an art and allows the learners to speak up spontaneously. The teachers of any school system who use this technique would definitely involve the learners in the learning process.

C. Addressing slow learner

In a classroom the teacher has to deal with three types of learners, early adapters, mediocre and late adapters, or slow learners. It is a core responsibility of teachers of any education system to teach the slow learners to a certain level. Usually a general style of instruction helps a little to reach these slow learners. Therefore, teachers must take initiatives to bring back them in the learning process by paying extra attention. It is supposed that the school system, which gives more time to slow learners, experience greater student's involvement in the learning process and better learning achievements.

Information presentation

In this report information is presented under five broad headings: classroom condition, classroom teaching, ongoing evaluation, classroom management and learners' performance. Classroom condition includes physical and academic infrastructure, teaching staff, class size and attendance, sitting arrangements and lesson plan preparation. Classroom teaching includes establishing rapport with the learners, introduction of the lesson, lesson presentation, contextualization, summing up, and ongoing evaluation of the lesson. Classroom management includes addressing slow learners, reward and punishment, use of humor in the classroom. Although performance of the learners was not measured by administering any test, this information was gathered using observation related to performance of the learners, in terms of responses to the questions, handwriting and homework, and demeanor of both the teacher and learners in the classroom.

Limitation of the study

The people categorized 'good' and 'not so good' schools might differ in their perceptions and priorities. The initial plan was to observe all primary schools in the same rural area but due to

some unavoidable circumstances the study team had to shift to another area to observe *ebtedayee madrasah*. The team went to two different places to observe *madrasah* but found them inactive. In both the cases there was only one teacher who taught Arabic in the nearby mosque for at best one hour without maintaining any class system. UNO was the local authority ex officio who provided the name of these *madrasahs*. Having seen the woeful predicament of the *madrasah* the team asked the authority to provide some other names. They again provided the names of two *madrasahs* but those were also found inoperative. The team went to the office and gave a full account of the whole condition and asked them to name two more *madrasahs*, but the authority negated as they could not confidently give any name that would not yield the same result. The team then shifted to another district for the case studies and the UNO office selected two *madrasahs* that were compatible to compare among systems. Five days classroom observation schedule was considered enough to get a real picture of the classroom for any subject, but in some cases it was not enough, as the teacher could not deliver more than one lesson. Therefore, the team missed how the teacher switched from one lesson to start a new lesson. Moreover, in some cases it was not enough time to normalize the class and a couple of days more could have helped in achieving a real classroom situation. Sometimes teachers of some schools moved classes to an earlier time to avoid the long observation hour. This reduced the chance to observe the real 'last-period' situation. The team only observed Bangla, English, mathematics; science and social science subjects and other subjects were remained unobserved. The logic for including these five subjects was that all the school systems cover these five subjects along with other subjects of their own interest.

Government primary school (good school)

Observation period: 4 - 8 March 2000

Classroom condition

The school was a little away from the highway and had three classrooms and a teachers' room. In the classroom where Class V students sat, there were three windows and a door which provided sufficient ventilation and light. There were twelve benches in three rows with space enough to accommodate 24-30 learners. There was no toilet facility in the school and the learners had to go to the nearby bush to respond to nature's call. There was an open space in front of the school where the students played in their breaks.

Although there were four teachers, one male and three female including the head teacher (Table A1), only two were assigned to Class V. One teacher taught science, social studies and mathematics and the other Bangla and English. The relationship amongst teachers was warm although two assistant teachers showed some resentment for being involved in preparing certain official documents they considered to be the head teacher's responsibility. However, no substitute teacher took the English class in the absence of the designated teacher for two days. Between 23 to 33 students attended on the days of observation out of 50 with the attendance increasing on third and fourth day (Table A2). This poor attendance may be due to the beginning of the academic year.

As the students were yet to receive the English and science books from the government, and some others didn't have other books the students were found to stare at each other creating noise and indiscipline. Many of the learners had no exercise books.

Classroom teaching

No teachers came to the class with lesson plan. On one of the last days of observation the science teacher brought a lesson plan. At the end the class she explained to us that it was not possible for them to prepare a lesson plan every day, as they needed to do a lot of non-academic work including official documentation and reporting. On the same day she also brought a picture of a 'mustard tree' to use it as learning material. It became clear that she did all these for us. It was also apparent that the teachers made no prior preparation since at times they were reading the lessons quietly before starting a class or while taking a class.

The teacher introduced the lesson with a picture related to the topic and asked the students to identify it. Before introducing the English poem, 'Every day', the teacher asked the students to look at the picture and discuss amongst themselves. She then alluded to some aspects of the picture to encourage them to understand the key concept of the lesson. In a Bangla class, the teacher while presenting a poem *Sisur Prarthona* by Annadasankar Roy, wrote the name of the lesson on the blackboard and then asked the students to read the text with her. Afterwards, the teacher asked the learners to read the poem quietly and try to understand the substance. The students responded by trying to learn that by heart. She then asked the students to identify difficult words in the text and she herself wrote down those along with their meanings on the blackboard. The teachers did not go on to explain the poem.

In English also, where the students are traditionally very weak, the teacher didn't explain the lesson or give line-to-line meaning. She asked the students to read with her and except two or three everybody was just humming with the teacher. When the teacher asked each student to read the text loudly, only three boys and a girl did. Despite the teacher's request some girls refused to read, ostensibly to avoid being embarrassed. Finally the teacher wrote down some English words with their meanings on the blackboard and asked the students to copy it. At this stage the teacher asked in English some questions from the lesson but the students couldn't respond. When she explained it in Bangla two or three learners were able to respond.

In the Mathematics class, the teacher didn't give any introduction or explanation of the concepts behind multiplication or simplification. She just started working out the sums on the blackboard and after completion of the sum she asked the learners to solve one of the sums of similar kind from the same chapter. When most of the learners were unable to work it out she worked it out for them and then asked them to do another one. This was the usual pattern of mathematics teaching in the classroom. In social studies and science classes the teacher started with pictures too. It became easier for the learners to contextualize and explain different parts of a tree, their function, with the help of the real tree. Participation of the learners in this class was much higher than any other class because of the use of teaching material. In social studies, the teacher started with a lecture on different types of natural disasters that people face every year in Bangladesh and

tried to involve the learners in the discussion by asking their experiences in this regard. In the class, the teacher ended the class sometimes by giving an assignment or sometimes abruptly in the height of a discussion. There was no summarization of the lessons taught.

Ongoing evaluation

The evaluation of students was mostly oral. Teachers, while reading the text or after giving the lesson, asked questions on the topic to get an idea of the lead of this understanding. In the English class whenever the teacher asked a question from the textbook, the learners just couldn't answer. But when she translated it in Bangla, 2/3 students responded in Bangla too. In social studies and science classes the learners were unable to answer questions even on the next day since the concept was not made clear to the students. In Bangla and mathematics classes some written tasks were given but the teacher hardly checked those.

Classroom management

The weaker students sat at the back of the class and whenever any task was given they just didn't make any effort to do it, as if they were not expected to do these. Also the teachers did not ask any direct questions to them. Some of the learners who sat in the middle benches pretended to be attentive but the teachers never came to them to see what they were actually doing. Only the good learners, who sat in the front bench and received most attention from teacher, were found to be more or less attentive and were participating in the classroom activities. When the teacher asked 'who can do this sum?' All the students looked at the students in the front row as if they were the learners who were expected to respond.

Sometimes a teacher appreciated the learners and induced others to applaud but it was done perfunctorily. No physical punishment was observed in the classroom but we sometimes heard the sound of whipping drifting from adjacent classes that adduced to the existence of the practice. Girls were found to be less receptive, especially in mathematics and English classes. In mathematics class when the teacher tried to involve the students in the discussion most of the girls were looking outside or started gossiping. To create a healthy competitive environment the teacher sometimes gave the four rows different names. In these groups the learners just read things and sometimes worked as competitive groups in the question-answer session. Sometimes group leaders were asked to check their peer's works.

Performance of the students

The learners were more or less able to read their textbooks except for English. Some of the learners, however, didn't know the English alphabet well. It was also observed that some good students had to take recourse to their notebooks to pronounce some English words (in the notebook pronunciation of English words were written in Bangla). The practice of writing was absent in most of the classes except for a bit in Bangla. Whatever the learners wrote was mostly to copy the teacher's notes on the blackboard. Students were given written tasks only a few minutes before a class suspended and the teacher checked the copies of only those who came to her. The learners were found to be very shy in participating in any discussion.

Government primary school (not so good)

Observation period: 4 – 8 March 2000

School condition

This school is situated 9-10 kilometre away from the *upazil Sadar* and more than a kilometre away from the main *pucca* (metal) road. It has four-rooms including a teachers' room. There is a big playground in front of the school. The classroom of Class V was a medium size room with enough space for the present number of learners. There were nine sets of benches placed in three rows. The classroom was nicely decorated with pictures, letters, symbols and writings signifying various lessons. There was a tube-well for drinking water and also a latrine besides the school building.

It was the month of March 2000 but learners still hadn't receive the English and science books. Some, however, had old books in their possession. Some of the learners from poorer families had no copy *khata*. There were three teachers. The two male teachers who were from the same village as the school, and were educated in a nearby *madrrasah* before the War of Independence (Table A3). On the other hand, the only female teacher lived in the *upazila* headquarters which is about one hour away from the school (by rickshaw). She spends an average of Tk. 40-50 a day to coming to the school. The female teacher teaches Bangla and English, the assistant head teacher Mathematics and the head teacher teaches Science and social studies in Class V. A total of 40 learners were enrolled in the class but only half of them showed up regularly (Table A4). According to the teachers this school was under the 'Food for Education' project but due to poor performance (in terms of low turn out of students) the food had been withdrawn and the student badly further dwindled.

Classroom teaching

None of the teachers prepared a lesson plan, which became clear from their teaching style and later from their admission in informal discussions. Sometimes the teacher asked the learners 'how far did we read yesterday?' and then would start thereafter.

In Bangla, the teacher did not give introduction to the lesson nor did she touch upon the central idea of the lesson even on the very first day. The usual style of presentation of Bangla lesson was reading out the lesson first by the teacher and thereafter by the learners. The questions followed (e.g., 'Where the Hamlin city was situated?' 'How was the city?') which induced passive learning and discouraged participation by the pupils. At times the teacher asked the learners to read a paragraph from the book quietly and asked questions from it later. One day the teacher asked the learners to make sentences orally with a number of given words which she wrote on the blackboard. Throughout the five-day observation period, the Bangla classes covered only one story '*The Pied Piper of Hamlin*'. The teacher did not discuss the morale of the story nor did she relate it to a real life situation. Only once during the five classes did the teacher ask, '*Is it good to tell a lie?*' It was deemed from the presentation style that the objectives of the class activities were to make the learners able to answer the exercises given in the textbook rather than developing their understanding, skills and attitude. One day the teacher asked the learners to read

the lesson in pairs as the lesson was a dialogue 'Keeping Well'. Only once the teacher tried to ask some questions in English from the exercise book but the learners could not understand and so the teacher harked back to Bangla.

The mathematics teacher introduced his lesson by presenting it as a problem and trying to clarify the concept. The teacher usually asked the learners to read a problem from their mathematics book and wrote the numbers on the blackboard to initiate a discussion on how to solve it. Then he asked some of the learners to work out the sum on the blackboard. But due to the poor handwriting and over excitement the learners failed to do the sum on the blackboard. For rest of the days of classroom observation he did not ask anybody to come to the blackboard. Rather he asked them to do it on their notebook. If most of them failed to work out the sum the teacher did it again on the blackboard and asked them to do another one.

Reading the text followed by a load of questions and answers was the general style in science and social studies classes. The teacher (head teacher) gave a detailed account of the lesson beforehand and tried to convey the main concepts. Later on he asked the learners to read it in a large group followed by individual reading. The teacher then asked questions from the lesson for clarification. One day the teacher brought a small plant to show different parts of it to animate the discussion but this did not add much as the picture of the same plant was sketched on the classroom wall.

It became clear from the overall teaching style that the teacher's main objective was to make the learners proficient in certain skills and knowledge required for moving up a class. The teaching was gender biased as most of the questions were directed to the boys. A sizeable portion of the class time was spent writing answers to questions, doing a writing exercise from the textbook or copying sums from the blackboard. Only a little time was devoted to reading and at times it lasted for only 1-2 minutes.

Ongoing evaluation

Evaluation of the previous lesson was a kind of formality to start off the next lesson. In most cases the questions went to the good learners in the front bench by name. Sometimes this strategy was used to teach the content of the textbook as the teacher asked the questions repeatedly to get answers aloud. When most of the learners were unable to answer, the teacher instructed them to read the lesson over again. None of the teachers ever asked the students to raise their hands if they knew the answer. In some cases the teachers tried to evaluate learners' performance by asking questions but the method was ineffective as in some cases the learners peeped into their books for the answer and most of the work of the learners remained unchecked at the end. Reproducing word meaning and filling in the blanks were the two other ways of written evaluation that were also very rarely checked.

Classroom management

Almost all of the good students inescapably were seated in the front benches. One girl who was older and taller than others sat in the backbench despite her satisfactory performance. The first two rows of benches near to the doorway was reserved for boys and the last row for girls. It was

difficult for the teachers to reach physically the slow learners due to the inconvenient sitting arrangement. All the teachers targeted their questions to the students in front benches. As the slow learners usually sat in the backbench the teacher hardly noticed what they were doing. Even when the teacher saw the poor performance of the learners, their expression was quite impassive. One day having seen the poor performance of a learner the stolid Mathematics teacher observed *Tumi to dekhi kichsui parona* (it seems you can't do anything), as if this is the first time he discovered the truth. The teachers were more willing to question the good learners, which saved the slow learners to be detected. The teachers never rewarded the learners for their good performance whereas they punished them for poor performance or for breaching class discipline. In the Bangla class the teacher was mainly stolid but sometimes she frowned and scolded the learners. In the classroom she nudged an irregular learner and asked *Athodin pore tuee koithon aaisos* (Where have you come from after so many days?). The Mathematics teacher always brought a cane and put it on the table although he never used it during the time of our observation. But one day he pressed down a girl by putting his hand on her head; it was a physical punishment for poor performance. To ensure participation of the unwilling learners in reading, the teacher shouted *Aai tuie porchosna kaen?* (Why aren't you reading?). Everybody took part in the writing exercise although a large proportion never completed it in time. Most of these children's previous work (class notes) was found incomplete and without any comments from the teachers.

Performance of the learners

The learners got only a little time to read in the classroom which prevented them from developing reading skills. There were some learners in the class who could not read their books properly (Bangla, science or social Studies) without the help of their teachers or other classmates. Due to the reluctance and indifference of the teachers in checking and commenting on the writing, the learners lose the interest to improve. When checked, the study team found learners' copy with misspelling, incorrect sentences, improper punctuation and without teachers' corrections. Most of the learners did not finish the written assignments. The slow learners were very slow in writing and their script was illegible. There was no effort for engage students in creative writing on any subject. Most of the learners were unable to read and write their English lessons.

Non-government registered primary school (good school)

Observation period: 6 – 11 April 2000

School condition

The school was established in 1982 and received government recognition in 1990. It is situated about one-and-a-half kilometres away from the motorway. The school has three classrooms and a small office-cum-teacher's room. There was a small playground in front of the school but no tube well or latrine available. Ventilation and lighting were satisfactory and there were enough benches in the classrooms for all students to sit on. A hazy run-down blackboard was spread out on the wall but teachers had to buy their own chalk and dusters. Most of the learners had no English or science books although only a few had used old books. Some students came to school without an exercise books or pen. There were three female and one male teachers (Table A5). Three of them had 18 years and one 12 years teaching experience but only one had teacher's training. Two of the teachers were from the family which donated the land and set up the school.

Due to a familial conflict, relationships among the teachers was cool; if one teacher was absent for any reason no other teacher bothered to take his or her class.

Classroom teaching

Teachers did not prepare the lesson plan, except for one who presented one of the days the lesson in a planned way using pictures and real flowers. The teacher later mentioned in informal discussion afterwards that, 'we usually do not follow the method prescribed in the teacher's guide because it is time consuming and ineffective'. The teachers did not go beyond the textbook when explaining a lesson. Forty children were admitted in Class V but only 14/19 attended regularly (Table A6).

All of the teachers went to the lesson point blank except only once when a teacher tried to break the ice in a cursory manner by asking without expecting an answer 'how are you?' In presenting the lessons some teachers tried to give an introduction but not all were relevant. In Bangla, the teacher discussed the 'language movement' while introducing the topic of *Bangla Bhasa*. The teacher showed a picture of *Shahid Minar* and *Smrity Shoudho*, but did not explain the relationship between those pictures and the topic. In English the teacher asked the children in Bangla, '*Tomra ki tomader jonmadin palan koro?*' (Do you celebrate your birthday?), related to the lesson. This was quite out of context for the rural children, and so, receiving no reply she started reading from the textbook.

In science, the teachers introduced the topic only once by using some real flowers and later characterizing flowers of different seasons in Bangladesh. It should be mentioned here that the same teacher taught Bangla and Science subjects and was less apathetic to follow instructions as embedded in the teachers' guide. Lesson presentation was more or less similar in all three subjects of Bangla, Science and social studies. After a brief introduction teachers read out the text once or twice. Sometimes she explained the topic and gave the meanings of difficult words, and then the students were asked to read the text. Most of the times the reading exercises started with the good students. Sometimes weaker students were also asked to read but if anyone failed to read, no help or encouragement was forthcoming. Students were sometimes asked to write down word meanings or to answer questions from the text but there was a little effort made to simplify ideas or contents of the lesson. The teachers concentrated only on reading from text and questioning from the exercise section. No attempt was made to contextualize the lesson except in the science class when the teacher tried to relate the content of the lesson with everyday life. On the other hand, encapsulation or summarization of the lesson at the end of the class was almost absent in all cases. It was found that the classes ended abruptly without any concluding remarks.

Ongoing evaluation

The teachers evaluated the learners in two ways, orally and through written assignments. Usually most of the good students took part in the oral test as teachers incited them to be responsive. It was found that when the teacher asked the learners to read English text, they checked their 'note book' surreptitiously for pronunciation. Apart from oral evaluation the students were asked to spell and define words and answer some selected questions. Again only the good students

actively took part in the process. The weaker students who are unfortunately the majority remained idle or tried to copy from others for the written evaluation. Teachers overlooked these non-participants or copiers.

Classroom management

The participation of students in the teaching-learning process was limited to reading the text, writing words or answering questions from the exercises. Moreover, participation was confined mainly to the 'good' students who volunteered to read the text or answer questions. The participation of the learners in the English class was appallingly low as only two or three students tried to respond by reading from the textbook though not very spontaneously. Participation in the Science class was better because of the use of learning materials (flowers, leaves). No extra effort was seen to help the slow learners; rather there was a tendency to avoid them. Sometimes teachers did ask questions to weaker student, but if they failed the teachers would tease or sometimes beat them instead of helping them. In response to a question the teachers argued that if weaker learners were given more attention or asked to study harder they might drop out of school. In the classroom teachers hardly appreciated the students in reading, writing or answering questions. The overall management of the classroom seemed very poor. Students did not pay attention to the teachers and teachers were oblivious of the inattentiveness. Students sometimes did not seek permission to enter or leave the classroom. Once a student left but reentered with an ice cream but the teacher was reticent.

Performance of the students

Many students could not read Bangla fluently. Almost all the students were unable to read English correctly. When teacher asked questions the learners could hardly pronounce one or two words let alone articulate a whole sentence. For example, when the teacher asked 'whose birthday is it?' in Bangla, the students replied 'Tania', not Tania's birthday. When student (even the first girl of the class) was asked to read a few sentences from the textbook he/she was actually surreptitiously reading from the notebook. The writing skills of the students were also very poor. Many students were unable to copy Bangla and English sentences from the blackboard even. No one could construct a complete English sentence using simple words and few could summarize the Bangla lesson.

Non-government registered primary school (not so good)

Observation period: 4 – 11 April 2000

School condition

This non-governmental registered primary school is situated about 9 kilometres away from the *upazila* headquarters. Being located close to the highway, the noise of heavy traffic and high-pitched horns sometimes interrupt the school environment. It is a big tin-shed structure partitioned into four rooms (including a small teacher's room) with bamboo made *chatai* wall. Ventilation was very poor and by noon children were sweating and flagging. The space of the classroom was quite inadequate. Three sets of benches were positioned behind each other for boys and a set of benches running along the wall was for girls.

There was a small scrap of green land in front of the structure and during the break learners ran and frolicked on this unlevelled field. There was no tube-well for drinking water. A very temporary urinal was set up besides the building, surrounded with a *chatai* wall, which no one but the smallest learners could use.

The learners got their English and Science books only couple of days before the study team arrived there in the first week of April 2000. Some of the learners were using old books. Scarcity of copy *khata* was obvious. There was a duster but the chalk was inadequate and probably provided by the teachers themselves as they used even every tiny piece of it and kept it carefully in their own bags. There was a blackboard in the classroom but it was undersized and a large portion of it filled up with general information for the class. Three female (including the head) and a male teachers formed the faculty (Table A7).

Classroom teaching

None of the teachers prepared lesson plans. Three of the four teachers were untrained and did not know how to prepare a lesson plan or follow it. The head teacher sometimes ordered the learners to stand up and sit down just after entering into the class to teach them to obey teacher's behest. None of the teachers gave an introduction to any lesson and went straight into the lesson. Usually the Bangla class started with a rude order of *Shobai bareer khata Dao* (give your homework) followed by an immediate rummaging for the homework and 'open your book' followed by the sound of rustling pages. The learners looked timorously at the face of the teacher to try and read her mood. The mathematics teacher usually started his class by saying 'do you remember that your examination is on the 6th of next month?' Obviously this was a kind of threat to the children for their inadequate preparedness. English class also started without any introduction. 'Today we'll start a new lesson, Tania's birthday', the English teacher proclaimed before starting a new lesson. science and social studies classes usually started with questions/answers. None of the teachers in this school intended to clarify and explain the concepts of the lesson.

In general, Bangla lessons were presented by reading out the subject matter in the classroom either by the teacher or by the learners. Basically the learners were asked to read the lesson for 2-3 minutes. The teacher never explained the text in detail and did not give any summary of it. Reading from the text was always a large group activity and the teacher sat on the chair while learners were reading. The buzzing sound of the learner's reading and the uncontrolled sounds from the contiguous classroom impeded their concentration and made it difficult for the teacher to understand how the learners were performing. The head teacher's perception of reading a poem was just to regurgitate it in the examination (as she told in a class that we do not read the poem rather we memorize it). So the Bangla teacher gave importance to memorizing 6-8 lines of it. Question-answers method was another important aspect of teaching style in this school. Teachers repeated the questions several times so that the learners could memorize the content and answer any questions. Such type of continuous questioning in alternation was quite monotonous. The teacher asked 'where does the flood come from?' 'The river,' said the learners. 'What comes to the river?' the teacher asked again. 'Flood'. Replied the learners. This type of question-answer

continued for long time. After that the teacher asked the learner to write answer to some selected questions what she thought would come in the examination. It took a long time to finish the exercise, as the learners were very slow in writing. Presentation style of science and social studies was quite similar to the presentation of Bangla. The only difference was that word meaning and sentence making was underscored in Bangla whereas, it was absent in both Science and Social Studies. Instead memorization of the subject matter was emphasized.

In mathematics generally the teacher wrote down a sum on the blackboard from the previous day's lesson after checking the homework and asked the learner to do it. While learners were working out the sum the teacher usually reclined in the chair and repeated the word 'have you completed it?' 'Do it quickly'. When most of the learners failed to do the sum then he went to the blackboard and did it by himself. The teacher was trying to teach division and multiplication during the observation period. He identified lack of learner's knowledge of tables as the main culprit that hindered learners' math learning. He told the students '*Namota na janley tomra a anka korte parbana*' (you will not be able to do the sum unless you know the tables). The basic problem was that the learners were not conceptually clear and some of them were quite unaware of the basic rules of doing sums of the particular type. The teacher was puzzled as to why the learner could not work out the sums. One day the teacher was saying despondently 'you are quite a few in number and I teach you like a private tutor. Then why can't you get it?' On the fourth day still none of the learners could work out the sum given by the teacher and he said 'we'll not spend time on doing *vhagh anka* (Division Sums) anymore otherwise we won't proceed. Examination is impending and you must do it at home by yourselves.' The teacher then went on to the next chapter. Some of the learners brought their English notebooks in the classroom and tried to read from it surreptitiously although the teacher did not pay any heed to them. It was also observed that teachers allowed the learners only a short period of time. Usually teachers looked at the best learners while reading and explaining the lessons. Reading English and understanding meaning was the highest performance expected from the learners, so, teacher spent most of their time reading and giving definition. Therefore, most of the English classes came to a close while teacher or learners were still reading and defining or writing a word. It was apparent through their remarks and teaching style that teacher's sole intention was to prepare learners for examination. To what degree the lesson was relevant to the lives of the children was always obscure. Even the teachers were quite reticent in offering any exemplified explanation of the relevant lesson. None of the teachers summarized the lesson and in all cases the class ended invariably while a task was still going on.

Ongoing evaluation

It was actually difficult to understand what part of the (Bangla, science and social science) lesson could be considered evaluatory since sometimes the teacher asked questions while reading from the textbook. Sometimes the teacher asked the learners to read from the textbook individually but she did not make effective remedial measures to overcome the problems that surfaced from the evaluation. Teachers used question-answer as a means of evaluating learners' memory. There was no oral evaluation measuring the understanding of the learners in mathematics, which could be useful in detecting their weaknesses and redressing their conceptual base.

Classroom management

The classroom was very small and the benches were set so closely that the children in the back bench could hardly get to the teacher and teacher to the learners. The learners who sat even in the middle of the first bench had to slip under the bench every time they wanted to come to the teacher to show their tasks. The English and math teachers looked only at the good learners throughout the session while they were teaching and looked down upon the slow learners reflected in their resentful sharp comments. In the case of Science and social studies teachers behaved in a similar way, and did not show any sympathy to the slow learners.

We saw an excessive use of punishment of various forms in the classroom but an inappreciable amount of rewards when deserved. In the Bangla class, the head teacher shouted at the learners for a trivial reason. At the very first day, the learners were scolded severely by the Bangla teacher. '*Bose bose uttor daee? Darao shobai*', said the indignant teacher when the learners answered her questions while sitting down. After that day the learners started answering standing up and did not sit down throughout the hour. Overall the classroom in this school was very dull. Learners were always frightened of being intimidated by the teachers. None of the teachers of this school ensured every child's participation in the classroom activities. Teachers averted their eyes from the slow learners.

Usually teachers spent little time checking the task and making sufficient comments. Teachers wasted a lot of time on questioning and defining words without explaining the lesson or initiating any discussion that could enhance learners' understanding of a particular matter. Due to the slow pace of progression it sometimes took too much time to finish one written assignment.

Performance of the learner

It was found that there were three learners (out of 9) who could not read their Bangla textbook correctly (Table A8). Most of the time these learners were 'reading' in utter silence. Most of the teachers averted their eyes from these slow learners and considered them incorrigible and tried to forget their presence in the class. The study found that two out of three learners continuously refused to read from the English book, as they were unable to recognize and read the English alphabet correctly. The Bangla script of most learners was not legible. It was found that the teacher did not correct the wrong word or spelling or structure of the sentence while checking the homework. Once the Bangla teacher observed angrily '*Roji atho vhul kore lekho keno?* (Why do you write so erroneously every day?)'. None of the learners of this school could legibly write English properly in terms of size of the script, gaps between letters and words save for two learners with house tutors. It was found that only 2-3 learners were confident in a minimum level to speak up on the issues discussed in the classroom and all other learners remained silent listeners.

Ebtedayee madrasah (good school)

Observation period: 23-27 April 2000

School condition

This *madrasah* is located 6-7 kilometer away from the *upazila* head quarter and more than one kilometer off the main road. There is no other primary school for the children of the 200 households scattered around the large village save this *madrasah*. Therefore, the guardians as well as the learners consider this *madrasah* the primary education provision and do not differentiate it from other primary schools. This *madrasah* has a coeducation system and apparently the girls are not being secluded from the system which usually happens in upper classes of the stringent *madrasah* system. There were two large rooms to accommodate learners of all classes. In the second shift teachers had to manage three classes in these two classrooms and consequently class four and five had to share one classroom. Although this room was large enough to accommodate learners of two classes due to the absence of any partition it was difficult for the children to ignore the activities of the other class and also for teacher to concentrate. There was no teacher's room in this *madrasah* and so most of the time teachers took refuge in this classroom. There was enough light and air circulation in this classroom.

Four regular and one part time honorary teacher were engaged in teaching but only one of these teachers was getting government benefits and two others were reported to be enlisted for the government benefits of late (Table A9). There were two more teachers. One of them sat for SSC examination this year (March 2000) and was requested to take some classes until his results were published. The other was a local homeopathic doctor who occasionally taught Arabic grammar when *madrasah* management committee asked him. There were four sets of benches in the classroom and apparently this was enough for the present number learners. Forty learners were enrolled in class five, but only 14 -17 (9-11 girls and 5-6 boys) learners regularly attended (Table A10). There was a standard size blackboard in the classroom. The children of this *madrasah* played on a small scrap of ground with a tube-well owned by the mosque nearby. Most of the learners of this *madrasah* did not have their textbooks. This *madrasah* used the books of the Bangladesh *Madrasah* Education Board and bought them by collecting the money. The teachers of this *madrasah* had collected 5-6 sets of books from the previous learners of this *madrasah* and distributed them among the new learners. Most of the learners of this *madrasah* came from very poor families who were unable to pay off the required amount of money for purchasing books. Therefore, sometimes 5-6 learners on one bench had to share only one book. There was an obvious lack of writing paper in the classroom and some learners did not write anything in any class. Except for books and the blackboard there were no other learning materials used to aid the teaching learning process.

Classroom teaching

None of the teachers had a lesson plan or even made mental preparations for lesson. In most days they had to decide which teacher would take what class, depending on their presence at the *madrasah*. On the other hand, it was not possible for the teachers to maintain a sound environment and prevent the noise from the contagious classroom that was impregnable, as there was no wall between two classrooms. Sometimes teachers from other classes came to take

chalk, duster, and keep something in the steal *almira* placed beside this classroom. Sometimes the president of the *madrakah* management committee came to the class while teacher was presenting the lesson. And all these disturbances disrupted the normal class situation. All but one of the teachers in this *madrakah* were educated in the same educational system where teacher-student relationship is stringently hierarchical and the teacher can do anything to the learners if necessary. Even in front of the outsiders, the teachers acted out this ideology by the severe beating of the children. Teachers never asked the learners about their personal matters to build rapport with them. Any teacher in any class initiated no introductory discussion or conversation about the concept of the lesson. Most of the time the Bengali teacher went directly to the reading or question-answer session. Usually the teacher came with a stick in his hand and ordered '*Khata guli guchao,*' (collect the homework). After collecting the homework, the teacher rumbled again 'Close your book'. He than he started questioning, 'How can we understand that plants have lives? The English teacher also gave no introduction to the lesson. Usually the English class started with the question 'What lesson did you read in the last class?' After getting the page number the teacher demanded again "You were told to learn it by heart, have you done so?" Having seen learners' reticence the teacher shouted repeatedly '*Keno hoi ni? Keno koroni?*' (Why didn't you do that?). Then the teacher changed the topic and said '*Tomader shokoler to engragir note booi ache, kar kar ache darao dekhe*' (do you all have your note book? Stand up who have). It was found that most of the learners did not have notebooks and having seen the condition teacher observed '*Tumader shokoler engragir note booi nai jonnai oshubidha hochea*' (you are facing difficulties, as you don't have your notebook). Then he advised the learners to buy notebook immediately otherwise they would be in trouble.

In the case of science and social studies the teacher started with the question '*Pora hoiche?*' (Have you learnt your lesson?). Then asked the learners either to read the text or answer some of the questions. First, the teacher asked the learners some questions from the previous day's Bengali lesson but usually none of them could answer. Having no response, the teacher started reading from an essay, about the life history of the plants while looking at some of the boys. In a classroom eight learners had no book, they were only looking at the teacher, and the teacher tried not to look at them. The teacher was reading a paragraph and trying to explain it and sometimes he did not explain some portion of the text. After reading two pages at a stretch the teacher inquired whether the learners could understand the lesson or not. It was nearly impossible for the learners to understand and internalize the subject matter only hearing it once. Having no reply he ordered the learners to prepare it at home. Creative writing, dictations, and writing answers to questions were not found to be practiced in the class during the five days of classroom observation. At the third day this pattern of lesson presentation was changed a bit when an alternative teacher came to teach Bengali. The teacher ordered the learners to read from the previous day's lesson and then inquired about the spelling of 'solitude', the meaning of 'sapling', 'signs of life one by one. As one boy and one girl, who had their textbook, were unable to answer the questions the teacher whacked them severely. Tears welled up and ran down their cheeks. Then the teacher said, 'This will be the next day's task and if you fail to learn it by heart all of you will be beaten'. Then the teacher extenuated by saying, 'The examination is afoot, read attentively otherwise you will fail in the test.'

The same thing happened the next day. Then the teacher observed, 'Only two of you have notebooks so how can you give the answers. Open your pen and paper, I shall write the answer.' The teacher then wrote down answers to two questions on the blackboard and said 'Who have your note book need not writing'. The boy and the girl who had their Bengali notebook were not writing but trying to find out the answer. One of these two learners said 'Sir I am not getting the answer'. The teacher took the notebook and thumbed it rapidly and indicating a portion of the notebook he said, 'It could be used as the answer,' and returned the notebook. The same teacher took science subject and the style of teaching was the same.

In English, after reviewing the previous lesson teacher wrote questions on the blackboard and asked the learners to write the answer. Almost all learners showed no intention of writing anything down. Some of them remained quite uncertain about what to write. The teacher checked one of the learner's writing pads and found quite irrelevant writing. He then tried to explain what these two questions meant. Having seen the worst performance of the best learner the teacher was disappointed and said '*Kisuito hoynai*' (it is nothing). Then he asked the learners to open their books and he read from it to show where the answer was. When the teacher read he did not look at the learners and it was found that most of the learners could not follow the teacher. After reading the teacher wrote the answers of those two questions on the blackboard. Two of the learners were not writing anything and in reply to the query they said that they wielded notebooks. The teacher followed the same style in the next day with the only exception of beating 15 out of 17 learners severely. In an English class, interestingly enough, some of the learners were reading the science lesson throughout the period, afraid of being beaten by the science teacher (the science teacher beat more severely than the English teacher) in the next class.

Only five of the learners had their mathematics book. The teacher read out a problem from the textbook and asked the learners to suggest possible ways of solving the problem but the learners were silent. The teacher went to the blackboard and worked out the sum with some instructions like '*Beshe hole gun korte hoi,*' etc. Some of the learners were not listening to the teacher but rather were busy copying the sums from the blackboard. After exemplification the teacher asked learners to work out the next sum in their textbook. Some of the learners tried to do the sum but others were still copying the previous one from the blackboard. The sum was *Bish Kegi chaler Dam 120 taka Hole 7 Kagi chaler Dam Koto?* (What is the price of 7 kg rice, if one kg cost Tk. 120?). From the teacher's comments, as well as classroom observation, it was found that none of the learners were able to work out the sum. Having seen the disappointing performance, the teacher worked out the sums again and asked them to try another sum but still they were unable to do so. The problem was that the teacher did the sums on the blackboard but he hardly checked the work of the learners in order to understand the problems facing by the learners. The teacher kept reminding the learners by saying, '*Barote chesta nakorle anko korte parbana*' (if you don't try at home you can not do the sums). None of the learners were able to understand the shortcut way of dividing the numbers (*Katakati*) but the teacher was not aware of it.

The teaching style in the science and social studies classes was very simple; the learners were asked to learn answers of some questions at home and were ordered to spell them out in the classroom. If the learners were unable to respond, the teacher beat them severely. Teachers entered the class with a stick and asked, '*Tumader pora hoiche? Kar kar hoini darao*' (have you prepared your lesson? Stand up who aren't). Then he whacked the learners who stood up in response with the stick. Another way of presenting the science lesson was the 'fill in the blank' exercise given in the textbook. The teacher took it as a way of measuring learners' performance as well as delivering the lesson. This teacher was also fond of the notebook and encouraged the learners repeatedly to buy it. In the classroom there were five science books including two notebooks. During presentation the teacher said '*Tumader shober jokhon noteboee nai tokhon amakaei dagaya dia lagbi*' (since all of you haven't notebooks so I shall have to underline it). Some questions were given to the learners to learn by heart and reproduce it next time. There was no scope to understand or think. The learners were supposed to cram the questions at home and reproduce it in the next class. This was, in a sense, a measurement of learner's performance. 'I shall ask you tomorrow' was the only motivation given by the teacher and how it works was mentioned earlier.

One of the most important objectives of any lesson is to understand meaning relevant to practical life and which add some suggestions and nuance to the human quality of the learners. To motivate the learners in materializing these ideas and ideals in their lives teachers should initiate discussions on these issues to accentuate the good and discourage the bad. In this school system none of the teachers discussed such things when the lessons necessitated them. Only once in a Bengali class did the teacher try to explain the unhealthy environment by exemplifying the living conditions of the slum dwellers; rather out of the learner's rural context. In fact teachers were anxious to teach learners very basic lessons that are important, according to the teachers, for their success in the examination. None of the teachers of this *madrasah* encapsulated the lesson at the end of the presentation because most of the classes were adjourned in the height of the question-answer session or while learners were working out sums or copying something from the blackboard.

Ongoing evaluation

Ongoing evaluation is very important to inform the learner/teacher of their performance and achievement. Sometimes it seems that the whole classroom activities were a part of an evaluation process. Learners were often being asked to prepare some tasks at home and present them in the classroom. Sometimes it was difficult to understand whether reading ability was being evaluated or review of the previous lesson or a presentation of the lesson. Most of the time the teacher gave some questions to prepare at home and the next day beat the learners who had their books but could not answer. To evaluate learners' mathematics skills and knowledge the teacher asked them to work out the sums but he never tried to explain concept to the learners which would have offered them a good insight and redressed their problems. On the other hand, there was no scope to test learners' understanding, critical thinking ability, writing ability or observation skills which are the primary objectives of any lessons.

Classroom management

There were four benches in the classroom for the learners. Most of the regular learners were girls (9 of 15). There were two benches for the girls and two benches for the boys although in most cases one of the boy's benches remained vacant. There were 2-3 learners in this class who could not write sitting on the bench due to their short height. There were no small group activities in the classroom. As there were no group activities in the class slow learners were not addressed by the teacher or by their fellow learners. In some cases the teachers were found to loath even gazing at the slow learners and were dispassionate when they grappled. To manage classroom activities most of the teachers adopted a nonchalant demeanor. The teacher who took mathematics and English was a particularly indifferent type of person. In his class some of the learners read other books but he did not pay heed to it. In a class only one learner was writing answers and the teacher waited only for his writing while the other children looked around vacantly. On the other hand, the science teacher believed in punishment to control the class and whacked the learners to motivate them to prepare their homework. Two other part-time teachers also behaved nonchalantly managing the classrooms and none of the teachers ever praised the learners for their performance. There was no constructive criticism or use of good humor in this *madrasah* system. Participation of the learners was only through answering some questions from the text or reading a paragraph from the book or copying some sums from the blackboard. The teacher did not have any idea that learners learn better while involved in the learning process. There were no small group activities and no effective large group discussions in any class. Most of the time was spent questioning the learners, and a large amount of time in the Bengali, English and science class was spent writing answers on the blackboard and learners' copying from it. No time was allocated to learners to participate in a classroom discussion on an issue. Minimum time was spent on practicing reading. The teacher left the learning for the learners to do at home, making the *madrasah* as a testing center. Although some time was spent checking the handwriting of the learners, but this was pointless as learners could hardly write properly.

Performance of the learner

It was found that most of the learners could read the textbooks in Bengali, science, and social studies quite fluently, but only a few of them could summarize them. In English, none of the learners could read the textbook correctly, and none of them could understand the meaning. Learners were found to be very weak in writing either English or Bengali. The reason being that learners had little time to write anything in the classroom and in most cases the teacher did not check what the learners were copying from the blackboard. In an English class a learner could not read his own handwriting when requested. It was unimaginable for the learners to write a paragraph from outside their textbook. Even when they wrote something in the classroom they had to memorize it from their notebook. The learners were not asked to speak except to answer some selected questions in most cases they were unable to reply. The teacher never encouraged the learners to say anything that could increase their ability to express their thoughts. In English it was quite absurd to expect such skills from the learners. In the mathematics class it was found that all of the learners except for one or two with house tutors, were unable to work out the sums. During the five days the teacher taught math from a unitary method, but the result was that none of the learners could work out the sums of similar kind when the number was changed. The teacher

worked out the sums on the blackboard but was unable to communicate the concept to the learners.

Ebtadaee madrasah (not so good)

Observation period: 23-27 April 2000

School condition

The *madrasah* is about two kilometers away from upazila Sadar. It was established near a big mosque and is housed in a building, with three very small classrooms and an office cum teacher's room. The *madrasah* students can use the toilet facilities of the nearby mosque and drink water from its tube-well but it has no playground. Classrooms are congested. Ventilation and lighting facilities are also inadequate. It was observed that students of two classes (class IV and V) were being taught in a single small room and once three classes were continuing in the same room. Though there was a blackboard in the classroom, it seemed to be unused since it was positioned on the rear wall. This *madrasah* does not use textbooks prescribed by the *madrasah* education board since those are not provided free of cost. Instead, the students were given old books from the government primary schools collected from the local students. Therefore the students always suffer a shortage of books, as these exhortations do not always ensure the availability of required number of books. No teaching material, chalk or duster, were used except for the textbook to aid the teaching learning process. It was found that some students were hired from government primary schools and came without writing paper, pen or pencil. They just came to increase the numbers.

The management committee of the *madrasah* claims that the *madrasah* has four teaching staff but only one of them is being paid government benefit. Two of the three other teachers are university students (Table A11). The other one is an Imam of the adjacent mosque (without formal education) who teaches very young children Arabic and Holy Qur'an. It seemed that two other women who were initially introduced as teachers of the *madrasah* actually did not teach in this *madrasah* regularly. One of them mentioned that, "I'm not a regular teacher, I come here occasionally". One of these two teachers said they would be appointed as teacher by the local authority after completion of their study.

The study team was informed that the *madrasah* started at 7 a.m. and ended at 10 a.m. Class one and two started at 7 a.m. and classes three, four and five started at 8 a.m. However, it was found that class five never started before 9 a.m. in any of the five observation days. Usually this *madrasah* remained open about one hour for the second shift for all the secular subjects. On one occasion one of the teachers commented, "Most of the students come early in the morning without taking their breakfast. Now (at 9:30 a.m.) they are willing to leave as they are hungry." During pre-observation visit the *madrasah* management committee informed that there were 10-12 learners in class five. However, it was evident afterwards that the number of regular students was never more than three (Table A12). Everyday the *madrasah* authority brought some students from the other primary schools to show good attendance rates and also to legitimize their claim. Students who came from other primary schools always wanted to leave the *madrasah* as early as possible for preparing themselves for their original schools. Six to eight students (including

hired students from primary school) were present in the classroom during observation period. Students of two classes (class four and five) sat in one small room. There were three benches in the classroom arranged in a 'U' shape. Students of class five sat on two benches and students of class four sat on another bench in the same classroom. However, it was difficult to record the actual attendance. Two students who were introduced as students of class five on the first day were shifted to the bench of class four at the second day and third day they were not included in this room as their performance was very poor and they could not keep up with the hired learners.

Classroom teaching

Since most of the teachers were temporary (for some it was their first classroom teaching experience) it would have been too much to expect lesson plans or lesson preparation. Two new teachers who were hired to create an impression that the *madrakah* was running well were sometimes puzzled in the classroom. Once the study team was asked to wait for a new teacher who would take the English class. The team waited about 15 minutes for the teacher; at last she entered in the class but left after a few minutes without doing anything. The mathematics teacher (the only regular teacher) seemed more competent in the classroom but he also did not carry on for more than 15 minutes for one subject.

A full account of the third day's teaching-learning process (from beginning to end) to demonstrate the strategies used in this *madrakah* is given. On that day the class started at 8.00 a.m. and finished at 9.15 a.m. and within this one hour and 15 minutes five secular subjects were covered. At first a girl came to the class to teach English. She was sent to teach learners of class five. Entering into the room the teacher took a book from the learners and started reading from a lesson. While explaining the meaning she inquired several times, 'Got it? But the learners were silent. After hardly 3-4 minutes she was puzzled as to what else she could do in the classroom and having no alternative she left the classroom. Then another girl came to teach the Bengali lesson. The teacher asked the learners to open their Bengali book and noticed that some of them had no book. She observed, "How do you read then, if you don't have your book?" Which poem have you been taught?" 'Prarthona' one of the learners replied. The teacher was astonished and said, "do you have the poem Prayer in class five?" 'Shishur prarthona achea', (prayer of the children is there), replied the learners. 'O' the teacher unwinds and asked them to write down 6 lines from the poem. Then she turns to other bench and said, "Now class four open your Bengali textbook'. Won't you get the *Shodesh kobita* (patriot Mother land) by heart?" "Yes madam", the learners said. "Then do it", She exhorted. While the learners of class five and four were busy with their writing and reading she turn to the learners of class three and said, "*Joog anka paro?*" The learners said, "yes *Apa*". Then the teacher wrote two sums on the blackboard and asked them to work out. While checking the task she asked one of the learners, "which class do you read?" It indicated that no body knew each other, neither teacher nor learners. In the height of the classroom activity, the original teacher (government affiliated) peeped in the class. Seeing him she left the class and the math teacher came in. Having seen the learners of class three in the same class he furiously rebuked them in saying, "*Tura akhane boichis kaa?*", "*Madam boshae diche*", they replied. "*Tura jaa*", the teacher ordered but they stayed there. Then the teacher asked them to work out one sum. Two of the learners did not even open their pens but the

teacher was oblivious. When most of the learners were unable to do the sum he worked it out on the blackboard training at only one girl who was attentive enough to listen to him. As the learners were not his regular students he could not even show his resentment for fear of not attending the following day's session. After math class the Bengali teacher came again to take science and social studies class and spent hardly 8-10 minutes on these two subjects. While she was reading and explaining to class five the learners of class three were trying to read their Bengali lesson by themselves, as they were not instructed to do anything. No conceptual discussion on the topic or introduction was given. Sometimes students were asked to write the meaning of some words or answer questions. Actually the whole thing was rather funny.

Ongoing evaluation

There was no formal or informal evaluation in the classroom. Teachers sometimes gave students a few tasks (writing the meaning of few words, and addition) but did not try to identify successful or unsuccessful learners. It was evident that the teachers were not interested in evaluating the lesson. One teacher commented, "What would I ask or what else would I give you to write, you do not study at home".

Classroom management

In the classroom three benches were kept along the classroom sides and occupied almost all the space in the room. The classroom has a blackboard but that board was not accessible as it was kept behind one of the benches. The classes are not scheduled and actual teaching time is also very short. Any sort of reward, appreciation and punishment was absent in this *madrasah*. There was almost no participation by the students in the teaching-learning process. The overall management of the classroom was very poor. It seemed that the teachers did not know the students. Sometimes they asked the students "which class are you in?" and then asked questions from the textbook of that class. It was also observed that some outsiders (a boy who came with a female teacher) sat in the class who sometimes even made unpleasant sounds but the teacher did not care. Students did not pay attention to the teachers and teachers seemed oblivious of the inattentive students.

Performance of the students

It was evident that only the students who came from other schools could read Bengali and English fluently. The performance of the students in this *madrasah* was understandably very poor. How can students learn if there is no teaching-learning environment in the class? No written test was given during the observation period although the 'hired' students were quite good at writing Bengali and English. The regular students could not even copy a Bengali and English sentence. Once the students were asked to divide 55 by 5 but none of the students succeeded. The performance in the *madrasah* we observed was very poor. We got the name of this *madrasah* from the local authority (TNO office) as a fully operated one. Before making the final selection we went to the Management Committee and explained the purpose of our visit. We were told that the *madrasah* has 10 to 12 students in class five. However, our observation revealed that the *madrasah* was not operating properly and class five had only two or three students. There was only one regular teacher in the *madrasah* who took combined class with the students of class three, four and five. Apart from the religious session in the morning the *madrasah* is only for an

hour or two. At one stage the teacher commented, “As we have no teachers so we encourage the students of class V to leave this school.” We could not observe the actual teaching-learning process in this *madrash*. The process we observed was especially arranged for us to give us a good impression about the school.

BRAC school (good school)

Observation period: 9- 14 March 2000

School condition

This is a 'one classroom' type of school. It's a rented tin-shade room with four windows and a door. Lighting and ventilation was not bad. Students sat on mattresses. They usually drink from the landowner's tubewell and use their urinal facility. This school was just beside the road. The easy communication may be one of the reasons that ensured good supervision and helped a lot to make this school a good school.

Books, exercise books, slate, pencil, and chalk are the materials used in the classroom. Every student had all the materials and in good condition. There was no library facility but it was observed that students got a BRAC publication, 'The monthly *Gonokendra*' which rotated among the learners. It is basically a magazine on current issues and includes a quiz, a story, and issues on social awareness. Students showed their interest through their impatience to have the turn. The teacher of this school was a female who passed her HSC exams and started teaching in a K.G. school. Almost at the same time she was appointed as a BRAC schoolteacher. She received a 15-day basic teacher's training from BRAC and then monthly refreshers. The class consists of 33 students. On an average, 26 out of 33 learners were present during the observation period. “Usually students' attendance remain nearly 100 percent but with the *Eid* holiday afoot their attendance rate has gone down a bit”, the teacher explained (Table A13).

Classroom teaching

The teacher followed lesson plans. Since the BRAC programme officers closely and regularly supervise their work, teachers have to show their lesson plans and prove that they are up to date. This teacher seemed to be well organized since every day, at the beginning of the class, she checked English spelling of the learners and wrote them on the blackboard. She revised the previous topic by asking questions and collected their homework. In some cases it was felt that the lack of subject knowledge sometimes caused her to avoid an explanation or incurred her to give a wrong explanation. For example, while teaching a lesson on 'Birds of Bangladesh' there was a paragraph about the concept that birds assure environmental balance. The teacher tried to explain that we come from different families and different environments and so do the birds. This also happened in social studies and sciences.

The teacher of this school always introduced the lesson precisely. In Bangla, the teacher normally started with picture and asked the students “What is it all about”. Students and teacher discussed the topic for a while. Then the teacher mentioned the day's topic. In social studies she tried to give an introduction by asking relevant questions on the topic she was going to present. For example, while giving lesson on 'agricultural and industrial goods' she asked the students how do we eat,

'where do we get, who produced those things, etc. Then she mentioned the topic's name. After that she introduced a map to show different areas, famous for different goods. In mathematics, the teacher asked learners to reproduce all the activities on sums that were done from the very beginning. Then she discussed the new concept prescribed for that day. For example, on the very first day of school observation the teacher discussed the rules of simplification (*sorol onker niom*), and tried to make this concept clear by giving them several types of exercises. Students at first couldn't do it, but the teacher helped them to think and they gradually did it.

Presentation of lesson was quite systematic in this school. In Bangla, the teacher gave a short summary on the issue that she was going to present and then determined the portion that would be taught on that particular day. The teacher read the lesson and then asked the students to follow her. While reading the text she tried to explain difficult words. Her local dialect helped her in explaining the text with the help of colloquial terms. Then she asked the learners to sit in groups and read the text one by one. But the students got busy learning the text by heart, which became evident when the teacher asked them to make a summary of different paragraphs. The learners were regurgitating the paragraph line by line. The learners were found to be very attentive since anytime anyone could be picked to read the text. The teacher contextualized the lesson by explaining its presence and impact on our every day lives. For example, to present a lesson on birds she put forward a vivid picture of how people wake up with the sound of birds and how they live with them and compared human lives with birds' one. The lively delineation of the topic gave an impression that the learners were visualizing it with a great enthrall. Sometimes due to lack of knowledge, the teacher could not clarify the concept and misinterpreted it. No Contextualisation was found in the case of mathematics. In social studies the teacher indicated the raw materials as a source of these goods and brought the learners in the discussion process to share their experience and conceptualize its importance in their real life. On the other hand, while explaining production of silk the teacher expressed her ignorance about the process and then a student shared his experience since he had seen it. English and science classes were revision classes, so there was no scope for such generalization and contextualisation. Summing up the lesson at the end of the presentation was a general practice of this school. Before asking the students to write the summary of each paragraph (in Bangla) the teacher summed up and in math she tried to explain where students had made mistakes. In social studies the teacher ended the class by asking for a summary of each paragraph they had learnt in small groups. The teacher also helped the students when they were struggling. No summarizing in the English class was observed since it was a revision class.

Ongoing evaluation

Before starting the class the teacher asked questions from the previous lesson. Besides, she also asked short questions during lesson presentation to keep the learners attentive. After finishing the lesson the teacher asked the students to do the exercise section in the class and also gave a written assignment as homework. She was not observed to comment on the students' homework. Sometimes she called the weak learners to come to the board and do the sums. She also tried to find common mistakes after checking students' work and explained or did it on the board. The

teacher also evaluated students in different games, such as asking students to name different agricultural and industrial goods one after another while clapping their hands.

Classroom management

Students' participation was ensured carefully. For example, every student had to read one by one; they had to write every thing on their slate individually. Teachers asked questions individually, not in a group. The teacher's explanation was that if she asked questions in a group it wouldn't be clear who lagged behind and it wouldn't be possible to help them. This practice was done very quickly and students were also good at the process. Students were found to share their experiences freely in the classroom. It was observed that those who were irregular were slow learners, but the teacher was not aware of that and tried to ask more questions to update them, and she scolded them over and over again. There was no physical punishment, however.

Performance of the learners

The overall performance of the learners in this school was fairly good. All the learners could read Bangla, science, and social studies book fluently and understand the subject matter discussed in the class. Most of the learners were unable to read their English books. None of them understood English independently, nor could speak English. Freehand writing was widely practiced in this school and learners could write a summary of the lessons quite confidently in Bangla. Learners' frequent and spontaneous participation in classroom activities was a distinctive feature of this school that enabled the learners to speak their minds. Handwriting of the learners in this school was very clear and legible.

BRAC school (not so good)

Observation period: 9- 14 March 2000

School condition

This school is situated 7/8 kilometres away from the upazila headquarters and half a kilometre away from the highway, and 2 kilometres away from BRAC's area education office. It was a one-room school as usual in BRAC's non-formal primary school model with one teacher. The schoolroom was on the rear edge of a large homestead. The schoolroom was in a thicket of large and small trees that made it dark. This darkness and shadiness made a cozy environment for mosquitoes which made the pupils mad by stinging them continuously. Previously this room was used as a living room and the area was smaller, but the owner rented it out to BRAC and expanded it according to the schoolroom specification. The pillars inside the room had not been removed and hindered students' movement. As the school was situated on the premise of a big house, the sounds of household chores, chatting, altercations were drifting in. As a rented schoolhouse there was no urinal for the children so they used the facilities of the nearby house. Smaller children used the ditches and bushes around. All the learning materials of this school, including chalk, duster, books and copy *khata* were provided by BRAC. Learners had their own book and copy *khata*. The teacher used the blackboard properly. Thirty students were enrolled in this school and 28 of them attended regularly throughout the observation period. The teacher knew all the learners and called them by their names.

Classroom teaching

The teacher did not always prepare a detailed lesson plan, but sometimes she prepared a short lesson plan mentioning the learning outcomes emerging at the end of the session. Although the subject knowledge of the teachers was not vigorously investigated there were some events that suggested an insufficiency of teacher's knowledge in explicating the subject matter. In a mathematics class she was giving a wrong example of working an equation on adding fractions. In explicating geographic location and their importance the teacher sometimes confused the *Chalna* river port with the *Mongla* seaport.

In Bangla class the teacher initiated a discussion about a picture of the relevant lesson and tried to contextualize the lesson in terms of theme and time of the story. On another day, the teacher gave a detailed introduction of the lesson by explaining the picture by involving learners in the process. In English, however, the same teacher never put forward any introductory discussion or explanation of the relevant pictures. Fewer introductions were given in Science and Social Studies. She initiated introductory discussion only once in the three days of Science class and took the examples from the textbook.

In the case of Bangla and mathematics the teacher successfully analyzed the concept of the lesson. Mathematics class got good attention. The teacher clarified the concepts of the lesson vividly and in doing so spent 8-10 minutes involving the learners in discussion. Moreover, learners were asked to workout the mental arithmetic every day (like, add 20 with 367, deduct 10 from 244, etc), recite the times table, prepare homework for the four basic rules of mathematics and to give answers to problems orally from the given numbers. In the case of English, science and social studies the same teacher, however, did not explain the concepts in the classroom with similar attention.

After the introduction and relevant discussion the teacher started her presentation of a new lesson by writing the name of the lesson on the blackboard. She then read a part of the lesson out to the learners who followed the lesson with their fingers. After reading a paragraph the teacher presented a summary of the lesson. At this stage she asked the students to find difficult words and write those down on the blackboard to explain the meaning. The teacher asked one or two good learners to read one paragraph and give a summary of the lesson. The teacher then asked the learners to read the lesson in small groups (there were four preformed small groups). The learners formed small groups in a moment and started reading. At the end of the small group reading the teacher asked the learners to present a summary of the lesson in a large group one after another. Sometimes she asked to write a summary in small groups and present it to the larger group. After summarizing the lesson the teacher went on to writing word meaning, antonyms, answering some selected questions and sometimes writing a dictation. This was the general presentation style of the Bangla, Science and Social Studies lessons. Presentation of the English lesson was quite different from the presentation of Bangla lesson. Usually the teacher read a portion of the lesson with definitions and the learners chanted in unison. Here importance was given to the formation of words with the alphabet, writing words, and word meaning. In most cases the main objective of the teacher was to help the students to memorize the lesson and reproduce it in the classroom.

The learners were not being taught how to make a simple sentence expressing one's own views and attitudes. Normally in the case of introducing new types of sum the teacher worked out one or two sums on the blackboard and then asked the learners to work out one individually. If most of the learners failed to do it the teacher did it again on the blackboard.

Although the subject matters of Bangla and English were very much life oriented, the teacher did not relate it to the real life situation. However, in the mathematics class the teacher contextualized the problems using life oriented examples. Presentation of summary was the essential part of small group activities. In Bangla, Science and Social Studies this was done systematically by the learners in either written or oral form. Although the teacher instigated the learners to summarize the lesson at the end of their reading she herself did not encapsulate the lesson at the end of the class. Rather she passed the duty on to the learners.

Ongoing evaluation

Evaluation of the previous lesson was an important strategy followed by the teacher of this school. The teacher asked the learners to write 4-5 word meanings from the previous day's lesson or asked the learners to read a paragraph from the previous lesson as a part of the evaluation. A summary presentation was a general practice in reading Bangla, science and social studies subjects. Learners were asked to present a summary of the lesson as a kind of oral evaluation of their understanding of the lesson. In English, evaluation of the previous day's lessons was performed by some prescribed activities such as, making words through playing. It helped the learners increase their vocabulary. Sometimes, however, the teacher overlooked the mistakes in the copy of the learners. For example, one of the learners wrote 'famer' instead of 'farmer' but the teacher did not mark or correct it. To evaluate the learners' mathematics knowledge, the teacher gave at least four sums from the four basic rules as homework. The most evident drawback of this school was the lack of special care to slow learners.

Classroom management

There was a very intimate and cozy relationship between the students and the teacher in this school. On the second day of our observation the teacher fetched two of the less regular children from their home. Not only the learners but also the guardians sometimes consulted the teacher on the necessity of their children doing different household chores during school hour. Once parents came and exhorted the teacher to let their daughters out for half an hour to do a specific job, but the teacher refused and explained the reason. Once the teacher sent some children to bring back two absentee students.

As the children in this school squatted on the unfurled mat making a big U shape and so there was no privileged or unprivileged sitting position in the classroom in the traditional sense. There was no strict line of demarcation regarding sitting arrangements between boys and girls. Help from the peer group members in the small group activities was an effective way of reaching the slow learners in this school. Once when a dunce boy was not allowed in any group the teacher went to his original group and said, "A *doler sokoler daito okey shekhano*" (It is the responsibility of all group members to teach him). However, there were still some slow learners in the class and they were sometimes unsupported. Usually the good learners went to her and the slow learners still

worked on the task and at the last moment went to the teacher or sometimes teacher came to them. Due to lack of time the teacher skimmed through the task and in some cases did not take it in her hand, but rather just looked at it and marked a tick or a cross without any comment. To maintain class discipline the teacher played a nonchalant role throughout the observation period. Sometimes in a day, the learners would gossip or nudge and scuffle or pretend to throw stones at each other, but the teacher ignored these activities. Sometimes due to the defective implementation process and weak management this small group activity was not very effective in engaging the learners in the classroom activities. For example, the good learners became bored after reading for a while in the small group or when the teacher checked the task. It was found that the teacher spent the largest amount of time on the Bangla subject and lowest on teaching English whereas they needed more time on it.

Performance of the learners

The lesson presentation of this school was systematic and participatory in nature resulting in some good practice among the learner's summarizing the lesson and presenting it to the classroom. This practice emphasized the learner and heightened his/her confidence level. Most of the learners were found to be well versed in reading their Bangla books and summarizing it. The handwriting of most learners was clear and most were versed in creative writing in Bangla. However, due to the flexibility in allocating time on different subjects the teacher spent minimum time on English and as a result, some of the learners were found to have great difficulties in reading and writing English. On the other hand, due to lack of proper attention, some of the slow learners remained very taciturn in the classroom, which reduced their performance. Sometimes understanding of the learners was not tested properly and relapsed the learners into chattering among themselves.

Discussion

School condition

The case studies show that the government primary schools ensure better physical facilities in terms of lighting, airing, space, sitting facilities, play ground, tubewell, latrine and sound learning environment compared to any other school system. These facilities are of a bare minimum in the *madrasah* system. Better use of the classroom facilities is evident in BRAC schools in terms of easy access (teacher to learners and learners to teacher), eye contact, applying participatory method (small group activities), etc. Learners of the BRAC schools are provided with academic aids on time including textbooks, writing pads and pens whereas government primary school could not provide the books even at the end of third month of the academic year. About two-thirds of the *madrasah* students were found without textbooks. Except for the BRAC schools, the teachers of all other systems were the avid supporters of notebooks and the *madrasah* teachers were positively craving for it.

The teachers of the government primary schools always eluded their responsibility by blaming learner's inferior socioeconomic background and poorer parental education as the major cause of low performance. This suggests that the teachers are quite unaware of their own inability in effective communication to enhance learners' performance. The relationship among the government schoolteachers is more cordial than the teachers of non-government registered primary schools. The reason being that some teachers of both non-government schools are relatives that creates a psychological conflict among the teachers as to controlling the school activities. Most of the *madrasah* teachers were unprofessional job seekers who attended school irregularly while the BRAC schoolteachers were most sincere pertaining to the regularity and timeliness. Non-government teachers mentioned lower salaries compared to the government teachers as the major reason for lower performance in this school system. By this reckoning the lowest performance of the *madrasah* is quite logical but the comparatively high performance of the BRAC schools is beyond explanation.

The government and BRAC schools dealt with similar numbers of learners on an average (average attendance for five consecutive days was 26 and 26.5 respectively, Table A15). The non-government and *madrasah* system have only half that number. In these two systems the numbers of learners differ widely on the basis of their status (good and not so good school). This case study also notice that the contact hour and time-on-task of the BRAC schools were functionally slightly higher than any other system including the government primary schools. It was lowest in the *madrasah* system. Usually the government primary schools remain open for the second shift from 12.15-4.15 p.m. Half-an-hour is spent for tiffin period in these four hours. Every day five major subjects are taught; Bengali, English, mathematics, science/social studies, and religious studies and it takes 2 hour and 45 minutes. After that there are subjects such as songs, drill, drawing, etc, but none of the schools regularly conducted those classes. The BRAC schools remained open 3.30 to 4.00 hours every day for five subjects with five to ten minutes break. In the 'not so good' *madrasah* total contact hour was very short and sometimes it remained open for only one hour.

There was a cozier relationship between the learners and the teachers of BRAC schools compared to any other school system which was exhibited by their interaction, participation, and disposition. In the case of government primary school this relationship was quite satisfactory, but it was almost below the standard of the non-government primary school. On the other hand, *madrasah* teachers demanded respect and conformity and traumatized with severe beatings if not resigned. In the *madrasah* system the learners never responded spontaneously to any discussion in the classroom if not invited by name.

Teaching-learning process

The teachers of the BRAC schools were more organized in presenting the lesson compared to any other system and the teacher of the good BRAC school always prepared a lesson plan mentioning the learning objectives of that particular lesson. Some teachers of the government and non-government schools prepared themselves during classroom activities. The attitude and demeanour of the *madrasah* teacher, on the other hand, is weird and gives an indication that preparation for the lesson is relevant only to the learners and the teachers' responsibility is to check their preparedness. The trained teachers of government and non-government primary schools were familiar with the lesson plan, though some of them opined that 'it's ineffectual in the classroom situation'. None of the *madrasah* teachers was familiar with the process.

The teachers of the BRAC schools and the 'good' government primary schools instigated introductory discussions except for the English subject. Non-government registered primary and *madrasah* teachers irrespective of status ('good' or 'not so good') never initiated any introductory discussion in any subjects. Only once a teacher of a 'good' non-government registered primary school wanted to give a brief introduction, but due to lack of practice she could not acquit well. It indicates some of the teachers' fervour to follow the 'teachers guide' but the teachers of 'not so good' school of the same type were not cognizant at all and *madrasah* teachers were completely ignorant of any structured presentation style. There was no systematic pattern of lesson presentation style in *madrasah* and 'not so good' non-government registered primary school. The teacher of good government school tried to follow a structured form of lesson presentation but still could not go beyond the reading, writing and questioning from the textbook. Creative reading, writing, speaking and understanding of the subject matter were rarely underscored. The difference in presentation between 'good' and 'not so good' government primary school is the learners' participation in the classroom activities. It was found that the learners of the 'good' government school participate in the classroom activities more frequently than the 'not so good' one. The BRAC schools, irrespective of status, followed a structured style of presentation of lesson. In all cases English presentation was the most ineffective, irrespective of status and type of schools.

In the BRAC schools the communication style was more or less reciprocal and the classroom environment was democratic. In *madrasah*, communication style was completely one way and the teachers were the most autocratic in nature. The very attitude of the *madrasah* teacher was that the learners should prepare their lesson at home and present it in the classroom. The teachers

of the non-government-registered primary school also rested the responsibility partly on the learners. One of the important objects of any lesson is to extract meaning that is relevant to practical life, but none of the school systems, except the good BRAC school, contextualized the lesson and related it to a real life situation.

Class organization and management

It was found that the BRAC schools played a comparatively better role in effective management of the classroom activities in terms of addressing slow learners, involving learners in the small group activities, conferring reward and punishment or constructive criticism to the learners than any other system. *Madrasah* had the least managed class in this regard.

Evaluation

All educational systems use some form of evaluation in classroom teaching-learning process, but most of the systems accentuate oral evaluation. In the *madrasah* system there was only a minimum level of written evaluation and in most cases oral evaluation was reduced to a vicious beating. The teachers of the non-government registered primary schools asked some questions to identify learners' level of memorization in Bengali, science, and social studies. In English and mathematics this was also absent. The teachers of government primary schools used the evaluation process in measuring performance levels of the learners but could not do so properly. In the case of the 'good' BRAC school the teacher used ongoing evaluation for the remedial purpose, but that 'not so good' school was not able to use this evaluation technique to improve the learners.

Following conclusions could be drawn from the above discussion:

1. Learners of the BRAC schools are provided with academic aids on time including textbooks, exercise books, and pens whereas government and non-government registered primary schools could not provide all the textbooks even at the end of third month of the academic year that hindered learners performance. While most of the *madrasah* students were not given adequate books and the students of the 'not so good' *madrasah* were hired with books.
2. Government primary schools ensure better physical facilities but BRAC schools use classroom space more effectively while 'not so good' non-government registered primary schools and *ebtedayee madrasahs* are lacking in both.
3. None of the teachers of any system prepared lesson plan regularly except for the BRAC schools. Because large proportions of government primary school teachers were not trained and this situation was bleaker in non-government registered primary schools (2 out of 8 teachers were trained) and interesting enough, none of the *madrasah* teachers were trained which inevitably incurred in defective presentation.
4. The government and non-government registered primary schools and *madrasahs* followed the teacher-centred teaching method irrespective of 'good' and 'not so good' schools but it

was mainly learners centered in BRAC schools that occasioned for their comparatively better performance.

5. The question-answer method was the most preferred way of lesson presentation in the *madrasahs*, 'not so good' government and non-government registered primary schools that emphasised memorisation of the learner, but BRAC schools followed activity-based teaching technique that underscored developing learner's understanding.
6. In the *ebtedayee madrasahs* and government and non-government registered primary schools oral evaluation was emphasised but in the BRAC schools both the written and the oral evaluations were accentuated. Taking remedial measures in improving learner's knowledge and understanding were not well practiced in any primary schools except for the good BRAC schools.
7. The overbearing attitude of the teachers of the *madrasahs*, and non-government registered primary schools prevented learners' spontaneous participation in the classroom activities and except for the good BRAC school the slow learners were not addressed properly.
8. It was found that the learners of all school systems showed satisfactory reading ability in Bangla irrespective of 'good' or 'not so good' schools (except for the 'not so good' *madrasah* where the original learners were unable to keep up with their 'hired' government primary school counterparts) but it was diametrically opposite for reading English. The possible reason for this probably is the emphasis always given by the teachers in reading Bangla and evading English. Little activity was initiated in developing writing ability, speaking, and understanding of the learners except for the good BRAC school. Table A15 provides classroom situation of different type of schools at a glance.

Recommendations

Except for government primary schools, all systems investigated in this study should ensure a better learning environment by creating facilities such as urinal, playground and sitting facilities in the classroom. Providing teacher's training should be the first priority for all primary school teachers in all system. A standard lesson presentation style should be followed by all school systems for a uniform dissemination of the meaning and content in the lesson. This can be done only by strictly following a teacher's guide. Reading materials should be provided on time in government and non-government registered primary schools. In *ebtedayee madrasah* children must be provided with textbooks by the government at least for secular subjects. A special recommendation for the *ebtedayee madrasah* is not to have one teacher teaching more than one class at a time. In this case either a new teacher must be recruited, trained and posted immediately or the classes should be transformed into a single classroom like in the non-formal primary schools run by BRAC.

Annex: 1

Table A1. Education, training and experience of good government primary school teachers.

Designation	Educational qualification	Experience
Head teacher (male)	B.A.C-IN –ED	27 years
Assistant teacher (female)	M.S.C-IN-ED	20
Assistant teacher (female)	I.S.C-IN-ED	16
Assistant teacher (female)	B.A.C-IN-ED	12

Table A2. Attendance rate in the good government primary school.

Day	Attendance of the learners		Total
	Boys	Girls	
Day 1	9	14	23
Day 2	10	14	24
Day 3	14	19	33
Day 4	13	20	33
Day 5	9	19	28

Table A3. Education, training and experience of the not so good government primary school teachers

Designation	Educational qualification	Experience
Head teacher (male)	Fazil	30 years
Assistant teacher (male)	Fazil	28 years
Assistant teacher (female)	B.A B. Ed. and C-In- ED	6 years

Table A4. Attendance rate in the not so good government primary school

Day	Attendance of the learners		Total
	Boys	Girls	
Day 1	9	10	19
Day 2	10	10	20
Day 3	14	15	29
Day 4	14	14	28
Day 5	14	16	30

Table A5. Education, training and experience of the good non-government registered primary school teachers.

Designation	Educational Qualification	Experience
Head Teacher (female)	B.A	18
Assistant Teacher (female)	HSC (C-IN-ED)	18
Assistant Teacher (male)	SSC	18
Assistant Teacher (female)	HSC MWTL* (Three days)	12

* Multiple Ways of Teaching and Learning.

Table A6: Attendance rate in the good non-government registered primary school

Days	Attendance of the learners		Total
	Girls	Boys	
Day 1	8	6	14
Day 2	11	8	19
Day 3	7	6	13
Day 4	7	6	13
Day 5	11	5	16

Table A7. Education, training and experience of the not so good non-government registered primary school teachers

Designation	Educational qualification	Experience
1. Head teacher (Female)	HSC (PTI)	10 years
2. Assistant teacher (Male)	HSC -	10 years
3. Assistant teacher (Female)	HSC -	6 years
4. Assistant teacher* (Female)	HSC -	2 years

*The teacher is not getting any benefit from the government

Table A8. Attendance rate in the not so good non-government registered primary school.

Day	Attendance of the learners		Total
	Boys	Girls	
Day1	3	2	5
Day2	3	3	6
Day3	5	3	8
Day4	5	4	9
Day5	2	2	4

Table A9. Education, training and experience of the good madrasah teachers

Designation	Educational qualification	Experience
Head teacher (Male)	HSC	3 years
Assistant teacher (Male)	Fazil	6 months
Assistant teacher(Male)	Alim	6 months
Part time teacher (Male)	SSC	10 days
Honorary teacher (Male)	Dhakil	Homeopathic doctor

Table A10. Attendance rate in the good madrasah.

Days	Attendance of the learners		Total
	Boys	Girls	
Day1	5	9	14
Day2	7	9	16
Day3	7	10	17
Day4	7	10	17
Day5	5	9	14

Table A11. Education, training and experience of the not so good madrasah teachers.

Designation	Educational qualification	Experience
Head teacher(Male)	B.S.C	15 years
Apprentice (Female)	B.A Student	Nil
Apprentice (Female)	B.A Student	Nil
Imam (Male)	Dkakil	Nil

Table A12. Attendance rate in the not so good madrasah.

Days	Attendance		Total
	Boys	Girls	
Day1	School was closed		
Day2	1	4	5
Day3	2	5	7
Day4	School was closed		
Day5	1	3	4

Table A13. Attendance rate in the good BRAC school.

Days	Attendance		Total
	Boys	Girls	
Day1	5	22	27
Day2	5	22	27
Day3	4	23	27
Day4	5	20	25
Day5	5	20	25

Table A14. Attendance rate in the not so good BRAC school

Days	Attendance		Total
	Boys	Girls	
Day1	7	21	28
Day2	7	21	28
Day3	7	21	28
Day4	7	21	28
Day5	7	20	27

Table A15: Percentage of learners attended in different school systems.

Name of school system	Average attendance %	
	Good school	Not Good school
Government Primary school	56.4 (50)	63 (40)
Non Government Registered Primary school	37.5 (40)	64 (10)
Ebtedayee madrasah	39 (40)	0* (10)
Non-formal primary school	79 (33)	84 (33)

* Almost all the learners attended in the class were hired from other government primary school

Annex: 2

Table : Classroom situation at primary level at a glance

Name of school	School condition			Classroom teaching	Classroom management style	Ongoing evaluation	Performance	Action needed
	Attendance (%)	Physical condition	Teacher and Teaching aids					
A	56.4	Small play ground Commotion free No urinal facility Satisfactory space Satisfactory ventilation Traditional seat plan Manageable class size	Four teachers, all trained No lesson plan Inadequate text-book Blackboard use limited Shortage of copy <i>khata</i>	Teacher centered Mostly one way Reading-based Memory-based Question & answer (Q&A) underscored	Less careful to the slow learners Careless to the classroom discipline Little appreciation No direct punishment	Mostly oral Little written test Written task checked irregularly Gauged only knowledge Little remedial measure taken	Reading Bangla satisfactory English not satisfactory Writing Bangla satisfactory English not satisfactory Speaking Bangla not satisfactory English unable Understanding Bangla not satisfactory English unable	Ensure: Learning materials Lesson plan Slow learners' participation Develop: Learner-centered teaching Learners' understanding Ongoing evaluation Special care for English
B	63.0	Big play ground Quite place Satisfactory urinal Satisfactory space Satisfactory ventilation Traditional seat plan Manageable class size	Three teachers, one trained No lesson plan Inadequate text-book Blackboard use limited Shortage of copy <i>khata</i>	Teacher centered One way Reading-based Memory-based Q & A underscored Targeted to male	Apathetic to the slow learners Careless to class discipline No appreciation Smoldering words for punishment	Mostly oral Little written test Written task checked rarely Gauged only knowledge Little remedial measure taken	Reading Bangla satisfactory Most learners unable to read Writing Bangla satisfactory English most learners unable to write Speaking Bangla not satisfactory English unable Understanding Bangla not satisfactory English unable	Ensure: Learning materials Lesson plan Learner centered method Develop: Learners' understanding Ongoing evaluation Remedial measure for the slow learners Special care needed for English
C	37.5	Noise free Small play ground No urinal facility Satisfactory space Satisfactory ventilation Traditional seat plan Manageable class size	Four teachers, one trained No lesson plan Inadequate text-book Blackboard use limited Shortage of copy <i>khata</i>	Teacher centered One way Reading-based Memory-based Q & A emphasized	Careless to the slow learners Careless to the class discipline No appreciation Little physical punishment	Mostly oral Very little written test Tasks checked rarely Gauged only knowledge No remedial measure taken	Reading Bangla satisfactory English most unable to read Writing Bangla satisfactory English mostly unable to write Speaking Bangla not satisfactory English unable Understanding Bangla not satisfactory English unable	Ensure: Learning materials Following teacher's guide Learner centered method Develop: Collegiality among teachers Learners' understanding Ongoing evaluation Remedial teaching practice Writing skills of learners Special care needed for English

A= Government Primary school (good school); B= Government Primary School (not so good school); C= Non-government Registered primary School (good school)

Annex A15: Classroom situation at primary level at a glance

Name of school	School condition			Classroom teaching	Classroom management style	Ongoing evaluation	Performance	Action needed
	Attendance (%)	Physical condition	Teaching aids					
D	64.0	Quite noisy Smaller play ground Poor urinal facility Unsatisfactory space Poor ventilation Inconvenient seat plan Small class size	Four teachers, one trained No lesson plan Inadequate text-book Blackboard use limited Shortage of copy <i>khata</i>	Teacher centered Wholly one way Reading-based Memory-based Q& A underscored Trained at good learners	Overbearing attitude of the teachers Resentful to the slow learners Careless to classroom discipline No appreciation Pierce words for low performance	Mostly oral Gauged only knowledge Remedial measure not taken No written test	Reading Bangla not satisfactory English unable Writing Bangla not satisfactory English unable Speaking Bangla not satisfactory English unable Understanding Bangla unable English unable	Ensure : Physical facilities Learning materials Following teacher's guide Learners' participation Develop: Learners' understanding Ongoing evaluation skills Remedial teaching Writing ability of learners Special care needed for English
E	39.0	Defective environment Medium play ground Use mosque's urinal facility Space and ventilation ok Bencher are too high for some learners	Only one regular teacher Two would be teachers All untrained teachers Inadequate text books and copy Blackboard use limited	Teacher centered Solely one way Reading based Memory based Q & A underscored Whacking for motivation	Overbearing attitude of the teachers Beating is prominent Learners were scared No appreciation	Mostly oral Measured knowledge No remedial teaching	Reading Bangla satisfactory English unable Writing Bangla satisfactory English unable Speaking Not satisfactory Unable Understanding Bangla very week English unable	Ensure: Physical facility Learning materials Teachers' training Develop: Learners' participation Remedial teaching Fearless environment
F	Hired learners form nearby government schools	Intolerable	Used government books by the hired learners	Not systematic	Unconvincing	Not done	Worst performance	This <i>madrasah</i> should be reviewed and reorganized
G	79.4	Commotion free No play ground No urinal facility Satisfactory space Satisfactory ventilation Innovative seat plan Manageable class size	One teacher The teacher trained Prepare lesson plan Adequate text-book Blackboard used fairly Adequate copy <i>khata</i>	Learner centered Two way Activity-based Memory and understanding emphasized	Careful to the slow learners Careful to the classroom discipline Reward given No punishment	Oral and written Understanding measured Remedial measures taken	Reading Bangla satisfactory English not satisfactory Writing Bangla satisfactory English not satisfactory Speaking Bangla satisfactory English not satisfactory Understanding Bangla satisfactory	Ensure: All learner's participation More definition Develop: Teacher's understanding English teaching

Name of school	School condition			Classroom teaching	Classroom management style	Ongoing evaluation	English unable	Action needed
	Attendance (%)	Physical condition	Teaching aids				Performance	
H	92.7	Little noisy No play ground No urinal facility Classroom little clumsy Poor ventilation Innovative sitting Manageable class size	One teacher The teacher trained Prepare short lesson plan Adequate text-book Satisfactory use of blackboard Adequate copy <i>khata</i>	Learner centered Moderate participation Activity-based (Impaired) Instigate little understanding	Less careful to the slow learners Little careful to the classroom discipline No reward No punishment Careful to the student's attendance	Oral and written Understanding measured Little Remedial measure taken	Reading Bangla satisfactory English not satisfactory Writing Bangla satisfactory English not satisfactory Speaking Bangla satisfactory English unable Understanding Bangla satisfactory English unable	Ensure: Physical facilities Regular lesson plan More participation More definition and explanation Develop: Effective ongoing evaluation Remedial teaching Special training for English needed

D= Non-government Registered Primary School (not so good school); E= Ebtedayee madrasah (good school); F = Ebtedayee madrasah (not so good), G= BRAC school (good), H= BRAC school not so good).

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