

Factors affecting performance of the ethnic minority students in secondary schools

Md. Abul Kalam
Research Associate

December 2003

BRAC Research and Evaluation division
BRAC Center, 75 Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212
Fax: 880-2-8823542, 8823614, Phone: 981265 (PABX), extn- 2707
Email: research@brac.net

1

205

~~118~~

1

Abstract

BRAC started working with secondary education through its post primary basic education program since 2001. After piloting in 20 schools BRAC is now operating this program in 250 schools of which 175 have different proportions of ethnic minority students. This particular study attempted to explore the level of and factors affecting the performance of the ethnic minority students in secondary schools. Five schools having at least 25% ethnic minority students, one from five areas of Kalmakanda, Kulaura, Haluaghat, Panchbibi and Dhamoirhat were selected purposively for the study. Three methods/techniques of classroom observation, scanning of documents and group discussion with teachers, ethnic minority students and their parents, were followed for data collection using checklists. The study found that ethnic minority students were lagged behind their Bangalee classmates in their performances in terms of completion, non-completion, dropout and repetition in different classes, attendance at school, and results in public and school examinations. Several factors were found which might affect ethnic minority students' performance in secondary schools. Prominent among these factors were attitude of teachers towards ethnic minority students' potentiality; poor economic condition; relationship with Bagalee classmates; treatment by teachers in the classroom; private tutor dependent education; lack of helping hand in study at home; lack of awareness among parents; attendance at school; lack of security; lack of educational environment at home, etc. The study also found that schools' responses to these factors was very few with limited or no results. Furthermore, the study gained some suggestions from different groups of respondents for improving the situation.

Table of content

Abstract	2
Introduction	4-6
Objective	7
Methodology	7-8
Findings	
School information	9-10
Performance	10-15
Factors affecting ethnic minority students' performance	15-18
Steps taken to improve the situation	18-19
Suggestions for improving the situation	19-20
Conclusions	21
Acknowledgements	21
References	22
Appendix	23-24

Introduction

Secondary education in Bangladesh has achieved a number of positive developments, for example increased enrolment specially for girls, increased number schools and teachers, revision of curriculum, etc. Despite these achievements secondary education system in Bangladesh is still facing problems to deliver quality education, which is reflected in public examination results, to students as well as to run with better management capacity. Increasing teacher-student ratios in many schools due to fast growth of secondary enrolment, stringent government regulations relating to sanctioning of teaching posts (one post is sanctioned to a class of 60 students, and a second position is not sanctioned unless the class size reaches 120), inadequate physical infra-structural facilities, faulty recruitment (recruitment of teachers with expertise having little relevance to teaching at school level), too few inspections, and above all, generally poor academic qualifications, training and motivation of teachers are some of the recognized causes of poor quality of education at secondary level (CPD, 2001, World Bank, 2000, BANBEIS, 2001).

Although the government, non-government organizations (NGO) and others working in education sectors are focusing their efforts on improving the quality of education sector, most of their resources to date have been directed towards the primary sub-sector. To strengthen the national education system, to spur development in Bangladesh, to realize the best returns from investment made in primary schooling BRAC feels that it is important to address the issue of quality in secondary education. BRAC has around two decades of experience in providing quality non-formal primary education to over two million children, across the country. It also has the experience of working with poor rural communities and in developing successful models of education. BRAC feels that it has the capacity to work in the field of secondary education.

BRAC started working with secondary education in 2001 through Post Primary Basic Education and Continuing Education (PACE) programme. It has started a pilot programme in 20 non-government secondary schools those were well-located with a '*Ganakendra Pathagar*' and graduates from the Non-formal Primary Education (NFPE) and Basic Education for Older Children (BEOC) program, and decided to work with non-government secondary schools. The

non-government secondary schools were selected because the government secondary schools are well equipped and the teachers are well trained compared to non-government secondary schools.

The programme aims to see the non-government secondary schools better managed and have improved capacity to deliver quality education. The programme also aims to improve the management skill of the members of School Management Committee (SMC), the quality of teachers through skill development and management training; and to facilitate physical and mental growth of the students by promoting co-curricular and extra curricular activities.

BRAC undertook a range of activities which include need assessment through discussion with different stakeholders, selection of pilot school, materials development and teacher training, management workshops, seeking permission from government, and developing field management structure, etc. The programme started mainstreaming of the pilot project by the end of phase III after completing the preparatory work necessary to do so, in phase IV. Mainstreaming will involve undertaking the following broad activities of- developing model schools; teachers training; conducting management workshops; developing materials; developing trainers; undertaking support activities; monitoring and evaluation; institutionalizing the learning; and involving the government.

PACE intends to mainstreaming its programme to about 500 schools throughout the country (15-20 schools from each of the 25-30 districts) to develop these as model schools. At present the programme is operating 250 schools, of which 175 have different proportions of ethnic minority students. This study focused on various aspects of ethnic minority education in secondary schools.

Despite little attempts to clearly define, there have been wide opinions about factors that determine minority status in modern world. LeTendre (2000) mentioned about 16 factors that are involved in defining minority groups in various nations. These are (1) number; (2) indigenous/aboriginal status; (3) ethnic background; (4) linguistic background; (5) social class; (6) religious identity; (7) economic situation; (8) political situation/affiliation; (9) sexual orientation; (10) colour; (11) immigrant status; (12) place of birth/regional; (13) ability; (14) age; (15)

citizenship; and (16) gender. However, in our situation, the definition used for many years in anthropological discussions of minority as “...an ethnic group occupying a subordinate position in a multi-ethnic society, suffering from the disabilities of prejudice and discrimination, and maintain(ing) a separate group identity” (Gibson, 1997) is found to be more meaningful to specify ethnic minority.

Minority education is always linked with ‘problems’ in most nations around the world. Countries around the world have developed their education system addressing the problems of minority education. Many countries adopted multi-cultural education where educators follow the approaches from the taxonomy developed by Sleeter and Grant. The approaches include teaching the culturally different; human relation; single group studies; multi-cultural education; and multi-cultural education and social reconstructionist (Sleeter and Grant, 1987; Baltes, 1996). There are yet some other countries where education system built on the principles of decentralization, liberalization, and shared responsibilities which created beneficial conditions for the education of minorities as well, since it allows individual schools to meet the linguistic and cultural needs of different local minorities (National institute of public education, Hungary, 2000; Save the Children UK, 2002; Webb, 1990). Apart from the lingua-cultural problems, one has to understand the constraints on individual student to make success a programme of education in ethnic minority areas, for example- the child’s health, malnutrition affecting concentration, distance to school, responsibilities at home, lack of parental support with school work (Save the Children UK, 2002).

Education system in Bangladesh seems to follow an approach of multi-cultural education. The teachers see the goal of multi-cultural education as providing bridges for their students of diverse heritage to assimilate into the cultural mainstream and into the existing social structure. However, it put little attention on the specific needs of the ethnic minority students as well as preparing teachers accordingly. Educators would be more aware about the needs of the ethnic minority students if information about the level of and factors affecting ethnic minority students’ performance is available. This study was an attempt to address this issue.

Objective of the study

The study aims to explore the factors affecting the performance of the ethnic minority students in secondary schools.

The specific objectives were to:

- know the learning achievement level of ethnic minority students compared to Bangalee students;
- know the rate of retention, average attendance and dropout among the ethnic minority students;
- identify the factors affecting these performances of the ethnic minority students;
- know how did the teachers respond to these factors that affect the ethnic minority students' performance;
- know the nature/trend of subject (specially science) selection by the ethnic minority students in grade IX and reason for that; and
- identify training needs for teachers regarding the ethnic minority students' problems.

Methodology

Methods/techniques for data collection

The study followed a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approach. Data were collected through classroom observation, review of documents/records and group discussion with teachers, ethnic minority students and their parents using checklists.

Area/sample

Five secondary schools having 25- 50% ethnic minority students were selected from five different areas of Kalmakanda, Kulaura, Haluaghat, Panchbibi and Dhamoirhat in five districts (Netrokona, Moulavibazar, Mymensinh, Joypurhat and Noagaon) under PACE programme. Teachers of these schools, a group of ethnic minority students and a group of ethnic minority parents from each of these sample schools were included in the study.

Data collection and analysis

A cohort of students those were admitted into the sample schools in class VI in 1998 were followed through five years using documents for examining their performance. Besides, their SSC examination results of the years 2001, 2002 and 2003 were analyzed. Qualitative data were collected through group discussion with different groups of respondents as well as classroom observation using checklists. Ten field investigators were recruited and trained accordingly for data collection, and these field investigators and researcher together collected the data in the study. Data were processed and analyzed using computer software as well as manually.

Findings

School information

One-third of the total students in the sample schools were from ethnic minority, and this proportion was different in different schools (Table 1). Highest (38.6%) proportion of ethnic minority students was found in the school of Kalmakanda area and lowest (24.6%) in the school of Dhamoirhat area.

Table 1. Proportion of students by community and area

Community	% of students by area					All N = 1839
	Kalmakanda N = 238	Kulaura N = 467	Haluaghat N = 297	Pnachbibi N = 422	Dhamoirhat N = 415	
Erthnic minority	38.6	34.7	36.7	34.4	24.6	33.2
Bangalee	61.4	65.3	63.3	65.6	75.4	66.8
Both	100	100	100	100	100	100

Class-wise distribution of students in these schools indicates that the highest (39.6%) proportion of ethnic minority students was in class IX followed by class X (37.0%), and lowest in class VII (Table 2). It was also found that the number of students went down as the grade level went up.

Table 2. Proportion of students by community and class

Community	% of students by class					All N = 1839
	Class VI N = 509	Class VII N = 397	Class VIII N = 341	Class IX N = 316	Class X N = 276	
Erthnic minority	31.4	26.2	34.9	39.6	37.0	33.2
Bangalee	68.6	73.8	65.1	60.4	63.0	66.8
Both	100	100	100	100	100	100

Distribution of teachers by community and area indicates that about 31.0% of the teachers were ethnic minority. One school had no ethnic minority teacher, however, two schools had 60% ethnic minority teachers (Appendix 3).

Performance

Performance of the students was examined in terms of completion, non-completion, dropout and repetition in different classes, attendance, results in public and school examinations. Data reveal that the rate of completion who survived smoothly (without repetition or dropout) from class VI through class X (succeeded in test examination) was found to be comparatively lower (25.0%) among ethnic minority students than among the Bangalee students (32.5%)(Table 3). Three-fourth of the ethnic minority students could not smoothly complete the five-year cycle of secondary education, which was 67.5% among the Bangalee students. Among the non-completing students some were dropped out and some were repeated in different classes. Consequently dropout and repetition rates in different classes were also found higher among ethnic minority students (52.1% and 22.9%) than among the Bangalee students (51.3% and 16.2%). Table 1 also reveals that 21.1% of the ethnic minority students in class IX chosen science group, this proportion was 33.6% among the Bangalee students. This indicates that ethnic minority students chosen science group for study less proportionately than the Bangalee students.

Table 3. Completion, non-completion, dropout, repetition rate and science group in class nine by community

Community	Completion	Non-completion	Dropout	Repetition	Science group
Ethnic minority	25.0	75.0	52.1	22.9	21.1
Bangalee	32.5	67.5	51.3	16.2	33.6
All	29.7	70.3	51.6	18.7	29.2

Completion rate among ethnic minority girls (29.7%) was found higher than ethnic minority boys (21.1%) and this was found to be reversed in the case of Bangalee girls and boys (Appendix 1). In both the cases of ethnic minority and Bangalee students dropout rate was higher among boys than girls, whereas repetition rate was higher among girls than boys. This indicates low rate

of passing in examinations among girls than among boys. In terms of completion and non-completion rate the situation of ethnic minority students was found to be comparatively worse than Bangalee students in all the areas except one of Haluaghat (Appendix 2).

An analysis of class-wise retention, dropout and repetition indicates that retention rate among ethnic minority students was comparatively much lower than Bangalee students in classes VI and X (74.3% and 57.4% respectively). About 23% of the ethnic minority students dropped out in class VI, whereas this proportion among Bangalee students was about 16%. In both the cases of ethnic minority and Bangalee students repetition rate was found to be highest in class X. This proportion was 24.3% among Bangalee students whereas it was 41% among ethnic minority students (Table 4). This might be due to that Bangalee students availed the opportunity of private tutoring at a higher rate in class X which helped them succeed the test examination. It was not possible for most of the ethnic minority students due to their parents' poor economic condition.

Table 4. Retention dropout and repetition by class and community

Class	Retention		Dropout		Repetition	
	Ethnic minority	Bangalee	Ethnic minority	Bangalee	Ethnic minority	Bangalee
Six	74.3	82.5	22.9	15.8	2.9	1.7
Seven	81.0	80.8	17.0	16.7	2.0	2.5
Eight	88.8	84.6	10.0	13.5	1.2	1.9
Nine	88.7	84.1	11.3	15.1	0.0	0.8
Ten	57.4	72.9	1.6	2.8	41.0	24.3

The results of the last three SSC examinations indicate that on average 32.9% of the students of the sample schools passed the examination. This proportion was 28.0% and 36.7% respectively for ethnic minority and Bangalee students. In the SSC examination of 2001, the ethnic minority students' achievement in terms of success rate was almost similar (35.5%) to that of Bangalee students (35.7%)(Table 5). In Haluaghat, Panchbibi and Dhamoirhat the Bangalee students did better. On the other hand, in Kalmakanda and Kulaura the ethnic minority students did better. In all the areas and cases except the Bangalee students of Dhamoirhat, boys did better than girls in SSC examination of 2001 (Table 5).

In the SSC examination of 2002 the success rate of the ethnic minority students was found much lower (29.5%) compared to that of the Bangalee students (38.6%). The ethnic minority students did better in Dhamoirhat, Kalmakanda and Kulaura. On the other hand, the Bangalee students did better in Haluaghat and Panchbibi. In all the areas except Kulaura, boys did better than girls in SSC examination of 2002 (Table 6).

Table 5. Proportion of students passing SSC examination in 2001 by area, sex and community

Community	Sex	% of students passing SSC examination of 2001 by area					All
		Kalmakanda	Kulaura	Haluaghat	Panchbibi	Dhamoirhat	
Ethnic minority	Boys	75.0	88.9	33.3	40.0	11.1	46.7
	Girls	-	0.0	50.0	15.0	0.0	19.4
	Both	75.0	66.7	44.4	27.5	9.1	35.5
Bangalee	Boys	60.0	50.0	80.0	44.4	16.7	41.1
	Girls	0.0	33.3	0.0	32.1	33.3	30.5
	Both	50.0	40.9	50.0	37.0	24.2	35.7
Total	Boys	66.7	68.4	62.5	42.1	14.8	43.6
	Girls	0.0	26.7	33.3	25.0	29.4	26.7
	Both	60.0	50.0	47.1	32.6	20.5	35.6

Table 6. Proportion of students passing SSC examination in 2002 by area, sex and community

Community	Sex	% of students passing SSC examination of 2002 by area					All
		Kalmakanda	Kulaura	Haluaghat	Panchbibi	Dhamoirhat	
Ethnic minority	Boys	20.0	28.6	0.0	42.3	38.5	30.4
	Girls	0.0	--	11.1	31.3	62.5	28.3
	Both	14.3	28.6	6.9	36.2	47.6	29.5
Bangalee	Boys	0.0	32.0	25.0	47.4	56.3	41.1
	Girls	0.0	14.3	25.0	61.1	36.4	35.3
	Both	0.0	25.6	25.0	51.8	44.7	38.6
Total	Boys	12.5	30.8	10.5	45.3	48.3	36.5
	Girls	0.0	14.3	16.7	42.0	43.3	32.0
	Both	8.3	26.4	14.3	43.9	45.8	34.5

Table 7 shows that 21.2% of the ethnic minority students and 35.4% of the Bangalee students passed the examination of 2003. The ethnic minority students did better in Kulaura and Panchbibi and the Bangalee students did better in Kalmakanda, Haluaghat and Dhamoirhat. In most cases boys did better than girls with few exceptions (Table 7).

Among those who passed SSC examinations of 2001, 2002 and 2003, about 1% of the ethnic minority students and 4% of the Bangalee students got 'A' grade. About 22.5% of the ethnic minority students and 32.7% of the Bangalee students got 'B' grade. In most cases and areas the ethnic minority students stood proportionately lower among the first ten or twenty positions in annual examinations compared to their proportions in the classes. All these indicate a lower performance of ethnic minority students compared to their Bangalee classmates.

Table 7. Proportion of students passing SSC examination in 2003 by area, sex and community

Community	Sex	% of students passing SSC examination of 2003 by area					All
		Kalmakanda	Kulaura	Haluaghat	Panchbibi	Dhamoirhat	
Ethnic minority	Boys	9.1	100	16.7	27.3	11.1	25.8
	Girls	0.0	--	5.0	40.0	0.0	14.9
	Both	5.9	100	10.5	32.4	6.7	21.2
Bangalee	Boys	37.5	61.9	42.9	26.8	25.0	37.1
	Girls	44.4	52.4	0.0	21.4	0.0	32.7
	Both	41.2	57.1	30.0	25.5	15.0	35.4
Total	Boys	21.1	70.4	24.0	27.0	19.1	32.3
	Girls	26.7	52.3	4.4	31.0	0.0	24.5
	Both	23.5	62.5	14.6	28.3	11.4	29.2

In examining the attendance in school three different months (October 2002, March 2003 and July 2003) of the year were considered. Average rate of school days attended by the students was

Table 8. Proportion of school days students attended in October 2002 by area, sex and community

Community	Sex	% of school days students attended by area					All
		Kalmakanda	Kulaura	Haluaghat	Panchbibi	Dhamoirhat	
Ethnic minority	Boys	60.5	45.8	39.8	20.9	66.5	44.6
	Girls	74.4	41.9	57.6	25.6	86.4	55.1
	Both	67.7	44.2	48.1	23.1	75.7	49.4
Bangalee	Boys	73.5	33.9	45.1	25.0	67.1	42.1
	Girls	82.0	50.9	58.5	29.7	77.3	57.1
	Both	78.4	44.7	53.1	26.7	72.9	50.2
Total	Boys	67.1	39.1	42.6	24.0	66.9	43.0
	Girls	78.7	48.9	58.2	28.4	79.5	56.5
	Both	73.5	44.5	51.1	25.7	73.7	49.9

calculated for three different months. In the case of October 2002, in general, the ethnic minority students' average attendance was found to be lower compared to that of the Bangalee students. However, ethnic minority students' average attendance was higher compared to that of the Bangalee students in Dhamoirhat area (Table 8).

Table 9 shows that in March 2003, in general, the ethnic minority students' average attendance was lower compared to that of the Bangalee students. In all the areas except Kalmakanda, average attendance of the ethnic minority students was found lower compared to that of the Bangalee students.

Table 9. Proportion of school days students attended in March 2003 by area, sex and community

Community	Sex	% of school days students attended by area					All
		Kalmakanda	Kulaura	Haluaghat	Panchbibi	Dhamoirhat	
Ethnic minority	Boys	61.1	57.7	39.3	39.3	74.8	53.3
	Girls	78.0	65.2	51.4	69.6	80.0	64.4
	Both	71.4	60.8	45.5	51.9	77.1	60.2
Bangalee	Boys	59.0	54.8	51.5	40.4	73.1	53.7
	Girls	72.4	71.7	60.0	67.1	84.1	72.8
	Both	66.9	66.5	56.4	52.0	80.5	65.2
Total	Boys	59.8	56.3	46.7	40.0	73.7	53.6
	Girls	74.6	70.0	57.0	67.9	83.5	71.6
	Both	68.7	64.4	52.4	52.0	79.8	63.6

Table 10. Proportion of school days students attended in July 2003 by area, sex and community

Community	Sex	% of school days students attended by area					All
		Kalmakanda	Kulaura	Haluaghat	Panchbibi	Dhamoirhat	
Ethnic minority	Boys	63.0	68.3	52.3	40.9	58.3	55.7
	Girls	63.0	84.0	62.1	53.7	53.0	64.4
	Both	63.0	75.0	57.3	46.2	56.0	59.7
Bangalee	Boys	63.0	66.2	73.1	46.4	43.9	56.4
	Girls	66.7	80.6	65.6	52.4	51.0	64.5
	Both	65.3	75.9	68.8	49.0	48.6	61.1
Total	Boys	63.0	67.3	64.8	44.5	48.8	55.5
	Girls	65.8	81.5	64.4	52.8	51.4	64.4
	Both	64.6	75.6	64.6	48.0	50.4	60.3

In July 2003 also, the ethnic minority students' average attendance was found to be lower compared to that of the Bangalee students with an exception of Dhamoirhat where ethnic minority students' average attendance was higher than that of the Bangalee students (Table 10).

It was found that average attendance of girls was higher than that of boys in both the cases of ethnic minority and Bangalee students in all areas with a very few exceptions. Apart from these, according to the different respondents, average attendance of ethnic minority students used to be lower in *Magh-Falgun* (February) and *Shraban-Vadra* (August) due to their community festival, marriages and work in the field in first period, and work in the field in the later period. During community festival and marriages they remained absent in school for long time.

Factors affecting ethnic minority students' performance

Several factors were found which might have bearing on the performance of ethnic minority students. These are as follows:

Attitude of teachers towards ethnic minority students' potentiality: All the teachers showed a negative attitude towards the ethnic minority students. They mentioned that the ethnic minority students were less meritorious and had poor learning ability. In most cases negative assumption does not promote positive action. It is difficult for a person to take any positive action in favour of any group in a particular field if s/he thinks this group is less capable in this particular field. This mentality of the teachers might prevent them from helping ethnic minority students in their difficulties in study at school. However, the socioeconomic background of the ethnic minority students in this country indicates a need for special care by teachers for ethnic minority students at schools.

Poor economic condition: Ethnic minority population in most cases work as wage labourer in other's field and get a very low rate of wage which resulted in low income and poor economic condition of the household. This forced them to pull their children to work in the field as well as at home to supplement family income and help parents in household work, baby-sitting, etc. This prevented the children from preparing their lessons and in many cases from attending the

schools. Due to poor economic condition parents could not provide the children with books, dress and materials they needed for their study at school in time as well as pay tuition fee of school in time. Furthermore, due to poor economic condition parents could not provide children with private tutor which is necessary now a days.

Lack of awareness among parents: Parents of ethnic minority students did not take care of their children's education. They showed aloofness about their children's education. They did not oversee whether their children get ready with study or not and also go to school or not. They never contacted school authority to know the performance of their children. According to parents as they took children to work in the field they could not put pressure on children for their study. Even the parents did not show a minimum concern for their children's study as they made noises with taking alcohol while the children were getting ready with their lessons at home.

Lack of helping hand in study at home: Almost all of the ethnic minority students could not get any help in their study from anybody at home since most of the ethnic minority parents and other adults at their homes did lack basic literacy.

Language used in instruction: Sometimes the ethnic minority students could not follow the instructions in the classes since they did not understand the language used by the teachers. Ethnic minority students were not as competent as the Bangalee students in Bangla language.

Attendance at school: The rate of attendance of the ethnic minority students was found lower compared to that of the Bangalee students. This rate was found to be reduced sharply in the period of February and August. These might affect ethnic minority students' performance at schools.

Lack of educational environment at home: Festival, worship, etc. are very common and frequent in ethnic minority community. Some of these occasions continued for seven to eight days. During this period they used to sing, dance and play musical instruments with high frequency, which seriously hinder educational environment at their homes.

Lack of social security: Ethnic minority parents mentioned about lack of social security specially for their girls in moving to and from schools. This also affected the students' motivation and interest about education as well as their performance at schools.

Relationship with Bangalee classmates: Relationship of ethnic minority students with their Bangalee classmates was not encouraging. Bangalee students, sometimes, reprimanded them for their different language, appearance and physical shape. Sometimes, specially in Kalmakanda and Haluaghat areas, they reprimanded by saying '*Dekh dekh Garo jaye*' (Look look Garo is going). Furthermore, sometimes they abused the ethnic minority students by uttering '*Garor bachcha*'. Sometimes the Bangalee students did not accept their ethnic minority classmates cordially. Whenever the ethnic minority students spoke to each other in their own languages the Bangalee students took it as opponent and started quarrel with them claiming that the ethnic minority students were discussing something against them. It was also found that the ethnic minority and the Bangalee students generally did not sit together, they set separately from each other. For example, in a school once a bangalee girl set beside an ethnic minority girl as she was the only Bangalee girl attended school on that day. However, on the next day, other few Bangalee girls were present and the girl who set with ethnic minority girls on the previous day set with other Bangalee girls. It was also found that there was a very little dialogue between the ethnic minority and the Bangalee students in the classroom. These indicate that the ethnic minority students did not have cordial relationship with their Bangalee classmates, which might affect ethnic minority students' motivation towards schooling.

Treatment by teachers in the classroom: Although it was not prominent, however, some teachers were found to be biased towards the Bangalee students. They were more attentive on the Bangalee students and less on the ethnic minority students. This might be due to their negative attitude towards the ethnic minority students' learning capacity/ability. Generally teachers give more attention on advance learners in the class and the ethnic minority students were found disadvantaged as very few of the ethnic minority students were found to be advance learners. Thus, they got less attention from the teachers. They did not get any special attention from the teachers that they needed most. Besides, teachers reprimanded the ethnic minority students for stipend while someone from the ethnic minority students remained absent from the school. These

also affected their motivation and interest in education as well as their performance at schools. Generally it was found that the ethnic minority students remained silent, asking no question in the class even when they did not understand a lesson, and there was little initiative by teachers to make them more active in the classroom activities.

Private tutor dependent education: Nowadays, students cannot learn lessons fully at school and this necessitates private tutoring. Even the teachers said that all the students should learn at least Mathematics and English through private tutor. The ethnic minority students could not afford private tutor due to their parents' poor economic condition.

Reason for very few ethnic minority students opted for science group in class IX: A feeling was observed among the ethnic minority students that science is a difficult subject and it needed more cost, study and private tutor, and their economic condition did not allow them to afford any of these requirements. The school authority allowed those students to take science group who stood within 15 or 20 in the annual examination of class eight, very few (less proportionate to their number in the classes) of the ethnic minority students could stand within this range. This was also a reason for ethnic minority students taking science group less proportionately. According to some teachers the ethnic minority students were comparatively weak in mathematics, but a strong hold in mathematics is a necessary in studying science. The Churches and Missions did not prefer science group students for their work. There was a strong interest among the ethnic minority students to work in these organizations as they thought that these were the only places where they could find employment after schooling. This might prevent them from taking science group in class IX. Lack of employment opportunity for them in wider economic sectors might reduce their possibility to be ambitious in their schooling and education, and this also might prevent them from taking science group in class IX.

Steps taken to improve the situation

Very little steps had been taken to improve the situation. These were half tuition free for some of the ethnic minority students; full tuition free for meritorious students and special tutoring to

those who could not understand the lesson in the class, etc. These could not improve the situation much.

Suggestions for improving the situation

Suggestions made by different groups of respondents for improving the situation of the ethnic minority students were as follows:

1. An orientation for teachers may be arranged to make them aware about the ethnic minority students' needs, establish cordial relationship between the ethnic minority and the Bangalee students, and to change their attitude towards the ethnic minority students' learning potentiality/capacity. There should also be a strong supervision and monitoring by the Head Teachers as well as by the authority provided the orientation.
2. An effective awareness raising campaign among the ethnic minority parents should be undertaken by the school authority to make them aware about the need for and value of education.
3. The school authority should ensure regular (monthly or at least quarterly) meeting with the ethnic minority parents to aware and update them on their children' progress.
4. Selection of some of the ethnic minority parents in the school representative body which would create a feeling of inclusion among the ethnic minority population.
5. There is a need for finding out a mechanism for helping the poor ethnic minority students so that they can buy books, dresses and other materials at the beginning of the year. This may be done in two ways: a) exemption of tuition fees for all the ethnic minority students and arrange some stipends for them at the beginning of the year to buy books, dresses and materials; and b) school authority may remind the students and their parents much earlier about the amount they will require to buy books, dresses, materials, and for admission fee.
6. As an extra-curricular activity the Bngalee students should be encouraged to visit the ethnic minority houses during their festivals, and vice versa. This will reduce suspicion and misunderstanding about ethnic minority, their language and culture, which, in turn, will contribute to enhance a cordial/friendly relationship between these two groups of students as well as in the society.

7. The teachers should pay more attention to the ethnic minority students in the classroom.
8. Both the groups of students should be encouraged to sit mixing with each other.
9. Importance of studying science should be conveyed to the ethnic minority students, and help them be ambitious in their study.

Conclusions

This study attempted to explore the level of and factors affecting the performance of the ethnic minority students in secondary schools. Five schools from five different areas of Bangladesh having at least 25% ethnic minority students were included in the study, and review of documents, classroom observation and group discussion with teachers, ethnic minority students and their parents were followed using checklists for data collection.

The problem of ethnic minority education in Bangladesh is socio-economical as well as, like other developing countries, multicultural. The study revealed that the performance of ethnic minority students in terms of completion, retention, drop out, attendance at school and results in public as well as in school examination were found to be comparatively worse than those of the Bangalee students. Many factors were found contributing to such performance of the ethnic minority students of which some were socioeconomic, some were cultural, and some were school related. These factors as well as socio-economic and cultural background advocated a preferential policy for ethnic minority education along with approaches of multicultural education (Sleeter and Grant, 1987; Baltés, 1996). However, teachers in the sample schools were found to be not much aware about the needs and problems of the ethnic minority students and approaches of multicultural education.

The respondents suggested some steps to improve the situation of ethnic minority education in secondary schools. These need to be considered seriously to address the problem of ethnic minority education in Bangladesh. Further studies on this issue are required to gain more indepth understanding of the problem.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to RED and PACE management for encouraging him to conduct the study. Sincere thanks are due to Mr. Samir R Nath, Senior Research Fellow and Coordinator, Education Research Unit, and other members of Education Research Unit at RED for suggestions on methodology and comments on earlier draft. The author is also grateful to Mr. Hasan Shareef Ahmed for editorial support.

References

- BANBEIS (2001) 'National Education Survey (post- primary) 1999: Final Report', Ministry of Education, Government of Bangladesh.
- Baltes, Beate (1996) 'Personal life experiences and work-related factors associated with educators' approaches to multicultural education', Proposal for the AMATYC conference- Diversity: What does it mean to you?, November 1996, Long Beach, California.
- CPD (2001) 'Policy brief on education policy: CPD task force report', Election 2001: National policy forum, organized by CPD, Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, Dhaka: 20- 22 August 2001.
- Gibson, M (1997) 'Exploring and explaining the variability: Cross-national perspective on the school performance of minority students, *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 28, 318- 329.
- LeTendre, GK (2000) 'The problem of minority education in an international perspective', *International Journal of Educational Research*, Volume- 33, Number- 6, Pergamon.
- National Institute of Public Education- Hungary (2000) 'Education in Hungary 2000', National institute of public education, 1051 Budapest, Dorottya u.8, Hungary.
- Save the Children UK (2002) 'Country report: Vietnam 2002', Save the Children UK, 17 Grove Lane, London, UK.
- Sleeter, CE and Grant, CA (1987) 'An analysis of multicultural education in the United States', *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(4), 421- 444.
- Webb, Michael (1990) 'Multicultural education in elementary and secondary schools', ERIC Digest Number 67, ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, New York, USA.
- World Bank (2000) 'Bangladesh education sector review, volume II', The University Press Limited, Dhaka.

Appendix 1. Completion, non-completion, dropout and repetition rate by sex and community

Item	Ethnic minority			Bangalee			All		
	Boys	Girls	Both	Boys	Girls	Both	Boys	Girls	Both
Completion	21.1	29.7	25.0	36.4	29.2	32.5	30.1	29.4	29.7
Non-completion	78.9	70.3	75.0	63.6	70.8	67.5	69.9	70.6	70.3
Dropout in different classes	61.8	40.6	52.1	52.7	50.0	51.3	56.5	46.9	51.6
Repetition in different classes	17.1	29.7	22.9	10.9	20.8	16.2	13.4	23.7	18.7

Appendix 2. Completion, non-completion, dropout and repetition rate by area and community

Area	Community	Completion	Non-completion	Dropout	Repetition
Kalmakanda	Ethnic minority	4.5	95.5	77.3	18.2
	Bangalee	17.7	82.3	70.6	11.7
	All	10.3	89.7	74.4	15.3
Kulaura	Ethnic minority	6.5	93.5	51.6	41.9
	Bangalee	18.1	81.9	63.8	18.1
	All	14.9	85.1	60.5	24.6
Haluaghat	Ethnic minority	51.6	48.4	35.5	12.9
	Bangalee	47.8	52.2	34.8	17.4
	All	50.0	50.0	35.2	14.8
Panchbibi	Ethnic minority	30.0	70.0	52.5	17.5
	Bangalee	46.1	53.9	48.1	5.8
	All	39.1	60.9	50.0	10.9
Dhamoirhat	Ethnic minority	25.0	75.0	50.0	25.0
	Bangalee	38.5	61.5	36.9	24.6
	All	35.8	64.2	39.5	24.7
Total	Ethnic minority	25.0	75.0	52.1	22.9
	Bangalee	32.5	67.5	51.3	16.2
	All	29.7	70.3	51.6	18.7

Appendix 3. Proportion of teachers by community and area

Community	% of teachers by area					
	Kalmakanda N = 10	Kulaura N = 10	Haluaghat N = 10	Panchbibi N = 16	Dhamoirhat N = 12	All N = 58
Ethnic minority	60.0	0.0	60.0	31.2	8.3	31.0
Bangalee	40.0	100	40.0	68.8	91.7	69.0
Both	100	100	100	100	100	100