



EDUCATION

Working Paper ■ October 2017

How Does a Branch Experience during the Transition? A Case Study of Cost Recovery Approach in BRAC Education Programme

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October 2017

BRAC Research and Evaluation Division

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List of Acronyms

AM	Area Manager
AOP	Annual Operating Plan
BEP	BRAC Education Programme
BLD	BRAC Learning Division
BPPS	BRAC Pre-Primary School
BPS	BRAC Primary School
CRA	Cost Recovery Approach
CRM	Cost Recovery Model
CSFs	Critical Success Factors
EAC	Educating A Child
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ESP	Education Support Programme
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FMP	Financial Management Policy
FO	Field Operation
FO	Field Organizer
GPA	Grade Point Average
GPS	Government Primary School
HO	Head Office
HRLD	Human Resources and Learning Division
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate
IDI	In-depth Interview
IGD	Informal Group Discussion
KG	Kindergarten
LAMP	Learning Assessment Material and Pedagogy
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NOC	No Objection Certificate
PECE	Primary Examination Completion Examination
PIs	Performance Indicators
PM	Philanthropic Model
PM	Programme Manager
PMI	Project Management Institute
PO	Programme Organizer
QA	Quality Assessor
QF	Quality Facilitator
RED	Research and Evaluation Division
RM	Regional Manager
SBM	Senior Branch Manager
SM	Senior Manager
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
ToT	Training of Trainer
UNO	<i>Upazila Nirbahi Officer</i>

Acknowledgement

This study was carried out as a part of BRAC Education Programme's process documentation exercise. Dr Muhammad Musa, the Executive Director of BRAC inspired in this regard. Cordial thanks to Dr Musa! Dr Safiqul Islam, the Director of BRAC Education Programme extended his generous support for conducting this study. The researchers are grateful to him. Mr Samir Ranjan Nath, Programme Head, BRAC Research and Evaluation Division played a significant role in the inception stage and designing phase of the study. The idea of this study was generated from his mind. The valuable suggestions he provided throughout the study guided the researchers to accomplish it successfully. The researchers are ever thankful to him. Colleagues from BEP and RED provided valuable insights during the concept note and initial findings sharing sessions. These helped the researchers to enhance the study further. Special thanks to Mr Profulla Chandra Barman, Programme Head, BRAC Education Programme and Ms Atiya Rahman, Research Fellow, BRAC Research and Evaluation Division for critically reviewing the study report and suggesting ways of further enrichment. The study participants deserve cordial thanks for their endless cooperation throughout the data collection period. Their opinion, thoughts and knowledge are priceless to the researchers. Without their participation this study would not have been possible to accomplish. The researchers are extending their sincere gratitude to them.

Study Background and Research Question

BRAC initiated Education programme in 1985 to provide free primary education opportunity to the disadvantage children of the poor community through its non-formal primary education intervention. Various development partners generously donated in this great effort which enabled BRAC to operate the education programme in a philanthropic approach for long thirty-one years. In 2015, Bangladesh achieved 'lower middle-income country' status which caused a shrink in receiving the foreign donations. BRAC therefore adopted cost recovery approach in 2016. The parents now pay a lump sum tuition fee for educating their children in BRAC's primary schools.

A year of cost recovery has already passed. To adapt with the strategic transformation of the organisation BRAC Education programme (BEP) developed their Annual Operating Plan (AOP) and Implementation Plan (IP). A need for documenting BEP's massive transformation process has been realized by the higher management of BRAC. As part of the process documentation exercise, the current study had been initiated. The research question of this study was- how a branch office at field level experienced the overall transition process while operating BRAC Primary School (BPS) through cost recovery approach? To answer this question four areas such as (1) the dissemination process of cost recovery model to the project stakeholders, (2) the operational and financial management process of the model, (3) the beneficiaries' perception towards cost recovery and (4) the updated status of BEP's implementation plan-2017 during cost recovery approach were explored.

Research Methodology

A qualitative case study approach had been adopted for conducting this process-oriented research. A single branch from the northern part of Bangladesh was purposefully selected as the case. The purpose was to learn the daily life activities and real-life experiences of the branch's staff regarding cost recovery approach. Staff of different levels associated with the branch, were the respondents of this study. Moreover, a grade five school of this branch was also researched to understand the school-centric activities during cost recovery approach. The school teacher and a group of parents were also the study participants. Data were collected through in-depth interview (IDI), informal group discussion (IGD), Focus group discussion (FGD) and non-participant observation. Available documents were also analysed. A duration of seven days starting from 23 July 2017 was allocated to collect data for this study. The researchers adopted Patton's (1990) three steps process of data analysis. These include organizing the data, generating description based on data and interpretation of data.

Significant Findings

1. Delay in sending formal circular on cost recovery approach created a restless situation at the field in 2016. Many staff perceived this approach as a "threat" for their job. Compared to 2016, the situation reached to a stable state during 2017.
2. At the beginning of cost recovery approach the most challenging task to the staff was to place the model to the community. They talked about cost recovery approach for the first time in the parents meeting and experienced acute non-cooperative reaction from the parents and community. However staff' non-giving up attitude and collective team effort helped them to establish the model in community.

3. Staff did not receive any training to present the cost recovery approach to the parents but they felt a strong need of this. Through brainstorming they identified some key techniques to convince the parents for paying tuition fees. These are- meetings the parents regularly, taking help from the experienced colleagues while dealing communities strongly against of paying fees, discussing BRAC schools' feature with example, convincing the social leaders towards this approach and bringing them to the parents meeting, and demonstrating BRAC children performance in front of the community.
4. During cost recovery approach the staff faced difficulties to find appropriate villages, school house and learners for opening schools. Such struggle was significantly less while BRAC schools were operated philanthropically. Staff' continuous effort helped to overcome such hurdles.
5. In case of school supervision a number of shortcomings were identified. Observed data revealed that staff did not provide necessary feedback to the teacher even though a number of scopes were there. Staff reported that they had to spend a large time for the monetary dealings thus could not focus in quality supervision. Frequency of school visit reduced because number of staff decreased but number of schools and distance between schools increased. This situation increased staff' workload a lot thus, could not allocate adequate time for school visit. Parents raised question in this aspect and showed their concern.
6. After adopting cost recovery approach, duration of refreshers' training decrease to one day. The duration was three days during past. The staff and teacher thought that the decrease in the duration of training hampered the quality of training and education. Discussing all the subjects in a day was stressful to the staff. The teachers badly struggled to receive such huge contents. Most of the time it was not possible to discuss the contents of all subjects in a just way.
7. The staff positively perceived the use of workbook in grade V. They believed that workbooks were helpful to enhance students' learning and to increase their reading habit. However implementation of the workbooks in the classroom was challenging for the teachers. They were not provided with any training except a little orientation on the use of the workbooks. Staff thought that the orientation was not adequate for a proper understanding of the teacher. Thus while dealing with creative questions they felt difficulties especially for English and Mathematics. With a low quality teacher it was challenging to use the workbook properly, the staff said.
8. As per the implementation plan of 2017, the staff received number of trainings on pedagogical issues as well as business thinking and marketing strategies. They appreciated the contents as well as the approach of the training. However they perceived that the duration of these training was inadequate.
9. Though parents meeting was supposed to be used as a platform of fee collection staff had to visit learners' home sometimes as well. Officially it was decided that the teacher would not be involved in any financial affair. However data showed that teachers were heavily engaged in fee collection process i.e. collecting fees, writing money receipts and so on.
10. The staff and teachers perceived that quality of BRAC primary schools decreased during cost recovery approach. However the parents showed satisfaction in this regard.

11. Cost recovery approach increased staff' workload a lot and impacted on their mental peace. They could not spend family time at the required level because of the excessive workload. The extended workload impacted to their professional performances too. These collectively contributed to decrease their quality of service, the staff perceived.
12. The staff mostly adjusted with cost recovery approach from a livelihood purpose, not from a true motivation. Their job satisfaction was too low. They were not happy with their current salary, grade, and job security. Compared to other programmes' staff they felt themselves less rewarded.

Major Policy Implications

1. **Confirming proper planning before any change.** Enough time should be spent while preparing the plans. Field staff should be engaged more during the planning stage to turn the plan into a more practical one. Plan should be disseminated on time.
2. **Defining quality of education.** Having a clear definition for "quality education" from BEP's end might help the staff to convince the parents for admitting children in BPS. It is also important to differentiate BPS's characteristics from the other competitors of the market. Therefore a thoughtful definition of quality education is essential.
3. **Emphasizing on teacher's pedagogical content knowledge enhancement.** Teacher development approach should provide adequate scopes for the teacher to enhance their content knowledge, classroom communication skill, assessment skill and classroom management skill.
4. **Increasing duration of refreshers' training.** Current congested schedule of refreshers' training did not contribute effectively to improve teacher's capacity and quality of classroom teaching-learning process. This one day training with huge contents' load created a haphazard situation. BEP might think of extending the duration of the training.
5. **Freeing teachers from the financial operation.** Circulars have been sent several times to keep the teachers out of fee collection process. However, teachers are still engaged there. This took out teaching time and put extra workload which hindered classroom teaching-learning process. This issue, therefore, should be strictly looked at.
6. **Simplifying financial operation process.** A number of steps are associated with the overall fee collection process which demanded huge working duration of the staff and teachers. For the financial transaction, an alternative approach should be exercised. Transaction through *Bkash* might be a solution. Staff' role in this regard might be assisting parents in opening *Bkash* account and sending money through it.
7. **Enhancing staff' motivation on cost recovery approach.** Orientation and training programme should be designed in such way that not only emphasize on understanding the reason behind adopting the cost recovery approach but also accepting this from inside.
8. **Organizing staff' capacity building programme effectively.** Capacity building programme on business thinking and marketing strategies should be more organized and insightful. There should be a consistency between the training contents and the duration.
9. **Improving staff' job satisfaction.** Initiatives should be taken to improve staff' job satisfaction otherwise they would not be motivated towards cost recovery approach.

Possible benefits should be provided generously. The award could be offered for the best performing staff to increase their work motivation. To reduce their mental stress counselling could be provided.

1.1. The transition and study background

BRAC has been contributing constantly to change lives of the marginalized sections of the country in a positive way through implementing various need-based programmes since its inception in 1972. Realizing the need for education for Bangladesh, BRAC initiated Education programme in 1985. The disadvantage children of the poor community dropped out or never enrolled in schools got the opportunity to receive free primary education through BRAC's non-formal education approach.

Various development partners generously donated in this great effort, which enabled BRAC to operate the education programme in a philanthropic approach for long thirty-one years starting from 1985. Though ensuring basic education is solely the state's responsibility BRAC has contributed significantly to this effort, which helped Bangladesh to achieve tremendous success in primary education.

In 2015, Bangladesh had been designated as a lower middle-income country by the World Bank, which caused a shrink in receiving the foreign donations. As a result, instead of being philanthropic BRAC required to think of self-sustainability. To cope with the changed situation BRAC adopted a five years strategic plan for 2016-2020. The plan emphasized that; BRAC's social development programmes will increasingly adopt social enterprise models (BRAC, 2015). In this massive strategic transformation, BRAC Education programme (BEP) played a leading role for which the programme is now termed as "locomotive" by the executive director of BRAC.

From 2016, BEP adopted cost recovery approach meaning that the community would jointly contribute with BRAC for educating their children. A lump sum tuition fee has been applied to BRAC's primary schools. Though BEP initiated cost recovery approach comparatively later, many countries introduced it much earlier. A World Bank study showed that 97% of their surveyed countries charged at-least one kind of primary school fee. The study also revealed that 20% of total cost in public schools was carried out privately (Kattan & Burnett, 2004).

A year of cost recovery has already passed. BEP has revised their Annual Operating Plan (AOP) keeping aligned with BRAC's five years strategic plan. BEP's components wise responsible groups have prepared their individual yearlong implementation plan according to the AOP. In this transitional period, many changes are taking place. A need for documenting the massive transformation process has been realized by the higher management of BRAC and they requested BRAC's Research and Evaluation Division to pledge this significant task.

As part of the process documentation, the current study had been initiated by RED which intended to explore how a branch at field level experienced the overall transition, more specifically, the cost recovery approach while operating BRAC Primary School (BPS) programme.

It is worth mentioning that, in 1999 BEP recovered the partial cost from the BRAC formal schools and from *Shishu Niketan* schools in 2012. Later on, *Shishu Niketan* School programme turned into social enterprise model (BEP, 2017a). Hence BRAC adopted cost recovery approach almost eighteen years ago. Any document was hardly found regarding the practice of cost recovery approach that BRAC experienced in 1999 and 2012. This caused a learning gap for the current repetition of cost recovery approach. Therefore, it is expected that the present

study would fill this gap of knowledge for the programmes as well as for the future investigators of this area.

1.2. Conceptual framework

The strategic transformation from philanthropy to cost recovery approach contributed to BRAC's massive organisational change. Cost recovery approach demanded implications of various management issues including the operational and financial affairs. Besides, introducing this approach to its stakeholders was another massive challenge. The following diagram crafted by the researchers connects all these issues and depicts the overall research conceptual framework.

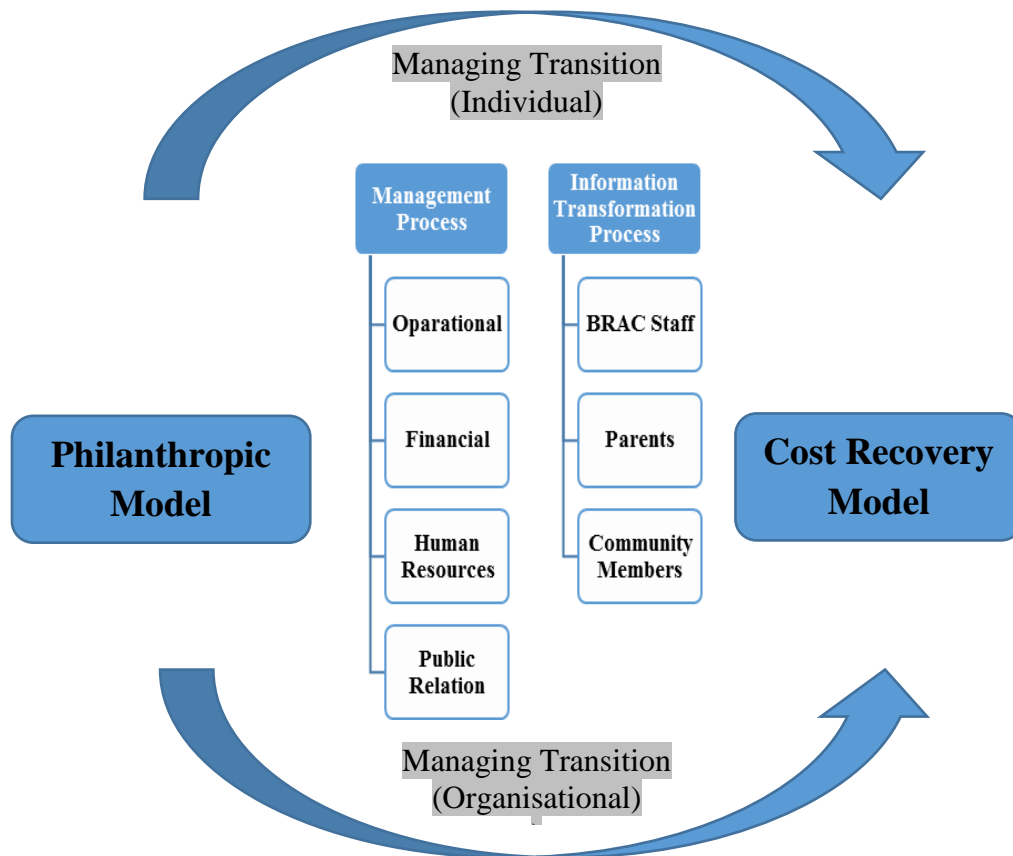


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

The changes took place at organisational as well as individual levels. All these issues collectively shaped and reshaped the beneficiaries' perceptions towards cost recovery approach.

The intention of this study was to understand and portray a branch office's experience on the change process referring how a philanthropic organisation shifted its operational process into a cost recovery approach. Observing BEP's overall working process some common activities before and after cost recovery approach were identified. However, their nature varied with respect to the shift. For example, the operational process, financial management process, information transformation process and other activities remained common during both periods

but their definition, objectives and working process significantly varied. All these activities are associated with social interaction and significantly community-based. Hence to analyse these the researchers adopted Vygotsky's Social Constructivism theory which emphasized on the role of social interaction in the development of cognition because he believed that community played a vital role in the process of making meaning of any phenomenon or event (Vygotsky, 1978).

In the framework, free education model appears on the very left side and the cost recovery on the right. In between, the common processes exist, such as, management process which comprises with the operation, finance, human resource, public relation/marketing and information transformation process among employees, parents and community personals. These differed before and after cost recovery. Therefore, might bring a variation in branch office's daily life too.

All the targeted activities for BPS during this transitional period have been appeared in the implementation plan of 2017. So understanding its status is also important to learn about field staffs' adaptation process with the change. As like as the staff the community is also a strong part of this study because the operation of this model is closely associated to them. Therefore understanding staff' and community's overall perception regarding the transformation process is very important for the further enhancement of the model.

1.3. Research Questions

Based on the above context, the research question of this study was determined as, how a branch office at field level experienced the overall transition while operating BRAC Primary School (BPS) through cost recovery approach? To answer this question, four areas such as (1) the dissemination process of cost recovery model to the project stakeholders, (2) the operational and financial management process of the model, (3) the beneficiaries' perception towards cost recovery and (4) the updated status of BEP's implementation plan-2017 during cost recovery approach were explored.

1.4. Significance of the study

It is expected that the findings will provide a clear understanding on the overall transition process at field level. These will reflect ground level experience regarding the transition from individual as well as organisational perspectives. It is also expected that the findings will contribute to enhance the operational excellence of the programme during this transition for achieving the intended quality and financial sustainability of BRAC Education Programme.

1.5. Chapter outline

The report is divided onto seven chapters. The first chapter intends to discuss the background, conceptual framework and research question of the study. The second chapter presents the methodology of this research. The process of introducing the cost recovery approach to various stakeholders has been delineated in chapter three. The fourth chapter discusses the operational and financial management process of the new approach. An update on the implementation plan of 2017 has been presented in the fifth chapter. Staff and community perception towards cost recovery approach is the topic of discussion in the sixth chapter. Lastly, the seventh chapter concluded the study with some policy implications.

2.1. Study nature and its rationale

A qualitative case study approach had been adopted to conduct this process-oriented research. Cost recovery approach is comparatively a new strategy in BRAC education programme. This study therefore, demands to comprehend the ongoing model and its development process. For a deeper understanding on the process, the study also required to analyse the detailed real-life stories behind this model; from decision making to implementation, implementation process, communication process, shifting of operation and financial procedures, barriers and ways of overcoming these and so on. To serve these purposes case study approach is an appropriate method because it explores a real-life within the contemporary bounded system such as a branch (Creswell, 2013) and emphasizes on the context (Yin, 2003). It also leads to render thick description (Kidder, 1982) which might include the internal organisation (Gilbert, 2005; Galunic & Eisenhardt, 2001), group process (Edmondson et.al, 2001) and strategy (Mintzberg & Waters, 1982) related to the cost recovery approach.

2.2. The case and the participants

For this study, a single branch from the northern part of Bangladesh was purposefully selected as the case. The purpose was to learn the daily life activities and real-life experiences of the branch's staff regarding cost recovery approach. Selection of a single case allowed the researchers to describe the existence of phenomenon lavishly in a manageable way which was consistent with Siggelkow (2007). Staff of different levels associated with the branch came under this study as participants. Moreover, a grade five school of this branch was also taken into consideration to understand the school-centric activities during cost recovery approach. The school teacher and some of the parents were also the study participants.

2.3. Data collection tools

The case study method demands in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2013). For primary data sourcing, real-life case participants were selected from BRAC branch office and community. Data collecting tools were an in-depth interview (IDI), informal group discussion (IGD), Focus group discussion (FGD) and non-participant observation. Secondary data were collected through document analysis. The table below shows the participants and data sources at a glance.

Table 1. Participants and data collection instruments

Participants	Data Collection Instrument
BRAC Staff (SM, AM, SBM, PO, FO)*	In-depth interview
BRAC Staff (PO, FO, Teachers from refreshers' training)	Informal group discussion (IGD)
BRAC School teacher and students (at classroom)	Classroom observation
Parents	Focus group discussion (FGD)
Official documents (register, circular, meeting minutes and so on)	Document analysis

*SM = Senior Manager, AM = Area Manager, SBM = Senior Branch Manager, PO = Programme Organizer, FO = Field Organizer

2.4. Duration of data collection and field operation

A duration of seven days starting from 23 July 2017 was allocated to collect data for this study. To avail a deeper understanding on the field issues the researchers themselves collected the data. On arrival at the research area, the researchers built a professional rapport with the AM and considered her important for securing access to different sources of data including the staff and documents. The researchers built a good rapport with the staff and teacher too. In-depth interview and FGD were conducted during comfortable time of the participants and with their permission, the discussions were audio recorded and carried out until the data reached to a saturation level. The researchers took detail note of everything and cross-checked those with the participants to ensure that the exact information was recorded. Parents meeting, staff meeting and classroom activities were observed keeping some aspects in mind such as; the activities and interaction patterns of the events. Available documents at branch and school were collected and they were preserved in photo format.

2.5. Data analysis

The researchers adopted Patton's (1990) three steps process of data analysis. These include organizing the data, generating description based on data and interpretation of data. In organizing phase, the researchers revisited the data obtained from different sources and categorized those in the light of the research questions. Data had been coded at this stage which contributed to generating themes under which the descriptions were presented.

In description stage data obtained from different sources had been triangulated. This helped to ensure the internal validity (Gliner, 1994) and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the data. Moreover, data triangulation (Denzin, 1978) and methodological triangulation (Bums & Grove, 1993) contributed to generating a thick set of descriptions which is one of the major strengths of case study approach.

To interpret data, Vygotsky's Social Constructivism theory (Vygotsky, 1978) has been used because the research questions here broadly emphasized on the interaction between the community and BRAC in various issues such as introducing cost recovery approach, an operational process of this approach and the community perception towards this approach. The social constructive theory guided to look at the issues from different points of views meaning from both emic and etic perspectives (Morris et.al., 1999).

Chapter-3

Cost Recovery Approach Introducing Process

Project Management Institute (PMI) of USA defined **project stakeholder** as "an individual, group, or organisation, who may affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision, activity, or outcome of a project" (Project Management Institute, 2013). Adopting these definition two groups had been identified as project stakeholders in this study; BRAC field staff and the community. The initial task for BEP was to introduce the cost recovery approach at the field, more particularly to these two groups.

3.1. Cost recovery approach to BRAC field staff

BEP has more than twenty-four years of exposure in the study area. The branch office selected as the case was established in 1993 and from then free of cost primary education was provided to the children of poorer segment of the community through BRAC non-formal primary schools. At present five staff are there in BPS programme including one Senior Branch Manager (SBM), two Programme Organizers (PO), and two Field Organizers (FO). Almost each of them worked in the selected branch from its establishment. Except for a FO, others had a bachelor degree. The mean age of the staff was around 41 years and their work experience at BRAC was closed for 20 years on an average. Area Manager's (AM) office was closed to the branch office. Thus very often the AM could remain in touch with the branch office. All these field staff had long years of experiences in operation of the education programme through philanthropic fashion. However, from 2016 BRAC has shifted its approach to cost recovery which was a big cultural change. So orienting the field staff to the new approach was important.

"Cost Recovery Approach" was relatively a new terminology and new mode of operation to the field staff but fee-based education was nothing new to them. Referring to *Shishu Niketan* schools, field staff stated that they experienced collecting tuition fees since 2013. That year they opened thirty-six *Niketan* schools and in next year the number raised to one hundred and ten. After a series of hope and frustration, they coped with *Shishu Niketan* and came back to their regular professional lives. That time children received an education free of cost from the BRAC non-formal schools. Two types of schools were being operated in their own ways and the staff also got their regular work rhythm back. However, this did not last long.

At the end of 2015 whisper regarding fee-based education got spread in field and the staff fall in tension thinking how they would collect tuition fees in the given context where BRAC had been providing free education for more than thirty years all over the country and above twenty-four years in their area. No formal circular was sent that time but a restless situation formed at the field, mentioned by the area manager. She said,

"bivinno gunjon shuni".
[Various chitchats are heard]

The branch manager, PO, FO and other staff of different Programmes also heard that BRAC was going to charge for education but nobody could share the exact reference. So a dilemma and confusing state confined the field colleagues regarding the actual fact. However, according to a senior staff of BEP, a number of town hall meetings took place at various regions of the country during the end of 2015 where the field level representatives were invited to discuss on cost recovery approach. In those meetings, the participants, in an interactive manner communicated their opinion and perception regarding cost recovery approach. Comparing the

statements uttered by the field staff and the senior staff of BEP it could be assumed that there was a communication gap with the field staff which confused them seriously regarding cost recovery approach.

No formal circular concerning cost recovery approach was sent yet at field level but the Area Manager unofficially heard about this new approach from the immediate senior in September of 2015. She received the message that no more free schools would be opened because of BRAC's fund crisis but those schools which were already free of cost would remain in the same operation i.e. the provision of charging a fee would not be applicable for them. So the staff got an impression that only *Niketan* schools would be opened. However, a few days later they understood that BPS would also be opened because separate management for BPS and *Niketan* evolved.

Till this situation, the field staff got the essence of cost recovery through different unauthentic sources e.g. through whispering from one to another as a result dilemma and confusion did not leave them. However, situation changed in the relatively different way when the Regional Manager (RM) came to visit a branch and raised the issue of cost recovery. It was the first ever formal discussion at field level on cost recovery approach. It is worth mentioning that formal circular on cost recovery did not reach the field then.

In that meeting, The RM did not confirm that community would have to pay for educating their children from BRAC Schools since he did not have that formal order yet. To understand the perception of staff regarding fee-based education he asked what they would think if BRAC does not open free schools anymore. The AM positively responded to this question. She had the successful experience of opening *Niketan* schools which added confidence to her attitude. As Area Manager she then realized the importance of knowing other colleagues' perception too regarding fee-based school opening. According to her, most of the staff showed the moderately positive attitude towards this change saying that "probably we will be able to open school with charging fee". The staff believed that as they were successful in case of *Niketan* School they would secure success here as well. So the previous learning experience of fee collection inspired them to think bit positively towards cost recovery approach. Such tendency of learning from past was not observed among the staff of other locations while Babu and Rahman conducted their study on cost recovery approach in 2016. However, some of the staff did not agree with the change. The AM termed their attitude as "problematic". In this regard, she stated,

"Area Manager hisebe ami janar chesta kori. Dekhlam oneke raji kintu keu keu osubidha kore".

[As an Area Manager I tried to learn their thoughts. I have found that many agreed but a few of them created problems too]

However, she was not surprised by such negative attitude of some colleagues because she knew people usually remained reluctant in receiving change and unwilling to shift from their comfortable zone. In that meeting, the Regional Manager also asked how much could be charged as monthly tuition fee and all the staff agreed on one hundred taka per month. Staff' experience of working in this area and studying the lives of the beneficiaries through regular meeting and interaction helped them to learn the ability of community people to pay the tuition fees.

Though RM meeting brought the issue of cost recovery in field more structured way but darkness regarding the approach did not remove. No official circular reached before the end of March 2016. As a result, the dilemma and confusion regarding the mode of programme

operation remained the same. As no decision was sent from the head office the staff could not conduct their formal survey for opening new schools. January and February of 2016 already passed and March was about to but the teachers did not receive a salary, house owners did not get the rent and the learners struggled for books as books were not managed to send to the schools. According to the AM, this situation was too difficult. They were not clear on the official decision and could not take measure for their activities as they were unsure about the new operational approach even with the opening of new schools. This situation had worst effect when they saw that many learners were leaving schools because of the crisis of books. That time the staff tried to handle the situation providing some old books but that actually could not attract learners and their families in a mentionable way as new books were available in the nearby primary schools. These kinds of situation heavily challenged the staff to carry on their job appropriately. This situation reminds us the importance of proper planning and on time decision making. As these were delayed from the HO's end the situation turned into more difficult one. This consisted of Babu and Rahman (2016)'s findings too.

In this confusing and tough state, a phone call from the RM helped to create a stable situation at the field. On 29 March 2016, the AM received a call from the RM with the information that new schools will be opened adopting cost recovery approach i.e., tuition fee would be applied there. The RM also informed that from now a target will be set and according to that the staff would have to open new schools. The RM could share this message to the field staff because a combined RM meeting took place in the presence of the Director and senior staff of BEP where the strategic decision of cost recovery approach was communicated to them.

Though the news obtained from the RM regarding recovering cost was not a comfortable one to the staff but they appreciated as they got a decision at-least which according to the AM brought a stable situation at the field and the staff started to work with new inspiration. Here the term "at-least" bears a special meaning. It refers the staff' acute urge for a strategic decision without which they even could not initiate any formal steps for opening schools. In this regard, the AM said,

"RM bhai jokhon fon kore bollo je school khola hobe tokhon sobai ekta stable oobosthay elo. Nobo uddome kaj shuru korlo ora".

[When RM Bhai informed over phone that schools would be opened then everybody came to a stable state. They started working with new enthusiasm]

Finally, the copy of official circular on cost recovery approach (BEP, 2016a) with a title "Financial Management Policy-2016" reached at the field on April 2016, reported by the AM. However, the official circular was dated as 10.03.16 which meant it was circulated in March 2016. According to the HO staff, the circular was sent to the emails of the respective RM and AM. It was a scanned copy with the signature of the director of BRAC Education Programme (BEP). Later on, the RM and AM shared its printed version with the other colleagues in the field. As per one senior staff of BEP, an AM meeting was held where the purpose of cost recovery and the issue of tuition fees were discussed before sending the official circular.

This circular was prepared based on a changed context which had been discussed in its background. To draw a rationale for the introduction of cost recovery approach the circular states, within last 43 years of independence Bangladesh enjoyed progress in many of her sectors. Remarkable progress had been observed in achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG). In recent time the socioeconomic status of this country has been changed with

which the scopes of improvement are simultaneously being altered. Now Bangladesh is designated as a lower middle-income country. With achieving this designation foreign donation had been squeezed for this country. On the other hand, people are now becoming capable to buy quality service with paying the low cost as their ability to buy things is increasing. Keeping the demand of people and necessity of the change in consideration BRAC has adopted a sustainable strategic plan. As a part of this plan, the measure has been taken to provide education and other social services to the community charging comparatively low amount so that the education programme can be sustainable and self-dependent. Through this process, coordination would be built among the programme and the community (BEP, 2016a). So, it is clear from the circular that, BRAC realized the importance of coordination with the community because community perception and attitude would determine the meaning of the strategic change to them as Vygotsky (1978) argued through his theory. This ultimately would help BRAC to design programme.

After describing the background context at the top of the circular it was mentioned in next part that, from 2016, considering the demands and socioeconomic status of people BEP had planned to collect fee in an experimental basis to bring financial sustainability for each of the components.

To ensure the transparency in financial activities necessary guidelines regarding financial management of different programmes had been mentioned in the circular. In case of BPPS and BPS guidelines had been presented jointly. Among twenty clauses of the guideline for BPPS and BPS, three were on BPS, four on BPPS and the rest thirteen clauses were common for both. The guideline mainly focused on the amount of tuition fee, student admission process and financial dealing i.e. role of AM, RM, BM, teacher and other staff in the financial process. In the financial operation section, these would be discussed.

Addition to the above, this circular provided guideline on waiver option too. Clause 2.1 informed that if the parents of admitted disable child are not able to carry the educational expenditure then the tuition fee could be waived completely but the admission and other fee must have to be paid. If any disabled child is admitted then with the approval of authority waiver could be provided, priority should be given to the girls in this regard, mentioned in clause 2.2. It was mentioned in clause 2.3 that, one of two children coming from the same family could be facilitated with half free or full free studentship with the approval of the authority.

At branch level when any new circular reaches it is discussed in staff meetings which generally held four times a month; 4th, 11th, 19th and 26th days of the month. Usually, the branch manager received the circular from AM and shared it with the POs and FOs at the meeting. So the circular was disseminated at branch through a top to a bottom approach, which means from head office the circular was sent to RM and AM then the AM disseminated the circular to BM, and the BM shared the circular with POs and FOs. However, the first circular on cost recovery was discussed by the AM at the branch. After the circular discussed the PO, FO and sometimes the BM sign over the circular and stored in their record file. The reason for incorporating staff signature in the circular was that it ensured staff' awareness regarding the circular.

The AM and other staff discussed the circular among themselves in an interactive way and they reported that the instructions were clearly written which they understood well. The bottom level staff could discuss the clauses with seniors if they could not understand. Also in our observation during a staff meeting, we found the participants discussing a new circular. The Senior Branch Manager invited a PO to read out the circular and to discuss with others. The FOs actively

participated in the discussion and raised their queries if they had any. It was assumed that the SBM would understand the circular better as he received it first and had some reading on that prior to bring it to the staff meeting. We found the SBM successfully answering the questions and queries raised. In an interview the SBM mentioned that in case of his ambiguity regarding the circular he could freely discuss with the AM to whom he was reportable. This phenomenon of sharing knowledge was closely consistent with Vygotsky's More Knowledgeable Others (MKO) concept, which emphasizes on learning from the peer, colleagues, mentors and so on (Vygotsky, 1978).

This dissemination of circular resembles a democratic and participatory approach. It is especially essential to discuss the circulars freely otherwise understanding gaps might happen among the staff, which are harmful to the operation of cost recovery approach.

The circular titled "Financial Management Policy-2016" brought the cost recovery approach officially at the field and challenged the staff to adjust and readjust with the change. In other words, lead them to master a new cultural competency. At the beginning, this approach came to the staff as "threat". Many of them felt insecure regarding their job. However, over the period their feelings and perception also reshaped. One FO said-

"jokhon prothom ei poripotro pelam mone holo ei chakri bujhi ami r korte parbona. ebar bujhi onno chakri khujte hobe. hotash hoye gelam. Pore chinta kore dekhlam ei BRAC e etodin chakri korlam. valo mone koreche boleito ei siddhanto BRAC niyeche. Jodi onnera pare tobe amio parbo".

[When this circular came to in hand it seemed to me that perhaps I would not be able to carry on the service anymore. May be I have to search another job. I was frustrated. After that I though I have passed so long in BRAC. BRAC has taken this decision because BRAC percieved it useful. If others can cope with this I would also be.]

The above statements simultaneously revealed the staff's frustration regarding the cost recovery approach, respect to the organisation and finally the inner motivation which ultimately inspired him in accepting the challenge. However, the issue of job security came to their mind concurrently when they received the circular. Many accepted the challenge to secure their job. Even the senior staff sometimes convinced the supervisee referring to the job security. The senior branch manager said to the FO and PO that, if they wanted to secure the job they would have to recover the cost.

When staff become bound to accept any change being pressured it is more likely that they would hardly engage themselves mentally and emotionally with the change. So it is highly necessary to orient them to the change and to explain them the reasons for change rationally. These might be lacking in the case branch while cost recovery approach was initiated. As a result, instead of being motivated by the strategic change, most of the staff felt the threat of losing job. Same was observed by Babu and Rahman in 2016. Except for the self-motivation which was resulted from *Niketan's* success, no positive stimulus was there among the staff at the begging of the massive strategic change of BEP. Vygotsky's argument here again reminds us the importance of proper interaction because, as the new strategy and its rationale were not properly communicated the staff instead of being positively excited felt exhausted. They got a meaning of losing job.

So at field level restless situation evolved because of the new approach. However, over the period, the situation got changed too and the staff had adjusted with the change. Despite these realities the staff also realized the importance of learning from this transition. One-year experience in cost recovery approach helped them to grow some confidence but still, they felt the importance of learning from their limitations and challenges. They believed on the importance of research in this regard. Almost each of the staff appreciated the research activities in the process of cost recovery approach. Statements from the AM is a testimony to this concern,

“Apnara ashate ami khub khushi hoyechi. Gobeshona dorkar. Somossa somadhaner jonno gobeshona dorkar. Ei prokriyar kothay ghatti ache ta gobeshonar maddhomei uthe ashbe”.

[I am very happy because of your arrival. Research is important. To solve the problems research is necessary. The shortcomings of this process would be identified through research.]

Different factors contributed to make the staff capable to cope with the cost recovery approach; sometimes by self inspiration and inner motivation, sometimes remembering the previous successful experiences such as *Shishu Niketan* and sometimes for the need to securing their job and importantly their attitude of learning from the transition. These aspects would be discussed further in the operational process of the model at field level.

After hearing about the changed approach the first thought of the field staff was to take the approach to the community, more specifically to the parents. The following section would present the process of introducing cost recovery approach to the community.

3.2. Cost recovery approach to the community

The financial management policy-2016 assured the field staff that, they would have to recover the cost from BRAC primary schools. For this, the first task was to familiarize the cost recovery approach to the parents. The circular did not provide any guidelines to the staff on how to present the cost recovery approach to parents. The interesting part was that the field staff did not wait for the formal circular on cost recovery to reach them and then to approach the parents rather they went to the parents much before of that.

While they first listened to the whisper on charging fees they on advance basis tried to know parental perception regarding the fee-based school. They did this because the issue of job security came to their mind while they heard about the fee-based school and they perceived that, without opening fee-based school their job would not be secured. The AM's statement in this regard was representing their advance action of that time,

“Ashole formal nirdeshona ashar agei amra kaj shuru kori ei model establish korar jonno. Manusher vab bujhar chesta kori. September October e unofficially shuni j ar free school hobena. Ei obosthay amra amader chakrir kotha chinta kore advance kaj korechi. Amader dekhadekhi onno branch o eki kaj koreche”.

[Actually we started to work to establish this model even before the formal circular reach. We tried to understand people's perception. During September-October we unofficially heard that free schools would not be there anymore. In

this state we started working in advance thinking of our job security issue. Other branches also followed our strategy.]

The other field staff also agreed with the above statement and perceived the change in a same way.

Monthly parents' meeting is a tradition of BRAC schools. The staff identified parents' meeting as the most appropriate place to talk about the fee-based schools as many from the community participated there. However, it was not easy for the staff to talk on a fee-based school in front of the parents because culturally they were habituated with the philanthropic approach of BRAC for a long time. Referring this point, the AM said,

“Jokhon taka tolar kotha ashe tokhon prothom je bishoyta mathay ashe ta holo takar kotha bolbo kivabe. BRAC to sob somoy bina mulle seba diye esechhe. Manushjon sevabei obvosto”.

[The first thing came to mind after hearing the announcement of fee collection was how would we approach this to the community. BRAC has always provided service free of cost. People are also accordingly habituated]

Finally beating the inner confusion, the PO raised the issue of cost recovery in parents meeting. As they did not receive formal circular they could not earn sufficient knowledge on the background of the changed operational mode i.e. fee-based school. They only heard that BRAC would not open free-school because of fund crisis. They used the phrase “fund crisis” to draw a rationale for adopting cost recovery approach and presented it during parents' meeting stating that, BRAC would not receive the regular funds from donors. In this situation, BRAC would not be able to open schools free of cost. Saying this PO asked a question to the parents “what do you think now?”

Parents answered this question in different ways. In some areas hardly 30% parents agreed to pay, in some other areas hardly 40-45% parents agreed to pay. Any area was rarely found where 60% parents agreed to pay. According to the PO, those who agreed to pay were convinced by the popularity of BRAC School and the outstanding result BRAC graduates could demonstrate in PECE examination. During the parents meeting, PO was asked about the amount of monthly fee which he could not specifically answer as he did not have that information but he roughly gave an idea of taka ±100.

In these meetings, the staff received different reactions from the community. In some meetings, no parents agreed to pay and they walked out directly from the meeting. The POs even experienced protest from the community to open schools with fee in some locations. Sometimes the arrogant section of the community threaded the staff shouting that they would destroy the school if they were to pay any kinds of tuition fees. Some of the parents raised questions on the staff morality. They were in doubt that the staff would take the money for personal purpose because BRAC's tradition was not charging fee. They argued that without any evidence they would not pay any money. One PO shared a parent's comment in this regard,

“Taka nebar kotha notun shuntesi. ageto eisob shuni nai. Taka apnera niben. amra taka dibona. Jodi ditei hoy tobe prothome janbo shunbo tar pore dibo”.

[We never heard about collecting money (by BRAC). You will consume these money. We would not pay. If to pay, first of all we will inquire about this first]

The parents had a long term relationship with BRAC through receiving service in philanthropic mode. This interaction was such strong that the new strategy could not convince them to paying fee that time. However, the staff did not argue with the community then because they only wanted to know their initial reactions after approaching the cost recovery model.

In this situation, it was already difficult to organize another meeting where cost recovery approach could be discussed but the staff did not give up. They continuously organized the meeting and tried to convince the parents. In the mean time, they received the official circular on cost recovery approach which worked as evidence to them to show the community.

Though the circular provided some background information on cost recovery approach no guidelines were there which could help the staff to present the model to the community. That time they did not receive any training on approaching cost recovery issue to the field but they were under pressure for opening new schools. In this tough situation, they struggled to take the model to the parents as the community already rejected them in many cases.

To cope with the situation, the staff discussed among themselves regularly. The SBM let us know that they on a regular basis shared their experience and learning after each meeting. They discussed their challenges and searched ways to overcome those together. The staff shared some of their convincing techniques and speech that they used to apply in the parents meeting in order to melt parental rigidity on cost recovery approach. After a series of brainstorming and discussion sessions, they had been able to prepare these. These are presented below.

3.2.1. Staff' techniques to convince the community

A. BRAC always has done well for the community. The POs at the beginning of the meeting described BRAC's role in that community and established the perception that BRAC always had done well for the human life. In order to do that, they presented examples of other services of BRAC in that community beyond education services. In this way, the staff tried to achieve communities' faith on BRAC once again.

B. Illuminating community's affirmative statement on BRAC Schools' quality. After establishing parental faith on BRAC brand the next step was to elicit parental affirmative response regarding the quality of the schools. In this aspect, the staff asked for their opinion regarding BRAC School. Parents mostly praised the schools for education quality, discipline and cordialness of the teacher. After that the staff posted a leading question "you agreed that BRAC Schools are good, don't you?" The reason for posing such question was mentioned by the SBM. According to him, when they pose such question after eliciting positive comments on BRAC Schools parents usually could not utter any negative statement which was helpful for the staff to argue logically for BRAC schools. Another aim of such technique was to make the participants feel that they need BRAC schools for educating their children.

C. Foreign donation is squeezed now. Would BRAC Schools be closed? After gaining positive and complimentary statements on BRAC Schools the staff said few words on the recently shifted economic status of Bangladesh. Referring to the TV news they said to the parents that World Bank has included the name of Bangladesh in the list of lower middle-income countries which means the economic status of the country has improved. They also mentioned

that donor squeezed the funds after improving the economic condition of Bangladesh. They provided fund for opening schools in past but now they would distribute the fund in poorer countries so that they can also improve their status like us. After explaining the context the staff threw the question then, would the schools be closed because of fund crisis? After posing this question some of the community members became soft in their expression and some even started to respond saying that schools are necessary. That time the staff uttered, BRAC would not be able to bear the school cost alone. So you have to take some responsibilities. From now you would be the donor for educating your child. Along with BRAC a little expenditure now would have to be contributed by you.

D. Our condition has been improved. We should be able to pay for our children education. Using some life-related examples the staff tried to make the parents feel that their life-style had been changed which was an indicator of their financial improvement as well. The PO specifically pointed out some changes in the lives of community people and logically stated those to convince the parents that they would be able to pay for their children education if they wished. Some of such statements were:

- Once you had one or two sets of dress and you had to depend on those two for regular use as well as for attending social ceremonies but now you do not use your old dress anymore even though it is usable. Now you have more dress and you have a choice in dress selection.
- Once the villagers like you depended on soil and other natural substance like *khail* (substance obtained from mustard) for the cleansing purpose of body and hair but now you do not use those. Instead of those materials now you use soap and shampoo. Not only that, you have a choice in selecting the brands too.
- Once it was difficult for you to arrange basic requirements of your living such as food and shelter but now most of you have access to the fan, electric light, mobile phone, television with satellite channels and so on.

Referring to such clear changes the staff argued that, the parents already invested in enjoying better lives and they already proved their financial capabilities too. So they were actually capable to finance for their children education purpose.

E. Reducing partial cost of the mobile bill you may pay a monthly tuition fee of your child. The staff asked in parents meeting how much did they pay daily for mobile communication purpose. Most of the parents referred around ten taka. From this point the staff mentioned that, they paid three hundred taka per month for mobile bill purpose. If the cost was possible to minimize to five taka per day they then would be able to save one hundred and fifty taka which mean they could spend that amount for education purpose of their children. After arguing such way the staff questioned what was important to them; talking through mobile or educating their children. Such argument challenged parental rigidity regarding paying tuition fee.

These kinds of statements from the staff helped the parents to think differently from their initial attitude regarding the cost recovery approach. This change in parental attitude was consistent with Vygotsky because he stated that interaction creates the meaning of event among the participants. The way staff used to interact with the community helped to generate positive meaning of BRAC initiatives to the parents. Vygotsky also argued that social interaction generated cognition which was consistent with the staff' efforts to make the community positive

towards the change. The staff among themselves shared knowledge in the group. After a lot of discussions they prepared the above-mentioned argument to convince the community towards paying fees which resembles a generation of knowledge through their interaction as Vygotsky mentioned.

Still, many parents remained unconvinced and raised a question regarding the infrastructure of the schools. They opined that if they were to pay then they would admit their children in either government schools or other private schools especially kindergarten schools. The staff had to work a lot in arguing against this attitude. Convincing the parents with the belief that educating children from BRAC schools is much more cost effective was a challenging task. The SBM reported that through intensive discussion in their staff meetings they found some unique points where BRAC schools had differences from other providers of education. During parents meeting, they highlighted those and sometimes used the board to visualize these. The following section represents the ways through which the staff differentiated between BPS and other schools to convince the parents for admitting children at BPS.

3.2.2. Staff techniques to differentiate between BPS and others

A. Other schools are much more expensive than BPS. In response to parental willingness to admit children and paying to KG schools, staff let them realize that educating children in BPS was much less expensive compared to the KG school. In order to do that they on board demonstrated the expenditure heads for both kinds of schools as follow.

Table 2. Comparative expenditure between BRAC and KG schools

BRAC School		KG School	
Monthly tuition fee	BDT 100 only	A pair of shoe	BDT 800
		School dress	BDT1000
		Books	BDT 2500
		Diary	BDT 100
		Bag	BDT 500
		Session charge	vary
		Admission fee	vary
		Exam fee	vary
		Sheet fee	vary
		Transport cost	vary
		Other hidden fee	vary

After analyzing the expenditure a portion of the parents paid a rethought on BPS school. BRAC staff also motivated them towards BPS stating the following unique features that KG and other schools might not provide.

B. The Teaching-learning process of BPS is more organized and planned. Some parents compared between the teachers of BPS and KG schools and appreciated the later because of their higher academic degrees and smartness. In that situation, the staff prioritized on teacher training. They said that, KG schools' teachers did not have any training as a result, they might struggle to teach properly. Referring an example the staff stated that, KG schools' teacher in a forty minutes lesson passed almost thirty-five minutes in writing on students' diaries and assigning homework which limits actual teaching time. Contrary the teachers of BPS were well

trained and they on a regular basis received refreshers training. They also mentioned that in BPS lessons were taught following a monthly base target which caused on-time completion of the course.

C. Monitoring and follow up on the teaching-learning process is stronger in BPS. As a strong feature of BPS, monitoring and supervision process was explained to the parents. An impression was given to them that, to monitor the learning and progress of a child many persons were assigned from a different position. For example, teachers were supervised by the PO/FO, PO/FO by the SBM, and the SBM by the AM, the AM by the RM. All of their aims was to ensure proper education of the children. In case of other sorts of schools, such supervision was absent. Staff also informed the parents that besides monitoring and supervision, researchers were regularly conducted to enhance the quality of education. Such kinds of monitoring, supervision and research activities were lacking in other schools. The staff also added that if any learners remained absent in BPS the teacher and other staff inquired about that and brought that learner back to school which was hardly seen in KG or government primary schools.

D. BPS students do not need a private tutor. As lessons were completed in classes learners did not require extra private tuition. Teachers' cordialness and friendly behaviour helped learners to learn contents within class time. Mentioning that the staff said if a private tutor is appointed for your child, in addition to paying monthly salary you would require to entertain him/her with snacks daily. By admitting children in BPS this money could be saved.

E. There are less vacation and more educational activities in BPS. Comparing to GPS and other schools' long vacations, staff positively emphasized on limited vacation of BRAC schools. They rationalized that; long vacation caused long detachment with the study. As a result, children may struggle to come back to their study rhythm after vacation. Instead of such long vacation, BPS learners enjoyed a short one and remained in their regular continuation of the study. Besides, learners participated in co-curricular activities including indoor and outdoor games which helped them to grow with holistic development.

F. Staff monitor learners' out of school activities. BPS learners studied in the group at evening regularly and the PO/FO monitored it. Such kinds of monitoring made the learners aware of their study as they knew that some from BRAC would come to visit them. Illustrating this example the staff helped the parents to understand the level of BRAC's commitments for ensuring proper education of their children.

G. Quality of BPS students is appreciated everywhere. BRAC schools are appreciated by the government representatives. Recently a UNO visited BRAC School and praised a lot of school discipline, teaching-learning and students' hand writing. Referring to UNO's visit staff argued that not infrastructure but the quality of their schools achieved that compliment which might be difficult to achieve for many well-structured schools. Referring to such example staff illuminated the impression of BPS in the community.

Before any parents meeting the staff prepared themselves for arguing through the above-mentioned aspects to convince the parents towards BPS. In the staff meeting through role-play approach, they practised on how they would present these message to the community. They believed that it was their main formula for convincing the community. In this regard, the SBM said,

“staff meeting e amra kotha bolar practise kori. nijera demo kori. ekjon PO hoy r bakira hoy parents. amra mone kori amader samne community bose ache tokhon amra kivabe kotha bolbo ta chinta kore point ber kori. evabe practise kore kore amra communityr samne jai. r etai amader mulmontro”.

[We practice speaking during the staff meeting. There one of us played PO's role and the others acted as parents. We assume that the community people are sitting in front of us. That time we try to identify some speaking points through which we would talk to the community. Before approaching to the community we practice this way several times and this is our main strategy (to convince the community).]

The staff observed that approaching cost recovery approach using the above described arguments worked in some areas and gradually situation started to improve. This claim from staff had been positively aligned with the statements obtained from the teacher and the parents. The teacher in her interview reported that initially the parents were so negative to the cost recovery approach and they disagreed to pay any fees but gradually the situation changed because of the cordial and patience approach of the PO. She in this regard said,

“prothome jokhon taka chawa hoyechilo tokhon valovabe ney nai. ageto taka neya hoy nai ekhon keno nibe. taka dibona. pore PO vai meeting er maddhome parentsder bujhaise. ekhon dey”.

[When money was demanded for the first time parents did not take it well. No money was demanded during previous time then why now, they argued. They determined not to give any money. Later on the PO in the parents meeting tried to make the parents understand. Now they pay]

Parents also agreed with the teacher's speech. The parents got the message that, as country improved much the government did not get foreign fund. In this regard, one mother in FGD said,

“Shekher beti desh unnoto koira felse. ekhn bideshira taha dey na. to amagoi dite oibo”.

[Sheikh's daughter has improved the country status. Now the foreigners do not give money. Therefore, we have to pay.]

However, another mother perceived that charging fee was BRAC's own decision as she uttered,

“upor theke koise tai taha nicche”.

[Higher authority has instructed that's why money is charged]

Here *upor* means the higher authority of BRAC. Whatever their perception and understanding were, despite of these, they agreed to pay and they acknowledged the role of PO in changing their mind. Regarding this one mother said,

“prothome shune mone hoise BRAC keno taka nibo. amra taka dimuna. pore sir jemne bujhaise mone hoilo taka dei. thik e koise Jodi baccha primaryte vorti kori private porteto mashe 150-200 taka lagbo”.

[when we heard about charging fee for the first time a question came to mind- why BRAC would charge money? We would not give any money, we determined. Later on, we became convinced to pay because the way Sir (the PO) explained influenced us. He correctly said that, if we admit our child at primary school we would have to pay BDT 150-200 per month for private tuition purpose.]

Other participants also agreed with her. Data revealed from staff, teacher and parents showed that after a series of struggle finally cost recovery approach model was successfully taken to the community and parents are now aware that they would have to pay if they are to educate their child and mentally they are ready for that. The staff also reported the same while an informal discussion was going on. According to the staff, the school chosen for study was a challenging one for cost recovery but now almost every parent pays a fee. According to the SBM at present, the recovery rate was above 96% in this branch. When the staff were asked to mention the hidden secret behind their success in establishing the model in field level the SBM mentioned the following five key aspects that they always kept in mind. These are discussed in the following section.

3.2.3. Key aspects to establish the model

A. Teamwork is the key. The staff struggled to convince the parents to cost recovery approach and still they were going through challenges but they achieved success as well. According to the staff, the success was a result of their collective teamwork. The SBM in this regard said,

“Teamwork sobcheye important. eka kaj korar cheye team e kaj korle sobar kach theke idea ar concept ashe ja kajer goti egiye nite sahajjo kore”.

[Teamwork is most important. Working in team is useful for eliciting ideas and concepts from all the members which help to speed up the work. This may not be possible while working individually.]

They provided some example of their team works. The working areas were distributed among the staff. Sometimes a PO faced challenges in conducting a parents meeting as the parents were too much negative to cost recovery approach. In such cases, the other PO / FO who had successful experience in his / her respective areas joined with the PO who struggled while conducting the meeting again. Through mutual contribution, success came. If such approach was not successful then the SBM joined the meeting and if necessary the AM also attended the meeting to convince the community. In case of extremely negative areas staff had to adopt this approach and finally they got success. This approach of interacting with the community is strongly linked to KMO concept of Vygotsky (1978) as the participation of higher ranked and knowledgeable staff attended when the responsible staff struggled. From the presence of more knowledgeable staff s/he could learn the approach of convincing community. Sometimes the community did not believe in PO's statements on charging fee. That time the PO requested the parents to talk to the SBM or AM over the phone. And the SBM or AM also joined in a phone conversation as per need and also attended physically. So tasks were not dependent on any single staff rather they helped each other when necessary. Such teamwork helped to come out from the initial challenges they had.

B. Conducting meeting after meeting with the community helped to bring success. Initially, most of the communities showed acute negativity to cost recovery approach. That time it was even difficult to approach again for tuition fees but the staff did not stop going to them.

Through repetitive meetings, they went to the parents and lastly they had been successful. The repeated communication according to Vygotsky generated positive meaning to the community regarding the cost recovery approach.

C. Presenting BRAC Schools' feature with logic is vital. While parents referred to other schools for admitting their children if they were to pay then the staff explained the strengths of BRAC Schools with strong logic (described above). According to the SBM, it helped a lot to draw parental positive attention to BPS.

D. Convincing the social leader and brought them to the meeting is important. In case of the less cooperating community, it was necessary to identify someone to whom the parents pay respect and listen to him. Usually, the respectable people, UP member, good service holders were such kinds of persons in the community. The staff tried to reach them and explained the situation and requested their attendance in the meetings and cooperation to convince the parents to pay fee. Those parents who agreed to pay were also requested to speak to others for convincing them for paying fee. Such cooperative movements from the society also helped to convince the parents.

E. Demonstrating BRAC Schools' children performance in parents meeting creates a better impression about BRAC. Parents want to see the positive changes in their children. Keeping this in mind the staff brought some children of BPS in the meeting. Some co-curricular activities like songs, dance, reciting and so on were performed by them. Some of the children spoke in English as well. Demonstrating their performance the staff argued that children of other schools or of higher grade would not be able to perform like this. Such visualization of BPS children performance brought positive change in parents mind for paying fees, mentioned by the staff.

The above discussed activities and techniques were the output of staff' brainstorming and teamwork. They strongly believed that they succeed because they worked hard from the very beginning even before reaching the formal instruction at the field. The SBM in this aspect said that,

"shurur diker porisrom amader poroborti kaj sohoj kore dey".

[.The hard works of early days ease the later tasks]

These kinds of devotion should be appreciated but sometimes they criticized others in such way that might create a restless situation in community and negative interpretation of BRAC's effort among the society. Especially while criticizing the KG schools' system they mentioned several limitations of those schools too directly. As KG schools had a strong acceptance in the community the authorities of those schools might react against such argument of BRAC's staff. They did not have any formal training that time on how they would present the cost recovery approach to the parents. However recently they got some training on marketing strategy which would be discussed in the next section.

Analysing the above discussion the following communication model has been revealed by the researchers which the staff adopted to introduce cost recovery approach to the community people.

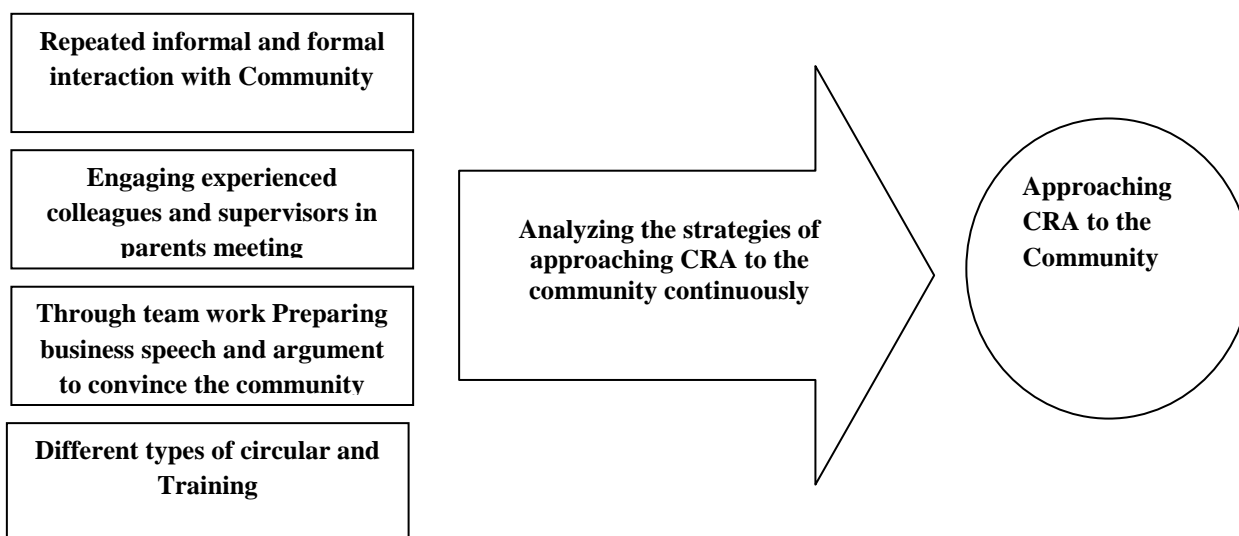


Figure 2. Dissemination process of CRA to the community

The study conducted by Babu & Rahman on cost recovery approach in 2016 identified that, field staff were not properly oriented on cost recovery approach and they had lack of knowledge and skill on how to present the model to the parents. According to the opinion of some HO colleagues, after that study, BEP considered the communication issue very seriously and prepared detailed communication materials for explaining the cost recovery approach at the field. A detailed hand-out on cost recovery approach for the field staff was sent on 25 July of 2016 (BEP, 2016b) and the RMs were provided with one day orientation (ToT) on that. The hand-out was divided into five sections such as; background, emerge of cost recovery approach, communication strategy at different stages in implementing the Programme, to do work list and works to avoid. Along with these a list of FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) on cost recovery was also included to help the staff while communicating with communities for cost recovery purpose. According to a senior staff of BEP, workshop was organized to orient the field staff on using the communication materials appropriately while dealing with the communities.

Some guidelines were provided to the staff for presenting the model and the changed context of Bangladesh to the parents. In doing so, a list of to do tasks was provided in the hand-out. The circular with importance mentioned that the current context of the country and BRAC, and the decision related to these should be properly communicated to the staff, teachers and the parents with correct messages. The circular added that the stakeholders might have a different opinion regarding the organisational decision, in that cases they should be provided with opportunities to express their thoughts. After hearing those, steps should be taken to convince them towards the taken decisions through logical explanation. According to the circular, the purpose of the communication was to bring the expected change in the behaviour of the persons being communicated. For this purpose, some strategies have been suggested in the circular. These are;

- The same information should be provided again and again through different means such as meeting, circular, hand-out, workshop, orientation, minutes and so on. Important

information should not be communicated through telephone conversation because these are not properly passed through such shortcut discussion.

- It is important to convince everybody that without ensuring quality no service can last long so the staff would require to work together to ensure the quality of service.
- To ensure quality all the agreed decisions should be taken to the parents for detail discussion with them. Staff would require them to provide adequate motivation and if necessary would involve them in different activities.
- The objectives and rationale of the new activities should be presented to everybody so that they can understand properly.
- The reason behind collecting fee should be clearly communicated in parents meeting. What added advantages would be provided as a return of charging fee should be mentioned to the parents. Here added advantages mean the competencies learners would be able to achieve as a result of studying in BRAC schools.
- The financial affair should be transparent and the policy should be followed properly. In case of any problem, staff should inform the authority immediately.

Along with these some activities have been suggested to be avoided such as;

- Unknown and wrong information should not be provided to anybody and should not be discussed at the office as well.
- No false assurance regarding tuition fee would be committed to parents and community.
- It should not be assumed that the community would understand the information after the first presentation.
- For financial dealings, nothing can be done beyond the policy.

BEP's these kinds of initiatives can be perceived as an implication of the recommendations obtained from Babu & Rahman's study on cost recovery approach in 2016.

Operational process of cost recovery approach was observed and documented with considering two broad areas; School opening and operation and financial operation. These would be analysed in this part.

4.1. Field Operation Process for school opening

To understand field operation process in-depth interview was conducted with the field staff individually and in the group. Some of HO colleagues were interviewed also. Official circulars disseminated at field level and some minutes of RM meeting were analysed too to achieve a clear understanding of the operational process. Addition to that, available documents at field office related to cost recovery approach was also reviewed carefully. Activities conducted by the staff were closely observed being present physically. To understand the shift in responsibilities staff were requested to describe their professional lives before cost recovery. After that, they described their responsibilities in present time. However, in both time, the staff had to deal with some common tasks to operate the BPS. According to the AM, these included surveying availability of learners for BPS, selection of village to open schools, selection of teacher, selection of school house and so on.

During the field visit an official policy entitled “policy for school opening” was found dated on 25 November 2014 and specially developed for the BPS (BEP, 2014a). This policy was signed by the Programme head of BEP. Later on, another policy was sent to the field dated on 21 December 2016 and was signed by the director of BEP. This time the title was “policy for opening pre-primary and primary schools”. The later one had more emphasis on BPPS (BEP, 2016c). Both the policies consisted of same kinds of areas where policy guidelines were provided. These are:

- Selection of village/*mahalla*/slum/place for opening school
- Survey the learners
- School house, advance house rent and deed related affair
- Selection of learners
- Selection of teachers
- Collection of tuition fee (added in 2016 policy)

The policy of 2014 was sent before cost recovery approach and the later one of 2016 was sent after cost recovery approach. The following part would offer a comparative discussion of these two policy guidelines and field staff experience to cope with these.

4.1.1. Selection of village/*mahalla*/slum/place for opening school

Both the policy guidelines referred that maximum distance between the branch office and schools would not be more than ten kilometres. However, with special approval, the distance could be twelve kilometres. In the year 2014 Senior Regional Manager (SRM) approved such special cases. This authority was transferred to the Regional Manager (RM) in 2016. Preference in opening school was given to the STUP areas and where schools were not available. Both the policies recommended some areas to avoid while selecting place for schools. These are; near

to temple, mosque, grave yard, market, highway, cow house, low and wet space, space with the scarcity of adequate light and air, and space with acute noise.

In both the guidelines schools in urban areas were allowed to be opened within six to seven kilometres distance from the office. While selecting a place for opening schools priority would be given to all kinds of slums and *Bihari* camps. Also, the distance would be flexible between government primary school and BRAC School in urban areas. Policy guideline of 2014 referred that with NOC from the government primary schools BRAC schools could be opened in 800 Meter distance. In that circular location beside technical school was preferred while opening a school in urban sites. These two clauses were not mentioned in the policy guideline of 2016.

In case of selecting school's place at ethnic areas both the policy guidelines relaxed the conditions compared to the other areas. Here also schools could be opened on twelve Kilometers distance from the office if required. Approval authority for this was the Programme Manager (PM) in 2014 and the Senior Manager in 2016. Other common clauses in both policy guidelines were that; schools would be opened in all the villages of the ethnic working areas. For hill track areas schools were allowed to open beside the temple.

The staff reported that, following these directions and guidelines they investigated for villages and places for opening schools. They surveyed a number of villages being a team of 2-3 staff. When they were to open schools they discussed among themselves and based on their experience tried to identify some areas to open schools. They not only search for appropriate location according to the policy but also talked to the community and tried to understand their demand and perception regarding schools opening. The villages showed positive responses were termed as "positive village" by the staff. During philanthropic operation a number of such positive villages were found but after adopting cost recovery approach the staff struggled to avail such villages. This has been discussed in the previous section.

Another vital problem was that, different components of BEP had a tendency to open different types of schools in the same location which caused an inter-component competition among the components. Basically, the field staff of different components had to fulfil specific target regarding the number of schools. So they tried to open their component specific schools not thinking of other components' schools in the same area. This situation caused problems for the *Shishu Niketan* both before and after of adapting cost recovery approach. Having a philanthropic school reduced parental motivation to admit children in a fee-based school before cost recovery approach on the other hand after cost recovery approach the situation did not change much because parents still had the opportunity to admit children in comparatively lower fee-based schools. Observing this reality a special instruction was communicated in the school opening policy 2016 stating that, no schools would be opened within one Kilometer of 2898 areas listed by *Shishu Niketan*.

However, the situation still continued in different segments of the country. To get rid of from such condition a circular regarding school opening reached at the field on 16 January 2017 (BEP, 2017a). It was mentioned in the circular that, it had been observed while opening new schools the inter-component policy was not properly followed as a result challenges rose to open new schools. Hence the following instructions were presented in the circular with expectation that all the units of BEP would follow these properly-

- The AM and RM of all unit would sit together and prepare an *upazilla* and branch wise map and would decide in which areas which programme would open schools. All the units have to open target wise schools.
- The managers of ESP areas would discuss the decision with the associate organisations and would take a step toward opening new schools. If any problem arises in this regard they would solve this by discussing the associated organisations.
- All the decisions taken should be written in minutes. If any problems are found in any branch or areas for making a decision and these are not possible to solve with discussing each other then, that minutes should be sent in HO.
- Preparing minutes after conducting meeting would be applicable in those areas only where schools have been opened through inter programme communication.

Presently the tendency of inter-component overlapping of offering services has been reduced to a good extent in the observed area. It is expected that the situation would improve more because a geo-mapping preparation is going on at head office. Sharing this with field colleagues after the completion would be helpful to solve the problem.

4.1.2. Survey the learners

After identifying the proper location for establishing schools the next priority task was conducting a survey for learning about the availability of eligible learners for admitting in BPS. Some guidelines were provided in the school opening policies of 2014 and 2016 about surveying the learners. Some of the instructions were common in both the circulars. Before starting the survey the AM had been instructed to conduct a one day workshop with the staff. During the survey, some meetings with small and large groups of the community were mandatory to conduct where the staff were to discuss according to the provided guideline. The circulars also guided that the staff would visit learners' home to home and would mark the households indicating 1, 2 and so on using chalk. After the marking, the survey would be conducted using the specific format. In each of the survey sheet, the BM and the AM would sign after checking those. The BMs were instructed to monitor the survey regularly and if any learners remained absent during survey the BMs were then instructed to visit them physically and then to add the signed list of such learners with the actual survey sheets. After completing the survey the BM would analyse the survey sheet and would prepare a primary list of the eligible learners. Addition to this it was instructed in the circulars that, the households linked with STUP and microfinance programme, ethnic and disable learners would be included in the survey. Learners already studying at government or nongovernment schools and pre-primary schools would never be included in the survey.

Besides these common clauses, some unique clauses were written in each of the circular too. Circular of 2016 provided two guidelines which indicated BEP's feelings for the marginalized and the disadvantaged groups of the country. These were, while opening schools at 2017 the learners, who are poor, ethnic, disable and belong to the *Horijon* communities and lives in an urban slum, CHT area and *Haor* would have to be considered for admitting. Another clause was that fee would be waived or an amount equal to the fee would be provided as a scholarship to those learners who are poor, ethnic, disable or belong to the disadvantaged group of the society. Some special instructions were there for surveying learners in the urban slum and ethnic sites in the circular of 2014. These were, in urban sites the schools could be opened with the agreement of the selected learners and in case of the ethnic areas, if the government primary schools do not provide the NOC then learners could be selected with the agreement of

guardian, local representative person, chairman, headman, businessman and member. Such instruction was not provided in the circular of 2016.

The staff during the interviews reported that they surveyed the learners according to the policies and using the prescribed survey format by the head office. In describing the process they stated that usually they surveyed during July-August period and got an idea about the feasibility of opening schools in January. The PO directly conducted the survey door to door and collected socioeconomic information including learners' name, age, sex, school going status, parental occupation, economic status of the family, and amount of land and so on. The AM mentioned that such kinds of information helped them to understand the number of children going or not going to school and dropped out. These sorts of information helped them to select children from the villages. However, in 2016 they were in a different situation and experienced a dilemma regarding school opening because they did not get any official order regarding the opening of new schools till the end of March. As they did not have a formal order they could not survey the learners but they on an advance basis talked to the villagers which helped them later in selecting learners.

The AM and the POs mentioned that after surveying an area for eligible learners' selection the staff organized small and large group meetings in those areas. In large group meetings, the guardians, respected person of that community and social leaders were invited. The staff discussed about BRAC curriculum, teaching-learning process, and BRAC school management with the participants of that large group meeting. Staff' experiences showed that all the parents did not agree to admit their children in BRAC schools. So, they had to think new ways to convince them of admitting children at BRAC schools. To do that sometimes the staff meet the parents individually or in small group and re-discussed the feature of BRAC schools' teaching-learning process and other characteristics regarding regular monitoring, caring teacher, on-time completion, of course, school discipline and so on.

As another strategy to convince parents the staff organized some special teaching-learning activities for the agreed learners in a specific location. The probable teacher taught there (teacher selection process would be discussed later). Venue for this was selected based on availability, for example, if any household had any unused room the staff requested the owner to provide them with that room. Many parents came to see the activities taking place there and the staff communicated them personally for convincing them to admit children at BRAC schools. Some parents heard about BRAC schools from their relatives. They also came to see these special activities. The staff then talked to them also. In this way, through different meetings, the staff used to identify and collect children for admitting in BPS. During learners' survey, the staff also tried to find an appropriate house for opening schools. Selection of house for school opening depended on many criteria stated in the policies of 2014 and 2016. The following section would portrait the process of school house selection.

4.1.3. Selection of school house

Guidelines for selecting school house for BPS were clearly stated in the school opening policy of 2014. The policy of 2016 put more focus on the opening of pre-primary school. Not much change was noticed in the guidelines of 2016 regarding school house selection for BPS compared to the policy of 2014. The AM also realized that as she said,

“BPS school kholar nitite temon poriborton dekhini. Ager motoi ache”.

[I did not observe mentionable change in policy for opening BPS. It remained as previous]

Major conditions for selecting school house stated in both the policies are- minimum measurement of the house would be 318sqft. To build the school twenty-four tins would be used with a minimum size of 9ft for each one. Five windows would be there with a minimum measurement of 4ft x 3ft and the height of the floor would be 1ft - 1.5ft from the ground. Schools must have bamboo or tin made fence and tin made a roof with shilling upward. The arrangement of usable toilet and water at a safe distance from the school must be ensured so that the learners and the teacher can use that. The owner of the school house must not be a close relative to the teacher such as parents, parents in law, paternal or maternal uncle and so on. These conditions were maintained while opening the case school and the other schools as well, mentioned by the staff. A portion of the school could be seen in the following picture:



Picture 1. A portion of a schoolhouse (tin made fence, window, shilling)

Compare to 2014 policy guideline more detailed instructions regarding school house rent and other financial issues were provided in the school opening policy of 2016. In terms of schoolhouse renting it was mentioned in the policy of 2014 that there should be 10% school house donated by the community free of cost. Rent of the house was not mentioned in the policy. However, the policy of 2016 mentioned that the rent of current primary school would be BDT 300 only. For new schools, if there is a separate toilet for the use of learners and teacher only then the rent would be BDT 500 only and if not or could not be arranged then the rent would be BDT 300 only. The observed school had an adjacent toilet which only the learners and teacher could use hence BDT 500 only is paid per month as house rent.

In case of giving advance money to the school house owner for building the school, some conditions were applied in the policy of 2014. It was mentioned that at least 10% of the total schools supposed to be built under any branch or area in 2015 would require considering the following conditions. The schools' house owner committed to build schools with satisfying these conditions would receive an advance amount of BDT 13,000 only with the approval of the RM. The conditions were:

- measurement of the schoolhouse would be 445sqft
- half of the fence would be made of brick and the rest with tin
- a corridor of 6ft tin would have to be arranged

- a totally separate toilet for the school would have to be there
- schools should be opened in such village where at least two cycles could be completed

In case of budget approval, the AM could approve BDT 7000 only in first instalment and BDT 3000 only in second instalment for opening any new schools. An advance amount of BDT 6000 only could be provided for construction purpose for reopening of school in an old house where the course has been completed.

In the latest policy, the AMs have been authorized to approve an advance payment of ten months and the RMs for twelve months house rent. An advance payment of eighteen months could be approved if the schools could be built with a corridor and could continue there for at least two years. In case of reopening of schools after the course completed an advance amount of eight months house rent could be provided. However, it would require being written in the agreement that if the schools are not opened then the house owner would return the money.

No mentionable change in the policy of 2014 and 2016 was observed for preparing house renting agreement with the school house owner. According to the policies, the agreement should be written in a stamp of BDT 300 only and the duration would be four months. It was also instructed to be mentioned in the agreement that the first party reserves the right to leave the house after one year and the house would be used for all time which means two shifts. After completion of course, if a sufficient number of students is found for opening school then the house owner would agree to provide the house, mentioned in the policy. All expenditure for agreement purpose would be carried out by the office. The policies provided some guidelines for the urban and ethnic areas also.

Regarding school house selection the staff reported that while surveying, they carefully searched for an appropriate house for opening school. She mentioned some of the conditions from the policies especially which the staff kept in mind for selecting house such as; area would be 318 sqft, the house would be four shaded with five windows, number of learners would be 33 keeping a ratio of 40:60 for boys and girls which might be 30:70 for new schools. During survey and meeting with community, the staff observed and tried to identify probable houses for schooling purpose. If any unused house was there they requested for that. It was a challenging task for the staff to find a house. When they found that they paid rent according to the policy. Some of the house owners build the schoolhouse as per requirement of BRAC. In such cases, office paid them the advance amount of rent. As per the AM maximum amount of BDT 6000 only could be given in advance.

In some areas, it was too difficult to manage the schoolhouse because the owner did not cooperate always. Staff had to adopt different strategies to convince them and sometimes they had to visit frequently even at night to reach the house owners. Following two examples might give a clear understanding of staff' effort for arranging schoolhouse.

Example-1

A village woman had a house which she could provide the staff for opening school as she did not use that. The location met almost each of the criteria for opening school. When the staff requested the woman for the house she did not agree to provide that. The staff (a female PO) frequently visited her and tried to convince her again and again so that she grants the house but she remained rigid constantly. One day when the PO went to the lady she found her cooking. That female staff then started to help her in cooking and also requested her again for the house

to open school. Finally that woman agreed to give her the house mentioning that her dedication for availing the house impressed her. In this regards the woman said,

“tumi ekta ghorer laiga ettobar bolteso jao tomare ghor dilam. Tumi jeivabe chaiso ami na korte parlamna”.

[Okay, I have given you the house as you have been requesting for so many times for this. I could not but agree because of the way you have requested.]

Finally, school was opened there. As a result of staff's repeated communication, the house owner got a new meaning of the staff's effort as mentioned by Vygotsky (1978). Probably she realized the importance of the school. This example provides a message to the staff that being dedicated towards goal and not giving up even in tough situation brings success. If the demand can be presented logically and repeatedly with patience and being closed to the community then cooperation from society comes with appreciation.

Example-2

A house owner disagreed to provide a house with a PO. In those villages that house was the most suitable one for being BRAC School because most of the conditions met there. In this situation, the PO approached the owner again and again for the house. Once it was noticed that the owner tried to avoid the PO in the locality. Once the PO along with another PO went to that owner's home at evening and was waiting for him. When the owner heard that the BRAC staff were waiting for him in his home he did not go to the home. However, the POs were still waiting. It was already around 9:00 pm when the owner back home and found that two POs waiting for him. The POs politely request again. Seeing the level of dedication the owner could not refuse this time. Finally, he agreed to provide the house and also offered them dinner.

Such kind of examples portraits the struggle experienced by the staff while searching school house. It was good that in surveyed areas the house owner being convinced to BRAC did not argue much about the house rent rather they were happy with what they got. The financial dealing with house owner is conducted by the accounts section. The owner collects the monthly rent from the office. During our observation, the researchers met a house owner at the branch who came to receive the rent. The rent agreement is also prepared by the office as per the policy.

4.1.4. Selection of learners

A number of conditions were mentioned in both the policies regarding the selection of learners for admitting in BPS. Some of these conditions were common for both and for some slight differences were observed. The 2014 policy guided to open schools with 25-33 learners. If to open school with less than this range then special approval was necessary. On the other hand, the policy of 2017 mentioned that number of learners would be 25-35 for school opening. However, on an average number of learners would not be less than 30 per branch, if so, then school could be opened with approval. It was noticeable that, in both policies it was not mentioned that who would provide the approval. In case of learners' age range for being eligible to get admission in BPS, 8-10 years was mentioned in the policy of 2014. In case of girls' and boys' ratio in the school, the guideline of 2014 stated that, for reopening of school in old areas girl and boy ratio would be 55/45, for the new area it would be 60/40 and to open school, in STUP areas the ratio would be 50/50. Instructions regarding learners' age and boys and girls ratio were not repeated in the guideline of 2016. However, a new clause regarding girls and

boys ratio was included in the policy of 2016 that branch wise learners' ratio would be 50/50. This is a big shift in policy because traditionally BPS intended to admit more girls than boys considering the less participation of girls in primary education but the enrolment has now increased and girls' enrolment rate has increased significantly. This improvement has been reflected in BPS learners' selection policy as well. As common guidelines, it was mentioned that, any learners studying at primary schools could not be admitted in BPS. Any learners who completed nursery (*shishu shreni*) could not be readmitted to BPS. In each school at least one disable learner would be admitted and age range might be 2 years increased for such learners. If no disable learners are found then schools could be opened with the approval of head office. Children of the guardians under STUP and microfinance programme would be admitted. Some special guidelines were provided in the policies regarding learners' selection in urban, ethnic and other marginalized areas like a brothel, *haor* and so on.

The staff reported that they strictly followed the policy guidelines while selecting learners for admitting in BPS. From the learner survey sheet, they used to generate a list of probable learners. Before opening schools, the staff arranged a coaching with the probable learners where the probable teacher taught. A number of learners were found from that coaching. Communicating the parents, learners' admission in BPS was ensured. In these ways, the learners of BPS were identified and selected. The staff took a bond from the parents while admitting children where the following issues were required to agree by the parents:

- children would study for four years
- would attend the school regularly
- no early marriage would take place

Disable learners were also admitted following the criteria. In the case school, two disable learners were found with hearing and speech disability. Keeping the associated conditions as mentioned in the earlier section in mind the staff registered the learners in the attendance record book following a format provided by the head office. Some parents willingly came with their children to admit to school.

Before cost recovery approach the staff did not have to struggle with having learners in their schools because the parents did not have to pay them. According to the AM and POs, in some village, they got an excess number of children so they had to take strategy to stop admitting them because of limited seats. They had to set some specific indicators as well for selecting learners such as height. However, after adopting cost recovery approach initially, it was quite difficult to convince parents for admitting children in BPS. It was even equally challenging to the staff to admit children keeping the conditions in mind with the limited number of children. With the progression of time, this situation changed. A number of children with BPS also increased and they were admitted according to the guidelines.

4.1.5. Selection of teachers

To select teachers for BPS, a number of criteria have been mentioned in the policies of 2014 and 2016. No significant changes are seen in the policies of 2016 compared to 2014. The major conditions emphasized in both the policies are; all the teachers would have to be married, required education qualification would be HSC pass for the new teachers. However, SSC pass with second division or GPA 2.5 could also be considered with the approval of PM (in 2014) and SM (in 2016). A new teacher would be aged from 18 to 35 years and must not be a current

student. The maximum distance between school and teacher's home would be one kilometre. There must be an alternative teacher for each of the school. A test of 100 marks would be administered for appointing teacher following the distribution; math-50, English-20, Bangla-20 and oral test-10. To be selected a candidate must obtain 60% marks in math, 50% in English and 60% in Bangla. The AM & QA (in 2014) and the AM & QF (in 2016) would take the test jointly.

In case of urban context, the teacher would be a permanent resident of that area or should be committed to teaching for consecutive four years. Unmarried lady teacher could be appointed in urban sites with approval. Some instructions have been provided for the ethnic and *haor* areas too where flexibility was noticed regarding teacher's educational quality.

According to the AM and other staff, teachers have been appointed following the set criteria. To describe teachers selection criteria the AM mentioned that, qualification would be SSC pass (at present HSC) and should be a married female. As a justification for appointing a married female teacher, the AM said, teachers' dropout decrease when married teachers were appointed. She also mentioned that if female teachers were not available then the male teacher could be appointed with special approval from the RM. However, reviewing the teacher selection policies of 2014 and 2016 it was found that male teachers were allowed to be appointed in *haor* area if female teachers were not available.

The teacher of the case school was appointed in 2014. She passes SSC examination in 2012 as a student of humanity group. She had to face written and viva tests for being selected as teacher. When she was asked how she got involve with BRAC School she reported that, once a BRAC school was situated in her home. Her father was the house owner. She felt her first interest to BPS from that school. The PO was known to her. After passing SSC she got married and expressed her wish to the PO and following the procedure she got an appointment as BRAC School teacher. One thing of the teacher did not match with the teacher selection criteria. Teacher's house was situated in three kilometres away from the school which ideally should be one kilometre. The reason of this mismatching was discovered from the interview. She reported that unfortunately, her conjugal life did not last long. After separation, she got married once again. Her current law's house was three kilometres away from the school so she had to travel that extra distance. The distance sometimes increased for natural disaster like flood when regular road drowned and an alternative road was necessary to use which caused passing long distance for both the teacher and the learners.

The policy of 2016 provided some guidelines regarding tuition fee collection and management. These would be discussed in the financial operation section.

The field staff were requested to describe their experiences of before and during cost recovery approach. In doing so they mentioned their general working process before cost recovery and the shifted mode of work during cost recovery approach. These would be discussed in the following sections.

4.2. Operational process regarding BPS at field level

The staff took preparation to open schools in January and they could complete most of the preparatory task before that because they started working according to the school opening policy from June-July. Before making a school functional they sent the teacher for receiving some orientation and training.

4.2.1. Teacher's basic training

First of all the teachers were provided with a four day orientation on BRAC, BRAC Schools and the associated activities. Usually, the branch managers provided that orientation. After that, the teachers were sent to observe the nearby schools for consecutive seven days. After coming back from the observation a basic training of fifteen days was provided to them. BRAC Learning Division (BLD) is responsible for providing the basic training. They follow a module which is discussed earlier with the programme. In basic training, a vast area of contents was covered. These include; child psychology, curriculum, teacher-learner behaviour and interaction, pedagogy, official rules-regulations and so on.

In the mean time the construction of schools became completed. The necessary materials reached to field from HO. Community people provided some materials too. When all these activities are done then parents were invited to a certain day and formal declaration of school opening was announced in the presence of the parents. How many schools would be opened depends on the availability of learners and the number of schools being closed.

After starting of the schools the staff had to think about different activities like staff meeting, school monitoring and supervision, teachers' monthly refreshers training, parents meeting and so on. The Prime concern of these activities was to ensure the quality of services and smooth operation of the schools' activities.

4.2.2. Staff Meeting

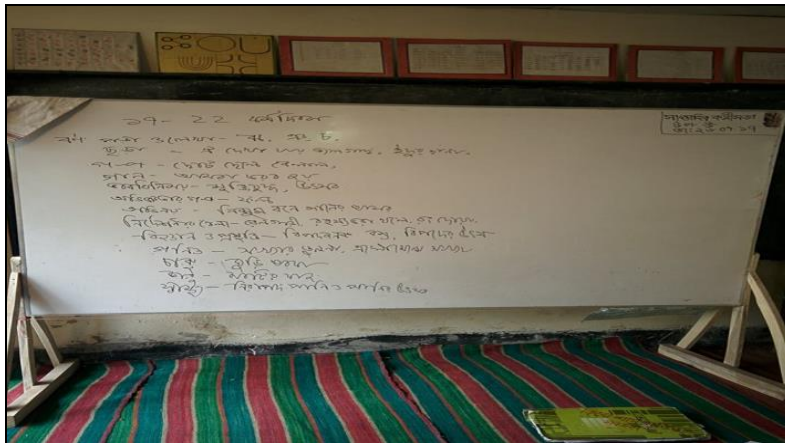
As mentioned earlier, staff meeting held on the 4th, 11th, 19th and the 26th day of each month. Staff meeting is termed as "*kormi sova*" in Bangla. The BM / SBM, POs, FOs and the teachers participated in that meeting. During the field visit staff meeting was observed. According to the staff they discussed their weekly challenges, problems and issues in the staff meeting. They analysed their shortcomings and identified ways regarding problem solving, improving presentation skill and many other activities associated with the operational process which was consisted with the process of cognition argued by Vygotsky (1978). For example, to complete the syllabus on time and to keep the learners and teachers on track some special processes are followed. The staff calculated their working days and analyse the current teaching-learning status of different subjects and based on that they set a weekly target to teach some particular pages of the textbooks. This is basically a plan to complete the contents with the schedule of the examination. The following example for grade-V is helpful to understand the overall process regarding this.

Table 3. Weekly target of teaching at classroom

Subjects	Current page	Target in next week
Bangla	84	85-90
Mathematics	88	89-93
English	75	76-80
Social science	74	75-100
Science	67	68-72
Religion	85	86-90

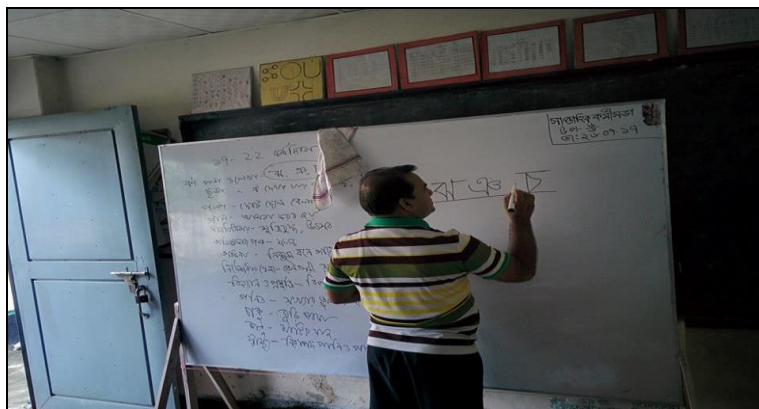
Sometimes it was observed that some schools lagged behind in terms of meeting the weekly target of teaching. For instance, one school could not step together with other schools in meeting teaching target for Bangla. Though most of the teachers taught on page 84 that particular teacher could not progress more than page 78. In such case, it was advised by the staff that, Bangla class should be conducted at the beginning so that more time could be invested here. In case of grade- V, a target was set that, by August 2017 all the contents would be taught. Once the textbook is completed the teacher would follow a short guide for preparing the learners for PECE.

After the weekly target is set the next task was to identify the topics for discussion which all the staff accomplished in a participatory approach. One staff wrote the topics on board as shown in the picture.



Picture 2. List of contents to discuss at the staff meeting

They categorized the topics into two segments; topics which are known and do not require further discussion and the topics demands discussion and presentation. In such environment, the staff and the teachers learned together. In a practise teaching mode, they presented the topic, played role and worked on board. For example, the staff and teachers one by one practised writing Bangla alphabet on board which they aimed to teach the kids in school. The following picture portrays the scenario.



Picture 3. A PO writing Bangla alphabet on board

In another segment, they practised telling story. Following the module, they practised the steps of storytelling and the techniques of engaging learners in these activities. The picture visualizes the scenario.



Picture 4. An FO demonstrating how to tell a story

Participating in such activities the staff and the teachers actively tried to enhance their capabilities in the contents and the pedagogy to present them in the classroom. It is interesting that in this stage the teachers and the staff learn together because both the group had to work on these; the teacher teaches in the classroom and the PO/FO/BM monitor the implementation of the learning at the classroom.

4.2.3. Supervision of schools

The PO/FO had a strong responsibility regarding monitoring and supervision of classroom teaching-learning process. In the staff meeting they prepared checklist on the aspects they would observe in the classroom for example; teacher's skill on problem solving, presentation and student assessment. Based on the observation the staff could understand the level of teachers' competency of teaching and they prepared work plan on how to guide the teacher to improve their practise. After observing the lessons the staff provided some written feedback on teacher's notebook. The SBM particularly emphasized on providing written feedback to the teacher and the further follow up of this. According to him, it was truly important that the teachers followed the feedback provided otherwise no positive impact would occur in the practise. In this regard he said to the PO/FO,

"apni class observe kore je feedback likhe diye aslen ta porer week e giye dekhte hobe je shikkhok kototuku follow korechen. Jodi na koren tahole take bolte hobe follow korte nahole kono lav hobena".

[The written feedback you have provided to a teacher after observing the class should be followed up in next week to understand how much of it has been followed by the teacher. If the teacher does not follow then you have to tell her to follow. Otherwise no benefit would be there.]

Such suggestion offered by the branch manager was consistent with Kiesler and Sproull (1982)'s thought where they emphasized on three essential factors of monitoring such as collection of information (observation), evaluation of information (reflection) and action on results (feedback).

During the field work an opportunity came to observe the FO's supervision role while he observed a lesson. The staff already knew which contents would be taught because they set weekly target of teaching in the staff meeting, they also prepared observation checklist prior to observation. So it can be assumed that the staff observed and provided feedback to the teacher in a planned and scientific way. The scenario of a classroom's activities and FO's role in providing feedback to the teacher is presented below.

A Bangla lesson of grade-V was observed. The teacher assigned a writing task to the learners. She wrote some Bangla words on board and instructed the learners to write their synonyms as shown in the picture.



Picture 5. Teaching learning scene at BPS

While writing, the learners became divided into three rows. Teacher's role was moving through the rows and observing the writing tasks conducted by the learners. The teacher did not mention any time duration regarding completing this task. The FO reminded the teacher about this and asked if she mentioned how much time learners would get to complete the writing. The teacher said "no". She then announced that five minutes would be given to complete the task. This indicated that the staff not only provided written feedback but also the verbal one during the lesson. However, teacher asked for the script after ten minutes and the learners did not complete the write up within five minutes too. So an issue related to time management emerged which neither the teacher nor the staff bothered about. A girl collected the script and handover those to the teacher. The teacher started to check the script and she put tick and cross marks for the right and wrong answers respectively.

were expected from the staff to improve teacher's practise but in reality, this did not happen which clearly resembled shortcomings of the supervision.

According to the staff, a number of factors affected the monitoring and supervision activities that the staff accomplished as BRAC School's tradition which ultimately played a big role in enhancing the quality of the teaching-learning process. The newly adopted cost recovery approach had some reverse effect on supervision tasks of the staff. According to the field colleagues, their responsibilities changed with the initiation of the cost recovery approach. To cope with the new duties they struggled to maintain the frequency and quality of supervision activities that they did traditionally. In this regard, the SBM reported that for being involved in the monetary tasks they had to struggle seriously regarding ensuring quality supervision and in broad sense the quality of education. In his words,

"ekhon school visit kore monitoring ar supervision onek kom korte pari amra othoco BRAC School er porichitir onnotomo karon chilo regular monitoring".

[Nowadays we can undertake a very little amount of monitoring or supervision activities through visiting school though regular monitoring was one of the strongest reasons for recognizing BRAC schools in community].

The staff reported that before cost recovery approach they used to visit a school twice a week for supervision purpose but during cost recovery approach they even could not visit a school in fifteen days. The reasons were investigated for which the staff realized that the cost recovery approach inversely impacted on their regular monitoring and supervision tasks as well as other regular activities for ensuring the quality of education. These are;

A. Meeting target of school opening and cost recovery: Cost recovery approach challenged the staff in terms of meeting a set target of school opening. Prior to cost recovery approach situation was not such rigid. The AM reported that before cost recovery approach the HO wanted to know how many schools could be opened. Depending on the number of schools being closed and the findings from learners' survey this question was answered. That time staff were not assigned any target. During cost recovery approach they were not asked such question but were given a target regarding a number of schools to open. As mentioned by the AM,

"RM bhai fon diye bollen ekhon theke target onusare school khulte hobe".

[RM bhai told over phone that from now schools would have to be opened according to a target]

Referring to the early day's experience of cost recovery approach the AM mentioned that, based on survey findings they proposed to open 250 schools but were instructed to open 350 schools. Stating another example the AM reported that the RM once was assigned to open 200 new schools in his area. They did not know any reason for the number but assumed that, to save the job of the staff such large number of schools was opened. To present another example the AM said, once she was emailed with the instruction of opening 30 schools. To meet such target the field staff of all level had to accept the challenge and workload. Especially the FO/PO had to arrange a number of meetings in the communities with large and small groups as per need. These activities charged huge time from the working days, as a result, they struggled to conduct school monitoring and supervision regularly and to pay attention to the quality aspect.

B. The number of schools increased but the number of staff remained same or reduced: before cost recovery approach one PO had to deal with 12-14 schools but at present, they deal with 19-20 schools. Number of POs also decreased during cost recovery approach. This increased number of schools put extra pressure on POs' shoulder. Another aspect is that the staff usually get 20-22 working days in a month on average. They had to keep four to five days for monthly refreshers training, four days for staff meeting, one to two days for other official tasks. So ultimately the staff had only 12 days for other operational tasks such as school supervision, organizing parents meeting, collecting the fee, preparing reports and other miscellaneous tasks for 20 schools. In the given context it was truly challenging to the staff to continue school supervision as they did before of cost recovery approach.

C. Distance between schools increased which hindered school supervision: during cost recovery approach distance between schools increased. While BRAC provided education service in philanthropic approach community easily agreed for school opening but after adopting cost recovery strategy situation changed and many areas were identified where schools opening was too hard. Considering the situation the staff explored different locations to open schools. These locations were far from each other. So naturally, the distance among the schools increased. According to the SBM average distance among the schools was 1-1.5 kilometres which at present is 3-3.5 kilometres. Before cost recovery staff could visit four schools from 8:00 am – 12:30 pm because the schools were closed then. At present, they also try to visit four schools but it is too hard for them. The FO is not eligible for receiving a loan for buying motorcycle but he bought one using his personal fund so that he can adjust with the distance. In a rough calculation, the staff showed that in each day they had to travel 3-3.5 hours. The distance has increased and the number of schools also increased as a result, the frequency of school visit decreased and also the duration of supervision decreased. The staff opined that if they tried their best they could visit a school twice a month but sometimes they struggled to do that because of other unavoidable priorities which mean it is not confirmed that the PO would visit the schools twice a month.

D. Engagement in financial activities limited scope of school supervision: staff are now heavily engaged in fee collection process. The staff perceived that, the ability to collecting fees was an indicator to measure their performance. As a result, they had to invest a large amount of time for the financial dealings with parents and officials, mentioned by the SBM. Such engagement restricted them to carry on supervision of schools as they did earlier.

The parents noticed such limited supervision in the schools because they observed much more supervision in BRAC Schools before cost recovery era. In parents FGD some of the parents reported this observation. Also, the FO agreed with this. According to him parents nowadays questioned them for less supervision in schools. The FO in this regard said,

“guardian ekhon proshno koren ageto onek ashten ekhon eto kom keno ashen taka nebar por”.

[Guardians now ask why we visit so less after charging money whereas we visited so frequently prior to charging]

Such comments from the parents indicated that parents were becoming conscious regarding the service and because of paying money they were empowered to question. To response such questions the staff highlighted three particular points to establish a rationale for a little visit to schools; such as it takes time to prepare creative questions, the weak schools were more

visited, and the number of schools increased, as a result frequency of school visit decreases. Most of the time the parents showed dissatisfaction and requested to increase school visit.

The above discussed issues had a negative impact on the quality of supervision, the AM mentioned. According to her the POs nowadays cannot observe class critically because of some extra pressure. For example, the increased distance among the schools caused them travel more and visiting four schools in a day was too hectic in current time. Compare to previous time staff now spent less time in schools. Moreover, too much financial engagement charged a huge time. According to her bearing such workload the POs missed many things to observe during the supervision. She mentioned some aspects from her own observations those were not properly practised in the classroom. Such as:

- learners could not recite rhyme with proper rhythm
- *Turi khela* was not properly going on
- materials were not properly organized
- the floor of the classroom was low

According to her, these should be noticed by the staff while supervision going on and guidance should be provided to the teacher too but they could not do so as a result learners could not learn properly.

It's worth mentioning that, in the given context the staff tried to monitor the grade-V schools twice a week because this grade would go for PECE exam. The teachers also reported that. During staff meeting, it was decided by the staff that they would pay some special attention to the grade-V learners. These were;

- Visiting grade-V schools more as they would sit for PECE;
- If weakness is noticed in any particular subject of any schools then practise teaching on that subject would be conducted;
- list of weak learners of grade five would be prepared and during supervision, their progress would be observed;
- Weakness in Mathematics and English is agreed. so these two subjects should be specially treated;

Though some measures were taken for enhancing the learning of the fifth graders, one thing was specially mentioned by the teacher that, BRAC learners were not oriented with the regular examination as like as the learners of other primary schools. This caused lack of confidence for some learners while participating in PECE examination. Seeing a vast number of learners with school uniform and different attitude sometimes they felt frightened which had some reverse effect on performance. To help learners to come out from this shortcoming they were taken to the nearby government primary school where they participated in the examination.

A guideline from HO reached to the field staff before the PECE of 2016. The guideline instructed the staff to accomplish some tasks so that the learners can smoothly participate in PECE. These include: collecting and distributing of admit card, checking authenticity of the learners participated in PECE, preventing of malpractices in exam, ensuring safe transportation with community participation to reach the exam hall, ensuring on time arrival of the learners in exam

hall and special care to the learners with disability to reach the hall and so on. Addition to these few guidelines were provided to ensure parental engagement in this process. Such as; informing them the rules and regulations of the PECE, involving few parents in carrying children to the exam hall, engaging the parents of disabled children to take their child in the exam hall.

Importance of identifying the less advantaged schools among grade- V and taking necessary steps to improve those were felt by BEP. To do this a circular was disseminated at field level on June 2017. Some indicators of less advantaged schools in case of grade five were mentioned there:

- Schools started with 25 students but presently dealing with minimum 15 and schools started with more than 25 students and currently dealing with minimum 18 students;
- Schools with more students but two teachers dropped out;
- Schools with more than 15 substituted students;
- Schools with more than 15 students but of them more than 50% were disadvantaged.

To collect information about these kinds of schools a format was sent along with the circular. Along with the related information of the above conditions what sorts of steps could be taken to improve the situation and in how many days these could be accomplished were also investigated using the form. Besides school supervision, another vital task of the operational process was organizing monthly refreshers' training for teachers.

4.2.4. Monthly refreshers training

The decision of refreshers' training was made in the staff meeting. A group of seven to eight teachers participated in the training. All the staff collaboratively conducted the refreshers training. In the observed branch, the SBM and a PO was the master trainer of English, Mathematics, Science and Social Science. They conducted refreshers' training for grades IV & V. The PO, BM and sometimes the BM of nearby branch provided subject based training to the teachers. Generally, the more experienced trainer conducted the refresher's training of higher grades i.e. IV and V.

Normally during school supervision, the staff observed the lessons and identified the challenges faced by the teachers while presenting the topics. Staff took notes on those and discussed in the refreshers' training. The teacher reported that she had a notebook for writing the problems while presenting lessons in the classroom. She wrote her problems and could discuss those in refreshers' training. While she was requested to mention her problem she said about the preparation and use of creative questions, especially for English and Mathematics. Most of the teachers faced problems in these two subjects. According to her, all the subjects are given priority in refreshers' training but English and Mathematics got top priority as these were comparatively tough to the teachers. The staff also opined that, English and Mathematics required more practise in the training. During this field work, it was not possible to observe any refreshers' training. However, prior to this study, the researchers observed a refreshers' training at the end of the year 2015. A glimpse of that training is presented in the following picture.



Picture 7. Teachers working in refreshers' training

After adopting cost recovery approach, duration of refreshers' training decrease drastically, opined by the field staff. Prior to 2017, the training duration was three days which at present is only one day. To minimize the cost duration of refreshers' training had been reduced, the staff opined. Addition to this the SBM reported that, duration of refreshers was reduced to one day only to make the teachers less-dependent on the trainers and to increase their habit of self-study. Some HO colleagues also opined in the same way. The SBM in this regard said,

“ekhon sob giliye deya hobena. Teacher nije pore pore onek kichu shikhbe”.

[Not everything would be spoon feed now. Teacher would learn many things studying by self.]

Though the SBM uttered these words with positively toned attitude ultimately he along with other field staff did not perceive this change useful rather they prominently believed that the actual reason of reducing training duration was the minimization of the cost. According to all the staff, this shrink of training duration impacted strongly in a negative way on the quality of education and training. To justify this feeling the SBM and the PO mentioned that when training duration was three days they could complete discussing the contents of six subjects in a planned and relaxed way. Participants got ample opportunity to practise by self and to ask questions to the facilitators when necessary. A huge amount of contents which was basically the teaching target of a month was properly discussed during three days refreshers' training. Participants could internalize those effectively too. Describing the benefits of three days refreshers' training the staff compared this with one day training. They mentioned some limitations of one day refreshers' training with importance.

According to them, it became a huge pressure when they had to embrace the load of content discussion on six subjects in a single day. They opined that when one month's contents were tried to discuss in one day it became overburden to them as one suffers to digest when eating too much. Staff thought that quality of training got seriously hampered because of this congested schedule. Six subjects were hardly discussed in a balanced way. The SMB mentioned that they had to invest half of a day only to discuss the Mathematical problem. Other subjects were hard to cover in a one day refreshers' training. Especially more time was required to discuss the creative questions. This hurries hindered the interactive communication and

pedagogical representation of the contents during training. Even investing extra hour staff could not cover all the contents properly.

To express self-opinion on the duration of the training the teacher opined that three days training helped her to learn and understand the contents and their delivery in the classroom. One day training was difficult for her to capture. Though she was not happy with one day refresher's training she did not encourage the refreshers training of more than three days too because when the schools remained closed for long the learners demonstrated a tendency of absenteeism.

Discrimination between schools funded by Educating A Child (EAC) project and the regular BPS was observed in terms of distributing duration of refresher's training. As fund was available the teachers of EAC funded schools enjoyed a three days refresher's training whereas the others attended in one day training. Because of this inequity in training duration, the whole set up of the training programmes varied. In this regard, the teachers who received one day long training complained that, they had to cope with the comparatively heavier load of contents which hindered their smooth understanding on those. Along with the teacher, the staff also opined that it was difficult to capture the message of training for those who participated in one day refresher's training. As a result, differences were created among the teachers of EAC funded schools and the regular schools in terms of knowledge, understanding and skill for implementing the training in classrooms. Because of variation in teachers' understanding of the contents the children of these two kinds of schools were also going through different learning experiences in their classroom. No mentionable steps were taken by the staff to minimize these gaps of pedagogical understanding between the EAC funded and regular schools' teachers which formed as a result of inequality in training duration. When they were asked if they informed this discrimination to the higher authority they reported that, they informed the AM but no change took place. Describing the above state of the refresher's training the SBM stated the importance of refresher's training mentioning that it was a strong mean of enhancing the quality of teachers and to ensure the overall quality of the teaching-learning process.

Besides monitoring, supervision and refresher's training, community participation is an integral part of BRAC primary school programme. It is ensured by arranging monthly parents meeting.

4.2.5. Monthly parents meeting

The parents meeting usually took place at the last portion of a month. The school was used as a venue. As the schools were occupied at morning most of the meetings held at evening. All the parents were invited to participate the meeting. A U-shape seating arrangement at floor was offered to them as shown in the following picture;



Picture 8. Monthly parents meeting

The FO moderated the meeting and tried to be as much as interactive with the parents. The activities of parents meeting can broadly be divided into two parts. Part one comprised the discussion on children academic and other issues and part two was focused on financial affairs. This section would emphasize on part one and the later one would be discussed in the financial operation section.

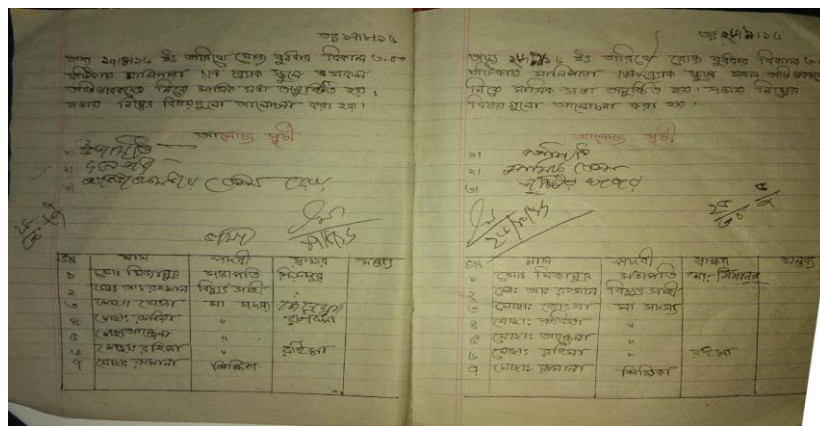
At the beginning of the meeting, the FO greeted the parents and checked their presence using the learners' attendance register. He called learners' name one by one and the respective parents of that learner reported the presence. It is expected that all the parents and the school managing committee members would attend the meeting. An analysis of last 13 parents meeting of the case school showed that out of 30 parents 27 remained present on average and among seven SMC members five were present on average (Table 4). The SMC consists of one chairman, one, four members (mother) and the teacher. Usually, the mother attended the parents meeting. Only one male parent was found during the observation.

Table 4. Participation and discussion agendas in monthly parent's meeting

Sl. No	Date of the meeting	Present number of parents	Mean	Present number of SMC members	Mean	Topics of discussion
1	20-07-2016	-		8		Attendance, study at home, monthly tuition fee
2	17-08-2016	28		7		Attendance, group work, giving tuition fee in parents meeting
3	26-09-2016	25		5		Monthly tuition fee
4	15-11-2016	25		5		Attendance, monthly tuition fee, winter dress
5	28-12-2016	-		2		Attendance, monthly tuition fee, winter dress

6	25-01-2017	25	27	7	5	Timely attendance, monthly tuition fee, textbook of grade V
7	23-02-2017	28		7		Attendance, timely attendance at school, monthly tuition fee
8	10-04-2017	30		7		Objective of <i>Aflatoon</i> , distribution of <i>Aflatoon</i> materials, study at home
9	27-04-2017	-		8		Monthly tuition fee, attendance, timely attendance at school
10	30-05-2017	25		4		Monthly tuition fee, timely attendance at school and visiting relatives' house
11	13-06-2017	27		5		Monthly tuition fee, timely attendance at school and visiting relatives' house
12	20-07-2017	30		6		Attendance, monthly tuition fee, discussion on PECE
13	24-07-2017	30		6		Timely attendance problem due to rain, learners do not do homework

The FO invited the parents to share their problems they observed in terms of their children education. Based on the conversation some problems were identified for discussion. Addition to these the FO also added some issues to discuss as per need (Table 4). A notebook for parents meeting was there where the FO wrote the minutes including the topics of discussion. The SMC members signed there as well. The picture below shows one of that notebooks:



Picture 9. Parents meeting minutes

Analysing the parents meeting minutes of last one year (please mention the year) it was found that, attendance issue was commonly discussed. From the beginning of the year 2017, the discussion on attendance was accompanied by a new dimension which was “timely attendance at classroom”. As the learners reached at grade V in 2017, their on-time attendance at classroom got much priority on the parents meeting as a topic of discussion. It was strongly believed by the staff that without proper parental support both attendance and on-time attendance of the learners were difficult to ensure. Besides attendance, study at home, preparation for PECE, *Aflatoon* and so on got priority in the discussion. The issue of monthly tuition fee collection was commonly discussed in the parents meeting because parents were to pay the fee there.

On the observed parents meeting the parents identified few problems to discuss such as children could not attend school on time due to rain, some of the parents reported that their children did not study properly at home. The teacher raised an issue that a large number of children did not complete their home tasks. With these issues, the FO added another issue to discuss which was about preparation for PECE.

To reply to the parental concerns FO uttered various motivational statements and provided some guidelines to the parents so that they became inspired to look after their children education at home. He requested the parents to company their children with an umbrella in rainy day while they come to the school. In way of motivating the parents, the FO mentioned some scholars' name such as Kalidash Pundit and Bayejid Bostami who won many struggles in life and finally established themselves as the example of wisdom. The FO mentioned, to be a scholar like them education was necessary for which attending school on time was a precondition. He tried to encourage the guardians stating that though they lived with various challenges their children might be famous some days as well. He advised the parents to grow learning interest among their children. In this regard, he said,

“poralekha tablet kore giliye khaiye deya jabena. Apnader sontander moddhe se agroho toiri kore dite hobe”.

[Lessons could not be swallowed like a tablet. Interest towards that would have to be built among your children.]

He suggested to the parents to monitor strictly if their children study at home. He used a word “guard” meaning that parents should be very strict about their children study at home. He also advised to wake up the children at the last portion of the night so that they can study silently for a long time. He mentioned all these ways of studying at home because the learners were to sit for the upcoming PECE exam. The parents got a feeling from the meeting that, to cut good result in PECE their children should study this way. The FO also aimed to grow this feeling among the parents.

4.3. Financial Management Process

Financial management procedure of philanthropic approach was well established and structured one which was followed in last thirty years. However, the financial process of the present cost recovery model is in the development stage and gradually being structured. A number of management activities exist in this model. In the previous model, BEP did not collect money from the beneficiaries but now recovering a small portion of its cost. Most of the beneficiaries are poor and less educated, thus it is difficult for programme staff to convince them to pay a little

portion of their children' education cost. One of the major concerns of this study is to represent the overall financial management process during this cost recovery era. First official circular regarding financial management process was disseminated in March 2016 and title of the circular was "Financial Management Policy-2016". Analysing all data and information about financial activities the following process diagram has been generated:

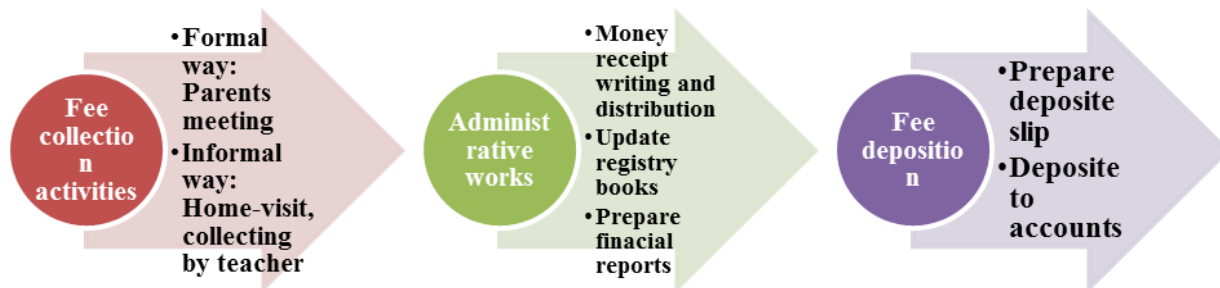


Figure 3. Root level Financial Management Process

This diagram depicts the overall activities related to the collection of tuition fee. In the financial management process collecting tuition fee is the first and foremost activities, later concerns are administrative and account related activities. The detail descriptions of the activities are presented below.

4.4. Financial Management Policy versus Field Reality

According to Financial Management Policy- 2016's clause no- 1.19, current primary schools' tuition fees was determined BDT 75 only for each student in the rural area and BDT 85 only for each student in the urban area. Another circular sent on 18 July 2016 provided a message that, no fee from selected schools of HTR area would be collected from July 2016. Referring to BRAC strategy it was mentioned in the circular that, BRAC was committed to bring positive change among the disadvantaged group of HTR areas such as; *Haor, Char*, tea-garden and hilly area. However, if any of the schools of those areas are situated within the city corporation then they would be charged tuition fee as like as other parts of the country (BEP, 2016a). On 14 August 2016, another circular reached at the field which was about providing free primary education at HTR areas under Education Support Programme (ESP). It was mentioned in the circular that, from July 2016 no fee would be collected from the decided fee free schools of HTR areas.

This circular brought another vital decision at field stating that, from January 2017 the monthly tuition fee of BRAC non-formal schools would be 100 BDT per child except in HTR areas. A justification was provided there as well for charging higher than the previous. The fee was increased because the fee charged in 2016 was too much little portion of the actual expenditure. The circular also stated that, because of charging fee no students should be dropped out from schools.

The financial policy of 2016 also concentrates on waver for special cases. The special need children will get full waver if their parents are unable to pay but admission and others fees must be paid. (Clause: 2.1). With the permission of authority special need children will get waver. Most of the time girl will get priority (Clause: 2.2). If two children are admitted from same household one will get half or full waiver with permission (Clause: 2.3). Necessary waiver or stipend should be properly distributed as policy recommendations.

Tuition fees should be collected two times a year that is the month of February and August. Entire year fees can be collected at a time if parents are willing to pay. (FM Policy-2016, Clause: 1.2). Findings from the study showed that, parents initially did not want to pay the fee because BRAC did not charge any fee while admitting their children. After four months fees have been introduced which caused huge challenges for the staff to operate the activities. In this reality, it was too difficult for the staff to collect tuition fee from February 2016 according to this policy because officially the circular was sent in March 2016. Addressing this reality and challenges BEP revised some parts of the policy and shared the revised version with the field colleagues on 8 August 2016 which contained two amendments for non-formal primary schools. These are (1) Fee collection from BRAC primary schools would be applicable from March 2016; (2) No fee from selected schools of HTR area would be collected from July 2016.

According to FM policy-2016, Monthly tuition fees must be collected in parents meeting. Collected money must be deposited into the account within next day. Staff are not allowed to keep money more than three days anyway (Clause: 1.4). This policy also mentions that, the teacher will not be involved in any fees related activities in any case (Clause: 1.6). But information obtained from different sources showed that teachers were directly involved in this activities. So after four months on 11 July 2016 second circular was circulated to the field for not involving teachers in fee collection process. The situation was unchanged. It's worth mentioning that, in June 2016, a study on cost recovery approach was conducted by the research and evaluation division of BRAC. Findings of the study showed that, teachers were strongly associated with fee collection process which significantly hindered the quality of teaching learning activities. The study recommended keeping teachers away from fee collection (Babu & Rahman, 2016). Later on, the third special circular in this regard was sent in August 2016.

Though instructions have been sent several times for not involving teachers in fee collection process the scenario did not change. The same was observed in July 2017 too in the case area where the teacher was involved in the collection of tuition fees in various ways. In the parents meeting it was observed that teacher collected tuition fees from the parents and wrote money receipt before the staff reached to the school. Staff only collected the money from the teacher and distributed the money receipt among the parents with his signature. When the staff was asked the reason for engaging teacher in collecting fee after knowing the restriction he replied,

“Amader je poriman kajer chaap, er moddhe etogulo field dekha sombhob na. Ty teacher der help kichuta nitei hoy. Onek somoy parents ra teacher er kache jor kore taka diye jay”.

[Dealing with such extreme workload it becomes impossible for us to visit such large number of fields. Therefore, we cannot but take some help from the teachers. Many times the parents leave the money to the teachers even by ignoring her unwillingness to receive that.]

Staff's this kind of statement proved that teacher was regularly involved in fee collection, even the community also became habituated to provide tuition fee to the teacher. Overloaded staff could not operate the financial process without the help of teachers.

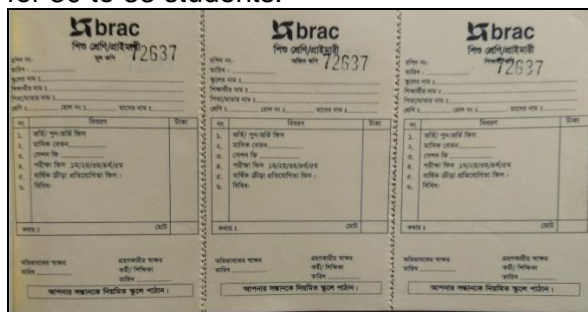
At the beginning of cost recovery approach teachers were heavily involved with fees collection process. That time parents gave money to the teacher and she preserved it herself and when PO came to the school she gave it to him. Usually, she kept daily collection information in her

mind and sometimes took note in her diary or khata which caused mismanagement and loss of money. Moreover, teachers were not interested in this additional responsibility without any monetary benefit.

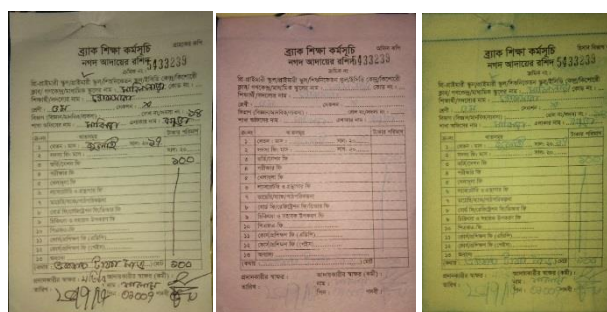
After sending the office circular teachers involvement has been decreased to some extent but unofficially teachers are still heavily engaged in the tuition fee collection process. Staff said that, in present context, they are supervising more schools than before alongside responsibilities are also extending in this new model. Some parents were unable to pay the monthly tuition fee at the parent's meeting. Sometimes several parents meetings were required to arrange for fee collection. When a part of the parents failed to pay the fees the staff asked for another date. The date offered by the parents was another burden to the teacher because she had to repeat all the tasks she did in the earlier parents meeting including ensuring parents' presence, accommodating them in a disciplined way, collecting fee from them and writing the money receipt as a formal way. A group of teachers opined that they felt afraid when the fee collection process started because it took huge time from them.

The alternative way of collecting fees was home visit. BRAC staff visited the households of the students who were unable to pay monthly tuition fees at the parents meeting which was an unofficial way of fee collection. Officially the staff are the only responsible persons for collecting fees and they have to achieve their monthly target regularly because it matters in their PMS. Sometimes BM also collected the fees if PO/FO was absent. A finding showed that, teacher sometimes was involved in these activities too. Usually, teacher lived in the school locality, therefore sometimes parents paid tuition fees to the teacher and then when PO visited the school teacher then handover this money to him. So it has been established as mutual understanding among the staff and teachers, although teachers perceived it as a burden.

This FM Policy-2016 has also mentioned financial documentation guideline. The policy says, after receiving monthly fees staff will provide money receipt immediately. Money receipt must have three copies one for parents/ guardian, second one for office and third one for accounts division (Clause: 1.5) and fees collection money receipt must be accompanied with parents'/ guardian's signature (Clause: 1.15). So writing money receipt and distributing these among the parents is one of the major activities. At the beginning of the model staff took the fee and noted it down in their dairy but after two to three months later they received money receipt book which helped them to collect fees because parents were not comfortable to pay tuition fees without any money receipt or evidence. This also helped the staff to kept record. The first money receipt book was traditional non- duplicable, therefore staff had to write the same things three times for each student. In that previous format, staff had to spend a lot of time to write the receipt books for 30 to 33 students.



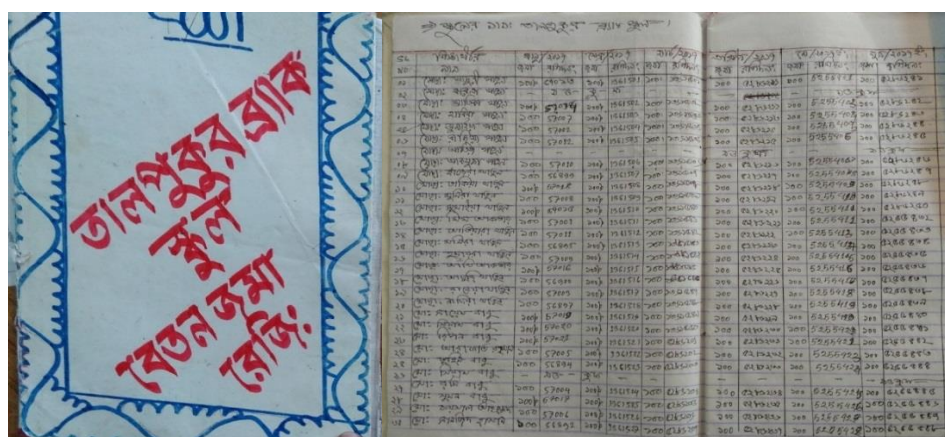
Picture 10. Previous money receipt book



Picture 11. Present money receipt book

To prevent this, from the beginning of the year 2017 BEP has introduced new carbonless duplicable money receipt book (with three different colours) which helps them to save time. Each copy is different in colours thus one can easily identify which copy belong to whom. However, teachers are still involved with writing money receipt.

FM Policy-2016 also mentions Monthly tuition fees collection information must be documented in school fees register book along with the information of each student's name and payment amount. This registry book must be accompanied with signatures of both staff and teacher. This registry book must be comprised with money receipt number and date and staff will take responsibility for doing this alone (Clause: 1.7). Related staff must entry collected money information to the office registry book and then deposit collected money to the accounts department through branch manager. (Clause: 1.9). Moreover, while depositing money into the accounts staff must have to collect a received copy along with accountant's signature and will preserve these (Clause: 1.16).



Picture 12. School monthly register book

Staff were not allowed to preserve the collected money for more than three working days and were encouraged to deposit the collected money at the end of each day. The SBM especially advised the staff not preserve money to themselves. In this regard, he said to them,

“bokeya taka mane durshito taka. eti hariye gele apnake nij theke dite hobe tai ami bar bar boli jeno apni jhamelay na poren. jediner taka sedin e joma den ar Jodi accounts closed hoye jay tobe por din joma diye field e jan”.

[Due money means contaminated money. If it is lost you have to pay it from yourself. I therefore reminds you again and again so that you don't have to face any problems. Deposit the collected money in the day of collection. If you find the accounts closed deposit it next day before you move for the field.]

Another guideline regarding preserving some documents on schools reached at the field through email on 21 April 2017 (BEP, 2017c). Senior Manager, BPPS sent this. It was mentioned there that, schools collecting fees from 2016 would have to preserve the following document at school - students' attendance register, students assessment register, fee collection register, all evidence of school opening, evidence of appointing teacher, approval of providing waiver, receipt book of fee collection, records of cash receipt, evidence of account deposit. Monitoring and audit department may want to check these documents. So these should be

preserved, guided in the circular. Another circular was sent on 9 May 2017 stating that weekly financial report should be sent to the RM by email within 5:00 pm of each Thursday (BEP, 2017d).

মাসিক আর্থিক হারিসেবন										
অঞ্চল/এলাকা :				মাস:		রেজেষ্ট্রি কোড:		তারিখ:		
সি.	খ.	জামা/এলাকা	ক্রমিক	পেশন / জরত মিস	প্রদান মিস	পরীক্ষার মিস	চারিত মাসের টিউশন মিস	চলতি মাসের এ পর্যন্ত টিউশন মিস	পূর্ণের মাসের পরামো জমা	চলতি মাসের পরিমো জমা
১	১	১								

Picture 13. Monthly financial statement format

Picture 14. Branch registry book

Picture 15. Monthly cash deposit receipt

Picture 16. Branch monthly account statement

This guideline also stated that, money could not be taken from the school teachers for monthly refreshers training (Clause: 1.8). Money should not be collected on the day of textbook distribution (Clause: 1.10). In each month the AM will ensure completing the process thoroughly and the RM will perform regular follow-up and monitoring (Clause: 1.12). During the inspection of branch office, RM will check fees collection registry book, their accuracy of debit-credit and entered codes. S/he will confirm to send a financial report within 10th day of the month to the Head office (Clause: 1.13). End of the month Branch Manager will calculate the monthly fee collection and prepared the financial report. Meanwhile, he will also check money receipt, student wise collection register and ledger book (Clause: 1.14). Every year new students can be admitted in the BPS subject to available vacancy. In this case, admission test will be taken for eligibility and admit according to their appropriate age. Admission fee and running month's tuition fees must be collected and further goes according to general rules (Clause: 1.18). Following materials will be not provided for primary schools – slate, slate pencil, colour pencil, pen, sharpener, pencil, white paper and so on. The cost will be bared by parents/guardian (Clause: 1.20).

4.5 Trends observed in monthly tuition fee collection

The following graph outlines the comparison between the month wise target and collection of tuition fees in a branch over the year 2016. In general, it reveals that the tuition fees actual target was started from March 2016 and collection of fees were started from April 2016.

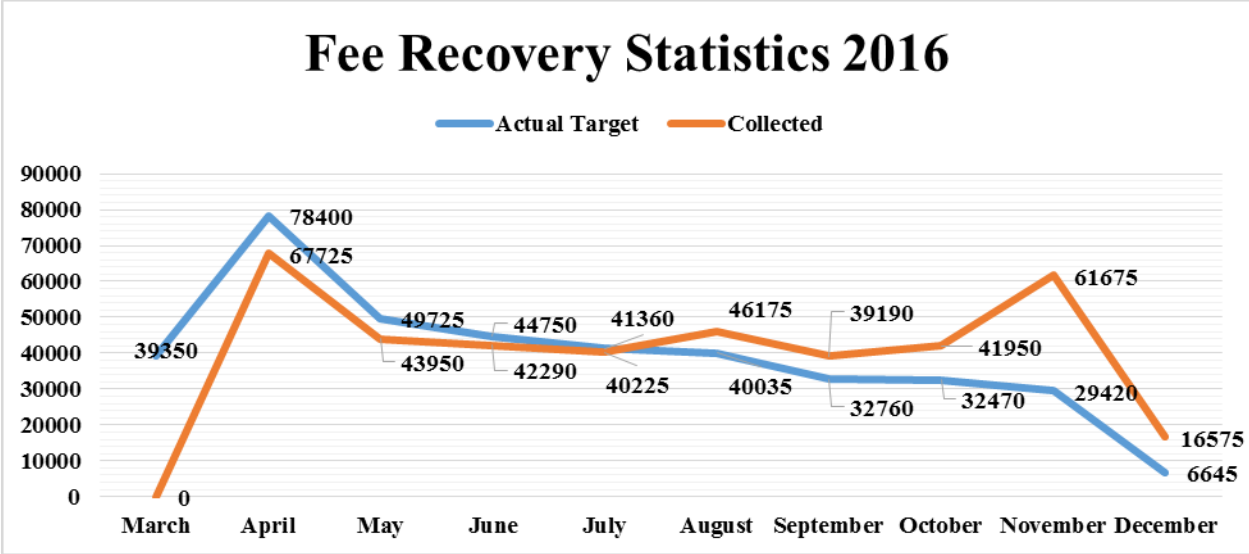


Figure 5. Monthly fees collection trend in 2016

The actual target was BDT 78400 only and collection was BDT 67725 only in April 2017. So, it seems that the collection was less than actual target and gradually this distance has been reduced. From August 2016 the opposite scenario has been observed and this trend continued until December 2016. So from this trend, we can suggest that at the beginning of the year the tuition fees collection rate may decrease but at the middle of the year this distance may gradually reduce and opposite trend may happen. The following graph outlines represent 2017's tuition fee collection recovery trend.

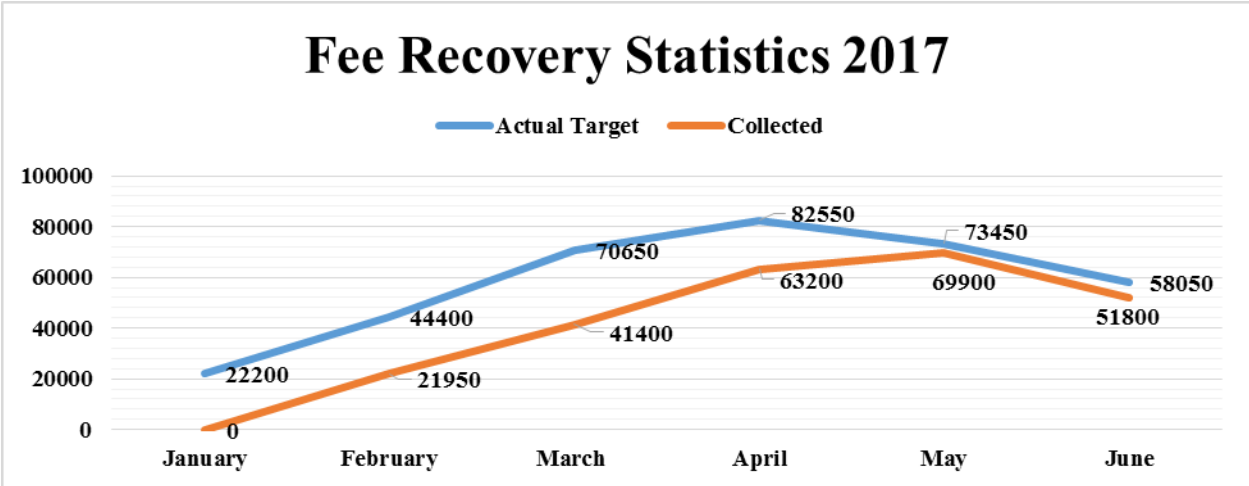


Figure6. Monthly fees collection trend in 2017

From this graph we can observe that in 2017, tuition fees collection was started from January, 2017 and fees collection was started from the month of February, 2017. We can also see the same trend compare with 2016 that the gap between the actual target and collection amount has been reduced.

Chapter-5 Update of BPS's implementation plan-2017

Being aligned with BEP's Annual Operating Plan of 2017 each of the components of BEP prepared their individual yearlong implementation plans (BEP, 2017e). There were five major components in the plan including Critical Success Factors (CSFs), Performance Indicators (PIs), risks, risks mitigation and some compliance issues which all the components of BEP i.e., BPS, BPPS, *Shishu Niketan*, ECD, PACE and Demo Secondary School identified individually.

In this exercise, the programme associated staff attended a two days long workshop at Savar BCDM. Two consultants facilitated this workshop. They explained the characteristics of the components of the plan and accordingly the programme specific responsible persons worked in a group and drafted their yearlong implementation plan within a day. Each of the programmes presented their implementation plan and the others shared their opinions and comments regarding the plan. Later on, the consultants provided little feedback on the activities.

In case of BPS, the implementation plan consisted of four critical success factors (CSFs). For each of the CSFs, some performance indicators (PI) were identified. The PIs were accompanied with a fixed timeline for achieving the target. Overall risks and ways of risk mitigation for each of the CSFs were mentioned in the implementation plan also. This section would provide a six monthly update of the branch's experiences regarding the implementation of the plan at field level for Non-formal Primary School programme.

5.1. Implementation of CSF-1: Improve learning Quality

In terms of quality aspect, much importance has been given in BPS implementation plan of 2017. The first critical success factor was written as "improve learning quality". Four performance indicators were associated with this CSF.

The first indicator was inscribed as "prepare workbook for grade V students on problem solving, reasoning and critical thinking". According to the plan, this task was supposed to be completed within May 2017 which in reality also happened. The Deputy Manager Quality along with the LAMP unit and HRLD were the responsible group to accomplish this task.

According to the HO staff, development and dissemination of materials were vital tasks for quality improvement. Sometimes delayed decision making and late approval of budget hindered timely preparation of materials and delivery of these at the field. An example in case of pre-primary education programme can be presented here. Jane Bursey in November 2016 conducted an assessment of some programmes of BEP. Pre-primary education programme was one of them. He recommended introducing an English learning material at field level as huge demand was obtained from the field for enhancing kids' English language skill (Bursey, 2016).

To work according to this recommendation it was necessary to start preparing the materials immediately after the study because it was expected that the materials would reach at schools before January and in the meantime teachers and field staff should also be oriented on this material. However, this did not happen practically because it took March to get the approval of the budget. Preparing budget took a long time at BEP's end too. Without the approval of budget, it was not possible to initiate preparing the materials because so many costs were associated with this practise. The FO reported that they received the workbook in June 2017. These had

been sent to the area office. The workbooks were distributed then to branch level from the area office.

5.1.1. Implementation of the workbooks at classroom

There were two workbooks. Workbook-1 is for Bangla, math and religious study. Workbook-2 contains the subjects like science, English and, Bangladesh and global studies. To provide an example of the process of using workbook the FO mentioned that, after teaching a story from the textbook teacher assigned a task to the students from the workbooks. Workbooks help to understand what learners had learned after studying a particular topic. For example, there is a chapter in grade five Bangla textbook "*ei desh ei manush*". The teacher discusses this prose at class and when she completes reading the text she instructs the learners to open the specific page of the workbook where topic related exercises were given such as; choosing the right answer, writing summary and synonyms, forming sentences and so on.

Observed data revealed that, learners used workbook at school. They sat in three rows. According to the teacher's instruction, they write answer of the exercise in a workbook using their pen. The teacher provides specific time and moves around the classroom while learners worked.

The staff believed that these workbooks were developed mainly for assessment purpose. They opined that these were nothing but a continuation of study beyond the government provided textbooks which meant after completing any topic from the textbook learners would use the workbooks.

In response to the question why workbooks were provided the FO reported that, they usually received guidebook during the PECE examination. In their area, a guidebook named "*prottasha*" was provided. In some other areas, another guidebook called "*shikhon*" was provided. The learners thoroughly studied the guidebook and sometimes got reluctant to textbook being over dependent on the guidebook. Over dependency on guidebook created some problems. For example, creative questions are used in PECE which the learners studied from the provided guidebook. During examination, some questions were selected out of that guidebook. When they met those uncommon questions they got afraid and could not write the answer. Many good category learners also felt in this trap. But if they understood the textbooks well they could make good result by answering any type of questions.

The workbook contains some sample questions as PECE. So when students practise these questions more and more they would be able to answer such types of questions easily in the exam, opined by the FO.

The workbooks created an opportunity for self-learning. No answer was provided in the workbook, only questions were there. The learners were instructed to solve these by themselves. The teacher was instructed not to help the learners in writing answers. Her job was to ensure that the learners did not copy from each other. They were allowed to make mistake. According to the FO making mistakes frequently would help them to realize that they should go back to textbook for proper learning. In this way, they would be interested in reading textbooks. It was a remedy for controlling learners' over dependency on guidebook too.

The FO was reminded that, the guidebooks also contained such questions. In that case, the counter logic from FO through which he rationalize the inclusion of workbook was that, the

guidebooks contained less number of questions, on the other hand, a good number of creative questions are included in the workbooks for different subjects which helped the learners to practise more. Another argument was that, the workbooks brought balance. Guidebooks of different brands were considered to provide among different zones of the country. Learning experiences of the learners varied because of the variations in guidebooks and the number of familiar questions also varied in PECE. After the arrival of workbooks learners of different locations could learn and practise in a similar way as same workbooks were provided.

Implementation of the workbooks in the classroom was challenging for the teachers. They were not provided with any training on the use of the workbooks. A preliminary orientation was given on a special refresher training but that was not enough to understand a new material properly. Using the workbooks was not easy for the teachers most of the time. Teachers opined that if the answers were given then it would be more comfortable for them to use the workbooks. The FO in this regards reflected his own perception. According to him basic knowledge of the BRAC schools teachers were not very strong. As BRAC paid a little it was difficult for them to find any qualified teacher than the current ones. He mentioned that the teachers experienced difficulties while using the workbooks. In his words,

“teacher ra himshim khay ei workbook bebohar korte giye. Ei branch er du ek jon chara baki sob teacher er obostha e kharap”.

[Teachers struggle to use the workbooks. Except a few, teachers under this branch are not in satisfactory condition.]

When the FO was asked to explain the process of helping teachers to solve the workbooks related problems he mentioned that, while the teachers could not understand the questions and failed to identify the correct answers by their own they reported those problems to the PO or FO while they visited the schools or the teachers attended the refresher. If the solution was known to the staff they immediately helped the teachers and if not then brought those particular problems to their study cycle for discussion where all the FOs and POs participated. If the solution was not found from study cycle then SBM was communicated for a solution. If still struggled for a solution then the problems were shared with the quality manager. In this approach, measures were taken to solve the workbook related problem.

Teachers usually faced difficulties in mathematics and English. Especially in solving creative questions they felt nervous, stated by the FO. When they were to work with answering the short questions and other problems of unseen passages in English they struggled badly. For mathematics, solving competency based items were challenging to the teachers. Among the four sections of the competency based questions they could easily solve the first two sections but in later two they felt huge difficulties. Not only the teachers but the learners also felt comfortable in first two sections but hurdle in the next two. Basically, the first two parts of creative questions demanded lower level thinking skill of Bloom taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) i.e remembering information and understanding of simple problems whereas the latter two required upper order thinking skills such as the analytical capability to solve the problems for which both the groups faced problem.

Another issue was, adjusting the use of workbooks with their regular course of activities. The workbooks reached in June 2017. Prior to that, the teacher and the learners were not habituated with using the workbooks. On a sudden, it was a bit difficult to adjust to using the workbooks because learners did not solve such problems earlier as these were selected from out of

textbooks. Before June 2017 a large portion of the textbooks were completed in classrooms as classes were started from January. However, these contents related problems were not solved in workbooks. So, a lot more tasks remained undone. To cope with the situation some guidelines were given by the head office during the branch managers' meeting with the senior manager of BEP. The senior manager advised to spend some extra times in each Thursday on solving the untouched problems of the workbooks. The teacher alternatively solved the problems of workbooks 1 and 2 in consecutive Thursdays.

About the use of workbooks, the staff showed positive attitude. According to them, the workbooks had been helpful to enhance learners reading habit of textbooks and they expected that practising the problems of workbooks would help the learners to cut good result in PECE because they had been able to align themselves with the question types. The FO reported that the teacher also appreciated using workbooks despite her limitations in using these. Both teacher and FO observed that learners also tried to adapt with the workbooks.

Some printing issues were found in the workbooks according to the FO. Some pages were missing in about 50-60 workbooks. In case of such problems, the staff exchanged the copy depending on availability, if not, then they instructed the learners to write the missing part from the others one. Through this process, the problems might be solved and simultaneously a value of sharing resources would also be built among the learners, the FO opined.

Development of this book was comparatively difficult because so many exercises were required to include as like as the PECE examination syllabus covered. Students were allowed to make mistakes again and again to learn from that through studying the textbooks. Teachers' role in this process was to review the tasks done by the learners.

It is difficult to develop and disseminate the materials but it is even more difficult to follow up the implementation of these materials. Experience shows that the staff and the teachers sometimes don't give importance to these materials. Many factors are associated with this especially the issue of staff' excessive engagement in fee collection, opined by the HO and field staff.

The second PI of first CSF was stated as "provide specialist training to teachers on Math, English and Science. As like as the workbook project the same team consisted of the Deputy Manager Quality along with LAMP and HRLD was responsible for this. According to the implementation plan, this task was expected to be finished within May to August of 2017. During the field visit in July 2017 the teacher did not receive such training. However earlier she received subject based specialized training. According to the HO staff, this specialized training was an ongoing one and teachers who already received this training won't receive it again during the mentioned time frame in the implementation plan of the year 2017.

The third PI was written as "98% students pass PECE and transfer rate of 90% to mainstream secondary schools". The FO and the Senior Manager were responsible persons to achieve this indicator. According to the plan within December 2017 the pass rate would be known and within January to February of 2018, the desired percentage of students would be admitted to the secondary schools.

The fourth PI of the first CSF was related to formative assessment practise and was written as "strengthening formative assessment system through developing the skill of teachers on competency based question". Timeline for achieving this indicator was May to December 2017. To look after this task the deputy manager quality and the senior manager were responsible.

Already an international consultant came and visited BPS, SN and ESP schools and shared his observation regarding formative assessment practises in these schools with BEP. The report has already been submitted but field level implementation of the recommendations was not observed during the visit.

5.2. Implementation of CSF-2: Opening and continuation of targeted primary schools

The second critical success factor was written as “open and continue targeted primary schools with planned enrolment and retention. To assess this CSF two indicators were selected such as;

1. 2,111 primary schools remain operational in cost recovery approach with 52,725 students, 1842 remain operational in philanthropy approach for 46,050 marginalized children;
2. Open 1000 new schools in urban areas and 300 schools in other HRT areas with 33800 students and will operational (enrol 50% girls, at least one PWD children in each school and inclusion of ethnic children in ethnic areas (1%).

The Field Operation (FO), Senior Manager and Manager Urban were responsible persons to satisfy these two indicators. Schools have been opened according to the target and their operation is going on.

5.3. Implementation of CSF-3: Generate 19% cost recovery

This CSF was expected to be measured with respect to three performance indicators. these were

1. Tracking monthly expenditure to remain within budget
2. Achieve targeted fees as per budget
3. Develop financial and supervision guideline for the school supervision

For ensuring the proper implementation of the three mentioned PIs the responsible authorities were the Field Operation, Senior Manager. While preparing the financial and supervision guideline for the school supervisor the accounts section of BRAC contributed. Tracking of monthly expenditure and achieving of targeted fees as per budget are a yearlong ongoing process. BPS’s achievement was 105.21% in terms of fee collection. To remain updated with these two indicators data were necessary. Field level data were sent by the AM on each Thursday. According to the opinion of a senior manager, the data were preserved through a MIS and they could obtain their necessary data from the system. He mentioned about a problem as well regarding the use of MIS. Sometimes data were inputted in wrong code which caused some mismanagements. The third PI was about developing financial and supervision guideline for the school supervisor. According to the plan, this document was expected to be prepared within April 2017. It was surprising that no point was mentioned in the plan about its dissemination in the field. During observation, no financial and supervision guideline was found in the branch except one of 2016.

5.4. Implementation of CSF-4: Improve staff capacity

The need of staff’ capacity building got importance in BEP’s AOP of 2017. Hence in the implementation plan, it secured priority too. Two main indicators were adopted to achieve this

CSF. The first indicator was stated as “training of staff on revised imperative teaching-learning training modules for addressing current skill”. Within October 2017 these training were expected to be provided to the staff. Up to June 2017, 20% of these training were provided at the field. According to the staff, they participated in a five days long training covering the contents of child psychology, pedagogy, communicative skills and early childhood. They reported that, the trainers of BLC provided them the training. According to the HO staff, such training was designed to bring positive change in the teaching-learning process through orienting the teachers and staff with the modern pedagogy. The staff were happy with the delivery of the training. They reported that they could learn new concepts. However, the duration of the training was not adequate for such huge contents, mentioned by the staff. It was observed that the staff had dissatisfaction regarding the reduced duration of the training. Referring to subject based training provided by the QF, the staff reported that, initially the duration of these training was seven days which later reduced to five days and presently squeezed to three days. They opined that, three days training did not add much value to their understanding of the contents rather it put pressure on them while internalizing the contents.

The second PI in this regards was stated as “develop business thinking packages for field staff (at least 70%) through coaching and mentoring”. The senior sector specialist with LAMP unit and HRLD collectively were designated to achieve this indicator within May to December 2017. Comparatively, much progress was noticed in this indicator. According to the six monthly update of the implementation plan 70% staff received this training from HRLD. About the contents of the training, the staff reported that they received skill development training, particularly in product selling and negotiation. Another important aspect of the training was to build positive mindset up towards cost recovery approach.

Two days long training was provided to the staff to develop their business thinking capacity. Analysing the training contents it was found that in the first day discussion held on the basic concept and rationale of social enterprise model and social enterprise skill development. Skills in communication, negotiation, sales and marketing were the point of discussion for social enterprise skill development part. On the second day of the training consisted of a discussion on customer service, time management and financial management strategy.

According to the staff, the training was provided in an interactive mode. Collaborative learning activity like group work was assigned to them. Videos were shown as per the requirement while delivering the content. For example, the product selling related video was shown where the seller could not sell the products but he did not give up and once he could sell. Though the staff admired the training but again they complained about its duration. To them, the schedule was overloaded with contents. They thought they need more training to master the business skills. Besides the CSF some compliance issues were there in the implementation plan. These are,

- enrolling marginalized children and covering hard to reach area including gender, ethnicity and PWD in school;
- maintaining 10% waiver;
- ensuring better sanitation facilities including toilets and safe drinking water in all schools
- emphasizing on child protection

Data revealed that the compliance issues have been satisfactorily maintained in the schools. Waiver option has been properly applied in the case school where three out of thirty students

received a waiver. Attached toilet was also there in usable condition. Arrangement for safe drinking water was ensured by setting a water filter inside the school.

In the previous chapters, some aspects of staff satisfaction have been reflected already. Hence omitting the repetition three key aspects of staff' perception including quality of education, operational challenges and job satisfaction would be discussed here.

6.1. Quality of education

Staff defined quality education keeping some indicators in mind. They thought quality education included achieving the terminal competencies, attending schools regularly, ensuring availability of materials and their usage, achieving the capacity to presenting in front of the audience, participating in co-curricular activities and mastering appropriate reading ability with understanding. They argued that prior to cost recovery approach they could concentrate more on quality aspects which helped them to ensure quality education. After adopting cost recovery approach they struggled to this point, they opined.

According to the staff and teacher, learners' attendance at school increased after cost recovery approach but the overall quality of BPS decreased. The AM especially believed that while they operated free of cost primary schools they could prepare children with more quality. To justify her claim she mentioned that she tried to understand a school from a broader point of view for which she had to spend much time in observation, especially the classroom. Many children in grade five schools were identified who struggled to read simple English text. They even could not utter their known words learned in the previous grades. With grief, she stated that overall quality of BRAC schools decreased though quality education was the main identity of BRAC schools once. As the reason of this crisis, the staff stated that they could not provide adequate supervision to the schools as their workload increased a lot.

They sometimes believed that the policymakers did not consider actual field context while making a decision or instructing them. Referring to the instruction of the Executive Director regarding performing quality improvement task at morning and fee collection task at afternoon the AM opined that these tasks were not such easy to do in the real field. The staff had to visit many schools and doing both the tasks in a single day was too difficult.

A group of teachers mentioned that their engagement in financial activities hampered the quality of the teaching-learning process. According to them, they had to take extra pressure regarding organizing parents meeting, sometimes several parents meetings in a month. Sometimes they had to talk to children individually in the classroom for ensuring the collection of tuition fees. As they prepared money receipt they had to spend huge time. Taking such extra hassles they struggled to invest their full concentration in classroom teaching-learning process.

Contrary to the staff most of the parents in FGD expressed their satisfaction towards the quality of education of BRAC schools. In their way of argument, they emphasized on some indication through which they assessed the quality of education. These were the beautiful hand writing of the children, the capacity of memorizing the text, understanding the Bangla joint letter, performing well in sports and learning cleanliness in real life.

Parents even did not complain about the infrastructure of the school. They believed that, BRAC schools' seating arrangement was healthier than others. To justify their belief they argued that, children at GPS sat on benches being congested because three to four students sat together.

As a result, they could not move which may cause a physical problem in future. On the other hand children in BPS sat in bigger space and could enjoy physical movement as they wish.

6.2. Operational Challenges

At the beginning of cost recovery approach, the most challenging tasks for the staff was to approach monthly tuition fees to the parents. As a result of the staff' hard work, this situation is changed now. The staff confidently argued that the parents were aware of paying tuition fees. Staff' continuous efforts made the parents realized that paying tuition fees for children was a pleasure and a matter of dignity. After a year of cost recovery approach, parents are now mentally prepared that, they would have to pay for their children education- the staff opined. It's a positive shift in parental attitude towards paying fees.

Parents in FGD also showed their changed perception regarding paying monthly tuition fees. They reported that initially, they were too rigid to pay tuition fees but the way the staff explained the reasons convinced them. They did not have any complain regarding paying tuition fee at BRAC schools because in other schools they had to pay even more. For private tuition purpose, they had to pay an amount while their children studied at another school. So challenges regarding fee collection reduced over the year.

However, the staff believed that they required more training on cost recovery approach because many staff were not being able to play their role appropriately for lack of knowledge and motivation about cost recovery approach. They also opined that in the changed situation cost recovery approach was not strongly established yet. The challenges regarding the approach varied from area to area. According to the staff, to handle such challenges and making an instant decision regarding those more capable human resources were necessary.

According to the staff, cost recovery approach put huge workload on their shoulder. As the number of schools increased the associated tasks were also added in their responsibilities. In this circumstance, they had to stay extra hours at the office. This burden of work hampered their effort of providing quality service because distance among the schools is increased now. They had to remain busy for a long time regarding fee collection which limited the scope of school supervision-only 1.5 visits per school per month. The workload inversely impacted in their personal life too because they could spend less time with family. One staff in this regard mentioned that, his 11 years old daughter decided not to serve BRAC in future because her father struggled a lot to satisfy BRAC's expectations and they missed him.

The staff reported that after adopting cost recovery approach many competitors emerged including their ex-colleagues and some NGOs. Recently many BRAC staff lost their job. Of them, some were from BEP including the teachers. Some NGOs and ex-BRAC staff hired those teachers and opened schools branding their expertise. They also influenced the parents mentioning that- BRAC was not in a stable state to educate their children, BRAC was in crisis for which they charged tuition fee and BRAC even could not pay salary to its staff for which many lost jobs. Referring this situation they tried to inject an idea to the parents that BRAC would not be able to provide quality education to their children. Such circumstances challenged the staff to operate the programme.

Being inspired by BRAC tradition, parents demanded free of cost materials for their children from the beginning of the cost recovery approach. Without convincing them towards BPS it was difficult to operate the programme under cost recovery approach. Recently BEP provided some

materials to the learners of grade IV and V including school bag, writing notebook, pen, pencil, and geometry box and so on. The teacher and the staff opined that providing such materials shifted parental perception towards a positive direction for cost recovery approach. They believed that after providing the materials, fee collection became much easier.

6.3. Job satisfaction

Staff' job satisfaction has been crucial in cost recovery approach. Though the staff showed respect and gratefulness to BRAC for its contribution to their lives, most of them were not satisfied with their current grade, slab, obtained salary and job security.

The staff already spent a large time with BRAC and became dependent on BRAC for their livelihood. In such situation, the job was too valuable to them. Some even could not think of alternative job because of their age. Such circumstance did not keep any other choice left for them but adjusting to the current change of operation. Staff opined that they sometimes even worked against their mind. Though they initially felt mental disturbance regarding cost recovery approach, but slowly they had to adopt the strategies to cope with this approach. So, from not a very welcoming point of view but from a livelihood requirement they deal with the cost recovery approach. To survive in this changed operational mode they worked hard, became successful to a good extent but their job satisfaction was poor.

Comparing themselves with other programme's colleagues they portrayed the inequalities they had been experiencing regarding grades and slabs distribution. Referring to the micro-finance staff they argued that, micro-finance staff earned money based on providing loan whereas education programme earned money even not offering any kind of financial benefit to the community. In spite of this clear difference, the slabs were offered to the micro-finance staff. Referring to *DABI* programme the SBM mentioned that, overtime's benefit and incentives were offered to the staff of *DABI* programme but there was nothing like that for the education staff. They opined that, if the capable staff were acknowledged and rewarded for their hard work during cost recovery approach they would have been more inspired to perform better.

Also, salary structure did not satisfy the staff while they analyzed their workload. They thought that along with them teacher's salary and benefits should also be increased. Interestingly the teacher was satisfied with what she got from BRAC. However, she reported that the community people thought she should be paid more because she worked really hard for the learners. Though she was not unhappy at that moment, but she expressed her wish of having a higher salary.

One added frustration regarding their job was its insecurity in recent time. The staff opined that with such vulnerable condition of their job security it was difficult for them to concentrate on their tasks. In this point, one staff opined that it was really painful when they worked hard with limited facilities but at the end suffered from job insecurity. Such insecurity killed their motivation to work with sincerity- the staff opined.

Chapter-7

Conclusion and Policy Implication

The strategic transformation from philanthropy to cost recovery approach is a huge cultural swing in operational process of BRAC non-formal primary education programme. This transition brought a huge change in the perception of staff and community. It challenged the staff, raised their level of frustration and pushed them to adapt with the new fashion of BEP for the sake of their job.

The late notification of cost recovery approach caused huge challenges for the field staff which shortly reached to its peak. BRAC appeared newly to the community which they even could not imagine. Many refused to pay tuition fee and raised questions on the values of BRAC because by tradition the poor received free education services from BRAC.

However, this hard situation came under control as a result of the continuous effort of the field staff. Initially, BRAC sent a policy regarding cost recovery approach but did not train the staff on how to approach the change to the beneficiaries. Through team work they discovered some ways to approach the changed model to the community which included some logical arguments and business speech regarding cost recovery approach. Such sorts of initiatives prove staff' innovative capacity as well as their strength of survival in the era of strategic transformation.

To establish the model socially and financially the field staff embraced a huge workload which impacted severely in their professional and personal lives. A prolonged financial process started from fee collection to deposit it to the accounts charged maximum time of a working day. However, they coped with the situation to save their jobs but the issue of job satisfaction was questioned. Most staff' job satisfaction level was poor which means they continued with less motivation but much pressure on their shoulder. For long term sustainability of the Programme, such kinds of staff may not be effective. But as they demonstrated their survival capacity in a hard time it can be believed that they are capable to cope with the change. In such situation, it is necessary to enhance their skills and motivation towards cost recovery approach. If this is done they would be an asset for BRAC during this transition.

Job nature of the staff changed a lot. Financial affairs instead of quality assurance got priority to them for survival in BRAC. To concentrate on fee collection they could not manage adequate time for school monitoring and supervision. Their discussion also shifted to monetary matter rather than classroom teaching-learning enhancement. The frequency of school monitoring and supervision decreased which is a huge threat for ensuring quality education because adequate, rigorous, inclusive and continuous monitoring is a vital component of any education programme as argued by Kayani, et. al., in 2011. Moreover, teacher's quality and staff' skills in supervising teachers are other vital issues. Hence staff development approach is a serious consideration. The decrease of duration for refreshers' training caused the teachers to struggling while absorbing loads of contents in short training period. It should be kept in mind that, in case of financial sustainability issue of the programme, the aspects of fee collection and quality of service come simultaneously because without ensuring quality service it is difficult to ensure fee collection from the community (Babu & Rahman, 2016).

With many challenges, cost recovery approach simultaneously unfolded some scopes as well which were significant from various points of view. It empowered parents to raise questions regarding their children education. The parents hardly expressed their mind when they did not pay. Contrary to that era now they ask questions to the school teacher and staff about their

children educational status. Parental awareness increased, as a result children attendance in the classroom also increased. Parental attendance in parents' meeting also improved. Moreover, parents now feel dignified because they pay for their children education. To reach this big success proper communication with community played a vital role. Learning from previous research on cost recovery approach (Babu & Rahman, 2016) and experience of the year 2016 helped BEP to prioritize some areas to work on. Communication aspect was one of that. Repeated communication with the staff and parents helped to draw a kind of positive perception regarding the changed process at the field level.

Parental willingness to pay increased and despite of their financial condition they pay tuition fees regularly. Though the participant parents of this study did not show that much negative attitude regarding BRAC schools but parental demands for better infrastructure and highly educated teachers are still there. A recent study found that the economic and educational backgrounds of the household heads did not significantly impact on parental willingness to pay for BPS but their willingness to admit children in BPS significantly decreased with the increase of their economic and education status (Babu & Hossain, 2017). Therefore for securing financial sustainability measure should be taken to attract the parents of higher economic and education background. Improving school infrastructure and recruiting more qualified teacher might help in this regard.

The progress on implementation plan-2017 up to July was satisfactory. The recovery rate is impressive. But, it should not be forgotten that, staff' effort without job satisfaction brought that high recovery. A demotivated staff being bound to the system can bring success but there is no guarantee that this success would be sustainable. Only motivated and dedicated staff can do that for the organisation.

Finally, it could be concluded that, compared to 2016, cost recovery approach is more stable now at the field. Society is now more aware and willing to pay but a number of issues are there which stand as big questions for the sustainability of the programme. The whole process is required to be reviewed keeping the findings of the study in mind.

Based on the data and above discussion some suggestions are presented in the next section for the further enhancement of the programme.

A. Confirming proper planning before any change

The most challenging task for the field staff regarding cost recovery approach was adjusting with it on a sudden because the model did not reach at the field in a planned way. For smooth operation at the field, BEP would require to ensure that the future strategic policy and plan are made on time and disseminated at the field with keeping a considerable time in hand before the implementation started. Enough time should be spent while preparing the plans. Field staff should be engaged more during the planning stage to turn the plan into a more practical one.

B. Ensuring staff' motivation on cost recovery approach

Staff' motivation seriously lacked towards cost recovery approach. The measure should be taken to enhance their motivation. Doing things by force is a risk. A motivated staff is an asset in this approach. Orientation and training programme should be designed in such way that not only emphasize on understanding the reason of the changes but also believing on that.

C. Organizing staff' capacity building programme effectively

At the beginning, the staff presented the model to the community without having any kinds of training on business or marketing strategy. They had to struggle hard to establish the model. From this situation BEP realized the importance of staff' capacity building on marketing strategies. New training has been introduced on that but its duration is not appropriate according to its ambition. Hence BEP might think of either reducing contents or increasing training duration for obtaining an effective result.

D. Defining quality education and determining USP

Experience shows that parents emphasized on quality of education while the issue of payment derived. There should be a clear definition from BEP's end regarding "quality education". According to that definition, USP should be determined for BPS. Without having a visible and clear difference with other competitors in market it might be difficult to achieve the financial sustainability of the programme. These should be repeatedly communicated and discussed with the community. This would protest many propaganda that other NGOs and ex-BRAC staff spread.

E. Emphasizing on teacher's pedagogical content knowledge enhancement

The teacher is the key to ensure quality teaching-learning at BPS. With the change in curriculum, many new contents and exercises have been included. Teacher struggled to deal with these. Especially they suffered to prepare and solve creative questions for Mathematics and English. Also in classroom observation, it was found that teacher had lack of content knowledge and pedagogical representation of the contents. Teacher development approach therefore should provide adequate scopes for the teacher to enhance their content knowledge, classroom communication skill, assessment skill and classroom management skill.

F. Increasing duration of refreshers' training

Current congested schedule of refreshers' training did not contribute effectively to improve teacher's capacity and quality of classroom teaching-learning process. This one day training with huge contents' load created a haphazard situation. BEP might think to extend the duration of the training.

G. Freeing teachers from the financial operation

Circulars have been sent several times to keep the teachers out of fee collection process. However, teachers are still engaged there. This took out teaching time and put extra workload which hindered classroom teaching-learning process. This issue, therefore, should be strictly looked at.

H. Enhancing staff' supervision capacity

The pressure of fee collection limited scopes of school supervision by the staff which resulted in decreasing the quality of classroom-teaching learning. They had lack of skills as well for supervision of the schools. So from now, staff' capacity building programme should emphasize on how to adjust the supervision task with fee collection simultaneously. Ensuring staff' expertise on the content knowledge should also be the priority of the capacity building initiatives.

I. Improving staff' job satisfaction

Initiatives should be taken to improve staff' job satisfaction otherwise they would not be motivated towards cost recovery approach. Possible benefits should be provided generously. Award could be offered for the best performing staff to increase their work inspiration.

J. Providing counselling to the staff to come out from frustration

Cost recovery approach impacted heavily on staff' professional and personal life. Sometimes they felt deprived compared to other programmes' staff. Such kinds of feelings increased their mental stress. In such situation, counselling could be provided to them to come out from the restless state of mind and to be satisfied with their role.

K. Simplifying financial operation process

A number of steps are associated with the overall fee collection process which demanded huge working duration from the staff and teachers. For the financial transaction, an alternative approach should be exercised. Transaction through *Bkash* might be a solution. Staff' role in this regard might be assisting parents in opening *Bkash* account and sending money through it.

L. Strengthening data management of BEP

In the era of cost recovery reliable data on financial and school operational issues is highly important. Some mismanagement in data handling was observed. Moreover, money sometimes was deposited in wrong code which caused mismatching. In such situation, both field and base office staff should be provided with adequate training on data management.

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