

**STATUS OF NON FORMAL PRIMARY
EDUCATION (NFPE) AT CHANDINA:
A Baseline Survey**

**M Nazmul Haq
Feroza Begum
Shaheen Akter**

**Research and Evaluation Division
BRAC, Dhaka
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1.0. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Chandina Learning Improvement Project

In order to educate the neglected poor as well as the school dropouts BRAC initiated a program of non-formal education for them. This program started in 1985 with 22 experimental schools and now it has come to an established figure of more than 34 thousand schools. As the scheme provides primary education through non formal approach it is designated as Non Formal Primary Education (NFPE). The NFPE program complements the government's Universal Primary Education Program with one of the aim of eradicating illiteracy from the society. The program was designed to impart education through one teacher schooling and making the classroom interesting to the children.

BRAC operates two models of NFPE school based on children's age. The first one is NFPE for children of 8 to 10 years, and the second one is Basic Education for Older Children (BEOC) for 11 to 14 years age. These children are either been never enrolled or dropped from school prior to completion of the primary cycle. New curriculum and text materials have been developed and teachers and supervisors are trained for this program. As the programs move on, it has been realized that the quality of the provisions as well as the product are not truly satisfactory.

So far more than 1.8 million children have been graduated from these schools, a significant number of them availed the opportunity of continuing education in primary as well as secondary schools. Those who could not afford further education left behind with three years of NFPE school experience. Common experience show that though children graduate from NFPE school after long three years they lack certain quality like comprehension, generalization and use of knowledge in other field. Therefore, a new project called Chandina Learning Improvement Project (CLIP) has been conceived with effective and improved schooling and sustainable education.

1.2. The CLIP: A New Project in NFPE

The CLIP is a new experimental project of BRAC-NFPE program. Initially it started with 100 first year and 62 second year school in three thanas (Chandina, Debiddar and Borura) of Comilla district. The major emphasis of the project is on to

improve the qualitative aspects of the existing NFPE curriculum so that the learners of the school can become not only the literate citizens but also human resources of our country. In order to improve the quality of learning CLIP has initiated certain steps within the curriculum. The major shift of the project is to bring the curriculum from teacher-centered to child-centered one. Along with this change, both the learning materials as well as mode of delivery was tailored with the curriculum. More participatory approach has been adopted to create a friendly environment in the school. Make the learners more creative in academic as well as in his personal life. Finally CLIP intends to help students in their overall development through education.

1.3. Purpose of the Survey

The main purpose of the study was to undertake a baseline survey among the teachers, students and guardians regarding their views achievement and current practice in relation to NFPE school.

2.0. METHOD

2.1. Sample of the Study

The survey was conducted in the project area in three thanas under Comilla district. These were Chandina, Barura and Debiddar. From these thanas 15 schools were proportionately selected from three categories of schools, such as first, second and third year schools, on random basis. Thus five first year schools, seven second year and three third year schools were available in the sample. All the learners of the selected school were considered as general sample of the study for determining their educational background and current practice. Ten randomly selected learners from each of the 15 selected schools were tested to determine their language skill in literacy and some aspects of learning ability. Ten available parents from each of the selected schools were interviewed to examine their perception about the school and education. All the teachers of the selected schools were included in the teachers sample for interview. Thus a total of 461 students, 150 parents and 15 teachers were interviewed as sample for the study.

2.2. Survey Instrument

Several data collection instruments were developed for the purpose of this study. These are as follows:

2.3. Background Information Checklist

Three background information checklists for teachers, learners and parents were developed. These Bengali version questionnaires consisted of information of respondents' socio-economic background, their educational attainment and opportunity of exposure to different types of mass media.

2.4. Language Test

Three set of language tests for the children of grades one two and three were developed for assessing their ability of reading, comprehension, sentence making and verbalizing an activity. Besides these skills children's ability in working with groups were also tested for the learners of grade II and III. These tests consisted of five letters for word making, three words for sentence making and a paragraph with few lines for comprehension test. Besides these ability, completion of three partial sentence, matching broken sentence and five opposite words were given for determining the language ability of children.

3.0. RESULTS

The survey results are shown in the following sections according to the different groups of respondents.

3.1. Teachers

A total of 15 teachers were interviewed from three project areas. Majority of the teachers were found relatively young and married, nearly three fourth of them fell bellow 26 years of age and about 80% were found married. Almost all of the spouses of the teachers were involved in some income generating activity including service (27%). When education was considered it was found that about 80% teachers were

either graduated from secondary school (60%) or passed the HSC examination (20%). Most of the teachers lived around the school and it takes them few minutes to reach there, i.e., more than two third³_λ were able to reach school within one to ten minutes.

It was observed in the survey that more than half of the teachers had radio and a one third had television in their house. Which signifies that most of the teachers are exposed to the modern world. Moreover almost all of them were found to know singing (93%) and nearly a half of them claimed to know dancing (53%), which are very wanted skills in NFPE schools. This is important to mention here that most of the teachers obtained these ability of singing and dancing in their basic teacher training course. These skills does not imply that the teachers became good singer or dancer but to use them in class for making learners sing and dance. Examination of teachers reading habits indicates that a large majority of ~~the~~ them had some liking for reading. That is almost all (93%) liked reading story, 73% prefer^{ed}_λ to read poetry and another 67% indicated to enjoy reading either novel or newspaper or magazine articles. This finding shows that teachers are interested in reading provided they have the opportunity of getting those materials. These habits may be utilized in teaching them something required through self-learning modules.

Ability of preparing teaching learning materials is one of the required skill of the NFPE teacher but when asked about their use of this skill at home only a few of them found to have that skill and prepare such materials for use in school. Such as only 1 to 2 out of 15 teachers mentioned that they prepared such materials for the students. However, nearly two third of them claimed to prepare clay materials for the students.

3.2. Guardians

A total of 150 guardians (28% father and 72% mothers) were interviewed for their socio-economic background and perception about NFPE school. Out of them about 62% parents were household worker and 22% were farmers. Among the remaining of the guardians they were either petty traders or manual labors (~~see Appendix Table~~) It was revealed from the survey that nearly three fourth of the guardians rarely visit the school for any reason, while only 16% tend to visit frequently for their children's education. However, large majority of the parents (80%) express

their concern about children's education in the parent-teachers meeting, (Appendix Table...).

The guardians were asked to indicate their views about the change took place in the NFPE children. According to their views more than a quarter (27%) feels that the children learned to talk well after schooling, became more intelligent (18%), able to improve their social manners (15%), increase the respect for elders (13%) etc. (see Table 3.1).

Table: 3.1
Changes in behavior of children due to NFPE schooling

Changes in behavior	Percentage (N = 150)
1. Learned to talk well	36.67
2. Became intelligent	24.67
3. Adopted good manners	20.67
4. Develop respect for the elders	17.33
5. Practice cleanliness	13.33
6. Develop interest to education	12.67
7. Others	10.67

Considering the guardians opinion about the NFPE school and the school children, it appears that they have a quite favorable attitude towards non-formal education and can derive benefit out of the system. However, the qualities developed among the children, as the guardians mentioned, are not yet very encouraging, only around 13% to about 37% of the schooled children adopted new behavior like respect for elders, practice cleanliness, develop interest in education etc. However, these behavior was not cross checked against the duration of stay in NFPE school. So, in order to bring desirable change among the learners of the non-formal school the whole system should be revisited in terms of qualitative output.

3.3. Student's Background

A total of 461 students were available in 15 NFPE schools taking from grade I to grade III. By age these children ranged between 9 and 15 years, of which 90% fall with the age of 12. It was found that out of these 461 children only 39 children (8.45%) had some kind of schooling ranging from one months to about two years.

Considering these figures it may be mentioned that BRAC enroll the unschooled children as well as dropouts from the formal primary school.

Large number of students indicated that they have either radio (45%) or television (7 %) in their home, which means nearly a half of the children are exposed to the mass media. Besides their education large number of the children are engaged in different household work like, cleaning, cooking, cattle rearing, baby sitting etc. The activities of the children are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Involvement of NFPE students in daily activities other than education

Activity	Percentage (N = 461)
1. Baby sitting	30.15
2. Cattle rearing	31.67
3. Assist in the field	22.12
4. Assist in cooking	66.81
5. Household cleaning	60.95
6. Others	18.00

The table above indicates that nearly two third of the children enrolled in NFPE school are engaged in household work and little less than a third are either involved in cattle rearing or baby sitting. These involvement are quite significant to remember while preparing school timing for these children. No such data is available at the moment to compare these figures with the formal school children. However, it may be mentioned that well off parents do not allow their kids to work in house at the cost of their education.

3.4. Language and Verbal Ability

Ten students from each of grade I, II and III were selected from the school. Their language and verbal ability was measured by using a sort of test developed by the research team. The results of the test is given in the following section.

Language ability of the students in reading, sentence making, comprehension etc. are given in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Language ability attained by the students of NFPE school (in %)

Type of test	Grade I N = 50	Grade II N = 60	Grade III N = 40
Word making	94.0	92.0	90.0
Sentence making	94.0	92.0	.....
Comprehension	68.0	75.0	68.0
Sentence correction	.....	43.0	15.0
Sentence matching	.....	58.0	67.0
Telling opposite word	.....	.....	55.0

Table 3.3 indicates that an overwhelming majority of the NFPE children attained the ability of word making and sentence making. In this regard grade one children are more fluent in making words and sentences with a given letter than their higher grader children. One possibility of such fluency is that younger children are less involved in daily activity and their memory is more fresh than the older children in higher grades. The ability of comprehension is not very satisfactory among the children, nearly two third to three fourth of them can comprehend what they read. Unless the children comprehend the materials they read, it is not useful reading. Test of sentence correction shows that only 43% of second grade children and 15% of third grade children could meet the criteria of sentence correction. But the children have better ability in matching sentences, such as, about 58% of children in grade II and 67% of children in grade III can match the broken sentences correctly. This test provides the fact that children can identify the right sentence provided it is given.

3.5. Verbal Fluency

The students were asked to describe a given activity in sequential order. Results of the test is given in Table 3.4. Data furnished in this table shows that about 27 to 46 percent of the interviewed children in different grades could verbalize an activity in sequential order. However, another 38% to 55% of the children could do it in partial form. Only 12 to 35 percent of children failed to describe an event in sequential manner. The table represents that, the children in grade one are more efficient in verbal fluency than the senior grades children. The reason of such counter

direction fluency may possibly be responsible for the nature of given activity. However, the figures given in different cells tend to infer that children's verbal ability or spoken skill is not very satisfactory.

Table 3.4

Children's ability (in percent) to describe an activity in sequential order

Topic for verbal expression	Very sequential	Partially sequential	Not sequential
<i>Grade I (N = 50)</i> How to make an object with clay	46	40	12
<i>Grade II (N = 60)</i> How to play <i>golla chut</i> (sort of children's game)	27	38	35
<i>Grade III (N = 40)</i> How to prepare soil for cultivation	32	55	13

3.6. Grouping ability

Group working ability of the NPFE school children was examined by asking them to sit for a group discussion. This test was given to the children of grades II and III only. Considering the difficulty of the task group work test was not given to the children of grade I. The report of group activity is given in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5

Group activity of the children in grades II and III

Group activity given	Average points raised	Average concepts raised	Reported words (mean)	Selection of leaders	Group participation
• What should we do to keep us fit and healthy (Topic for grade II)	7.42	4.25	4.25	satisfactory	Average
• What can we do to raise our income in the family (Topic for grade III)	7.42	10.00	9.88	satisfactory	Average

The table above indicates that group working ability among the students of grade III is better than the students of grade II. Since the NFPE students do not have any experience of group work in learning, they could not show much efficiency in this respect. However, on the basis of the above result it may be inferred that as the children go to higher grades they acquire better skill in group exercise. However, from the qualitative analysis of the group report it was appeared to the research team that children are yet to understand the dynamics of group exercise and to learn to express own ideas through free writing.

3.7. Classroom Observation

One of the main purpose of this survey was to conduct classroom observation to understand the teaching-learning process of NFPE school. In order to accomplish the purpose the members of the research team attended five non-CLIP NFPE schools in the experimental area in Comilla (3 schools) as well as in one of the non experimental area in Gazipur district (2 schools) spending one whole working day in each of the selected school as unobtrusive observer. The schools for this observation were identified by the research team jointly with the area office on the basis of their representativeness in the area. At least two members of the study team reached the school prior to beginning of the school and with the permission of the teacher they sat quietly at the back of the class. During the class period the observer took detailed notes on the starting and ending of class, teacher-student interaction, classroom delivery and questioning skill of the teacher, use of AV aids, small group activity etc.

After thorough observation of the classroom activity the research team collectively analyzed their data and came to a consensus about the teaching-learning process in the school, their observation is summarized in Table 3.6.

The findings thus indicate that the NFPE teachers are quite potential to be a teacher but the system made them rigid in terms of their behavior and teaching-learning exercise. Teachers were found to follow a lesson plan without any deviation. It hardly emphasize any comprehension, instead, rote mechanical approach is followed. During observation it appeared to the study team that the starting and ending of the school activity are quite ritualistic; particularly, at the beginning, addressing the class, worming up of children, informal talk with students etc. were very strictly framed and

mechanically conducted which was not spontaneous. Students were not found to ask any question to the teacher to satisfy their curiosity. Steps are needed to make learners more vocal in the class. Teacher-student interaction in the class seemed to be very slow and dull which fail to reinforce the whole class because teacher's way of asking question and reply was individualistic and both are in feeble voice. Question and answer both need to be loud and repeatedly asked so that the absent minded learners do not get chance to miss the information. Teachers were hardly found to accept any correct response to a question which is not available in the text or indicated by the supervisor.

Table 3.6

Pattern of teachers' behavior in the class as listed by the research team

Teachers' behavior in the classroom
1. The beginning of class is mechanical and rote, teacher is not spontaneous
2. Teacher instruction is guided rather than spontaneous
3. Comprehension is less emphasized by the teacher
4. No scope for creative thinking or writing in class
5. Teacher-student interaction takes place in very low voice, class is unable to listen each other
6. Teachers fail to provide reward on students' correct response
7. Teacher is less mobile in class while students are working
8. Teacher is reluctant to admit correct response beyond the text
9. Students are not inquisitive i.e., they do not have any question to the teachers
10. Individual care is not properly taken in the class
11. Small group activity is absent in academic exercise but it is done for non-academic aspects like singing or dancing etc.
12. Questions are mostly text-based, flat and not appropriately asked to the students. These are always directed to individuals rather than the whole class
13. Teaching aid is not used in class and use of chalk-board is also minimum while presenting a lesson
14. Teacher is very much dependent on the lesson plan and lack spontaneity in delivery which makes his/her presentation dull and less challenging

Use of reinforcement in the class was found very low, i.e., teachers rarely provide verbal or any other kind of reinforcement to the learners' right responses. However, the teacher otherwise endorsed learners' work through putting tic marks in the copy book or slate or expressing her satisfaction about the task by saying 'all

right'. In fact use of excessive reinforcer in class motivate the learners in school. In most of the cases teachers were either reluctant to do so or did not have the skill to do that. Besides reinforcement, teacher's movement in the class was found less frequent which is sometime required for efficient teaching. However, these NFPE schools have been found to use some co-curricular activities like singing and dancing in the class very efficiently. And these activities are the main attractive force for the children in school.

Teachers have been found to take individual care for some learners but that is not sufficient. Small group activity was almost nil in the non-CLIP schools. Teachers need training on small as well as large group activity in class for efficient teaching. Teaching aids are very essential for effective teaching but that is not found in use. However, the school house was found well decorated by such materials prepared by students. Out of these materials wall paper, posters, handicrafts, some educational materials etc. were found common in many school but they are not referred while teaching. However, in the absence of teaching aids teacher may use the chalk-board extensively but that was also found under utilized.

4.0. DISCUSSION

The status of non-formal school has been investigated in this baseline survey. This investigation was undertaken with the intention that it will provide a basis of comparison for future improvement. Thus the results of present survey is important to the fact that it explains the state of art of the project also it provides clear understanding about the inputs, processes and outputs of NFPE schools. If the similar survey is undertaken in future with proper intervention the result will give the success rate. Keeping this intention in view the present survey was undertaken among 15 NFPE schools in Chandina project area. To have a global idea about the system the respondents of the survey were selected from among the parent, teachers and learners.

Results of the survey through lights on various aspects of the NFPE schools, such as, teachers' level of education, their socio-economic background, interest in various issues, students' achievement etc. It was observed that most of the teachers were very potential resource for the school because, of their satisfactory educational

level (most of them were secondary school graduate) and rich exposure to radio and TV. Besides that quite a significant number of teachers showed interest in reading and learning from other sources. Teachers' residence to close proximity of school was also another advantage for the learners. Since large number of teachers have good reading habit therefore, this habit may be enhanced through assigning them extra reading of books or articles related to education or pedagogy. The resource center may lend books for the teacher. Preparation of educational materials for the students is very essential skill for the NFPE teacher but it was observed that only a few know this technique. Teachers require training on educational material development for classroom use. Along with this training they should be encouraged to use their own materials in class. In order to develop various skills among the teachers additional emphasis on creative thinking and writing should be given during the basic training.

Survey among the guardians provided very interesting fact about the school as well as the children. Though NFPE schools are very popular among the rural people yet it was revealed that around three fourth of the parents do not have contact with the school unless they are called for a meeting once a month. In order to enhance the quality of education contact between the school and home should be raised so that parents can help their children derive maximum benefit from the school. In this connection parents indicated the qualitative change among their offspring. However, the finding does not show very encouraging result, according to their notice only a tenth to a third of the children could be able to change their behavior pattern towards positive direction. This finding has the implication that schools should have develop some mechanism for monitoring children's social and morale behaviors in the school and try to rectify them whenever necessary.

Most of the children enrolled in BRAC schools were quite fresh in terms of educational background, i.e., they were first time enrolled in school, which necessitates to acquaint them with school culture and this is being done here. However, a sense of gap was felt between the formal and non-formal schools when the classroom exercise was repeatedly observed. There is a tendency among the teacher and supervisor to mechanized the whole learning exercise which essentially results into the failure of focusing the development of appropriate skill. It is very much expected that teaching emphasize on developing relevant skills then on specific act. Reading, writing and

numeracy are the tools for achieving literacy which need to be mastered. School envisages to develop mastery of these tools among the learners but BRAC schools are more prone to teach selected piece of skills than attaining mastery on the tools. This idea is elicited from the observation of students' performance in language test, comprehension and group learning ability. It appeared that students attained to a level of elementary stage of language with quite efficiently but as one goes up at the stage of comprehension, grammar etc. tend to decrease. The study revealed that spoken ability among the children was very poor and need special attention for improvement. Proper curriculum for these skills has to be developed and teacher and supervisor should emphasize on improving those skills rather than selected acts of the skill.

The weakest part of NFPE school lies in the teaching-learning process. It is true that these schools are very popular to the learners, they love to attend school at the cost of their household tasks but their overall achievement is limited which do not corresponds to their enthusiasm. If the learning is not effective, children cannot use the learnt skills for further learning then the whole exercise of education becomes futile. Proper curriculum for any education expects qualitative change in learner which is achieved through sincere and honest effort in implementation of curriculum. Teachers of BRAC school unlike the formal primary school are para-teachers, they have lower education and less professional training for the purpose. Therefore, it is not proper to expect something equivalent to formal education system from the non-formal outlet. The weakness of the NFPE teacher is understood and in order to overcome this two strategy may be adopted, firstly, expectation from the teacher is to be lowered, and secondly, less number of learning skills need to be identified so that teacher can fully implant them in the learner. Unless full mastery of learning is attained no skill can sustain for any effective duration. At present NFPE has lot of lapses but (as indicated in the 3.6) but many of them may be overcome by putting little more effort in teacher training and daily supervising task.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The survey indicates that large number of NFPE teachers live around the school therefore they may be utilized for school based other activities like story telling, recitation, teaching handicrafts or providing the school based training to the learners.
2. In order to enhance teacher competency provide them various book for reading at home which will help them develop reading capacity and teaching more efficiently in school.
3. Organize one or two courses on developing teaching-learning materials for the teachers.
4. Curricular materials on children household activities (such as, baby sitting, cattle rearing, cooking, etc.) may be incorporated in the text book of the children so that they find their work more useful at home.
5. Developing children's language skill needs to be more emphasized, particularly their fluency in speaking, reading and comprehension, grammatical aspects etc.
6. Working in small group is not found effective among the children. They must be trained to work in small groups and learn by themselves.
7. Teacher-student interaction must be enhanced and it should be more effective so that every individual learning activity may become learning exercise for the whole class.
8. Teachers should be encouraged to use verbal or material reinforcers in the class so that students achievement motivation may be addressed.
9. Students must be encouraged to ask question to the teacher while she is presenting a lesson.
10. Teachers dependency on lesson plan should be decreased so that they feel free to teach in the class.