

An analysis of classroom culture of BRAC schools

Syeda Rumnaz Imam

Kaisar A Khan

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Research and Evaluation Division

BRAC

75 Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at examining the classroom culture of two types of BRAC schools, i.e., Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) and Chandina Learning Improvement Project (CLIP). Two schools from each category were selected purposively, and each school was observed for a week. The NFPE schools are based mainly on large group method, according to which, the students are found to be seated in a large U shaped group and all the activities in the class are done within this group. On the other hand, CLIP schools are based mainly on small group method. The whole class is divided into five small groups, each containing 5-6 members and a group leader. Most of the classroom activities are done within these small groups in CLIP schools. Although the small group method has been implemented successfully in the educational processes in different countries, it does not seem to have been particularly successful in BRAC schools. Teacher's training and supervision of teachers skills need to be enhanced in order meet the goals set by a well-planned project like CLIP. The large group method seems to be more effective compared to the small group method. Some other drawbacks that were also found in the classroom practices in both types of schools were lack of adequate explanation of the lessons, pressure to recall lessons word by word, lack of pedagogical skills among the teachers, absence of the practice of asking questions to the teachers, some problems with the materials, gap in the process of supervision, and above all lack of gender sensitivity. The introduction of any innovative teaching method can not bring fruitful results unless the facilitators and the supervisors are trained enough to effective implementation. Thus, pedagogical skills of the teachers and supervision skills of the staff should be improved through effective training.

INTRODUCTION

Research on effective teaching in the past decade has indicated the importance of classroom conditions that depend directly on the ability of teachers to organize and manage their classrooms (Anderson, Everston and Brophy, 1979). Some of these conditions include the productive use of time (Fredrick and Walberg, 1980; Stattings, 1980), student attention or involvement in focused, goal-directed learning task, opportunities for corrective feedback and engagement in instructional tasks of appropriate difficulty (Borphy and Good, 1986; Fisher et al, 1980; Medley, 1977). The most important factors of classroom culture are the process of classroom organization and classroom practice. Efficiency of teachers and the effective supervision of staff play an important role in presenting an effective classroom culture. This study offers an approach to observe the classroom culture within BRAC schools. The level of basic competencies of BRAC students proves that BRAC's education programme is successful. Nath's (1987) study showed that the level of basic competencies of the NFPE students was 69%, whereas the basic competencies of formal school students was 51%. The difference is significant. Though NFPE is a very well planned and successful programme, at present it needs to be observed as to how effectively it is working. This study is an effort to examine this effectiveness through an intensive observation of the classroom culture of BRAC schools.

Research also indicate that the key to organizing and managing classrooms for effective instruction begins with advanced preparation and planning from the first day of school (Emmer, Everston and Anderson, 1980; Everston and Emmer, 1982). Even though studies have supported the importance of classroom management as a necessary condition for effective teaching, the problem of translating these principles to practice has remained the same (Everston, 1989).

Khan (1995) conducted a study titled, "Village Schools in Bangladesh: Caught between Tradition and Change", in which she demonstrated how classroom dynamics and teacher-student interaction can make an impact on the kind of knowledge, values and attitudes fostered in the students. She did a comparative study between government primary school and BRAC's NFPE School. Her observations indicated that the classroom practices of government primary schools generated and reinforced traditional values and practices such as teacher-centered approaches,

absence of pre-reading activities, verbal output without instructional matter but with disciplinary problem. She further observed that knowledge retrieval is obtained through formal examinations and by asking factual and literal questions to the students only. Formal schools also reinforce values like- respect for elders while not teaching them to challenge authority or raise question at the same time and also found schools to perpetuate traditional gender norms. NFPE approaches on the other hand, focused more on bringing about changes in practices and in values- it placed emphasis more on child-centered activities, and pre-reading activities. But the speech of the teachers is directed more towards instructional purposes rather than on explaining lessons; knowledge retrieval is done through recalling literal and factual questions rather than comprehension. It also placed emphasis on values like, dignity of labor, awareness of class differences, gender sensitivity, discouragement of asking questions and so forth.

BRAC school models

NFPE

This study will observe the classroom cultures of both the NFPE and CLIP schools. BRAC launched two models in its primary education programme. This model called NFPE (Non-Formal Primary Education) is a four-year course for children aged 8-10 years old. The second year model called BEOC (Basic Education for Older Children) is a three-year course for children aged 11-14 years old. For both the models preference is given to children of disadvantaged and illiterate families, and to children who have never been enrolled in to school or who are dropouts. The number of learners in these schools is limited to 30-33, and around 70% of them are females. These are single room schools and each school has one teacher, most of whom are women. At present BRAC is operating more than 34,000 NFPE schools. The NFPE approach is more children centered and follows less authoritarian classroom practices.

CLIP

CLIP (Chandina Learning Improvement Project) is a new experimental project of BRAC's NFPE programme, which was developed to improve the teaching method of NFPE schools. The project covers three teams namely Chandina, Barura, and Debidar. Presently, there are one hundred second year, and sixty-two third year schools under this project. This programme is designed to be more child-centered and participatory. The aim is to create a suitable learning environment for

children; to help both students, children and teachers to develop skills on creative thinking; and to help children in their overall development.

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of the study was to document the classroom culture of CLIP and NFPE schools. Classroom culture is a broad concept. It includes *'everything that happens in a classroom'*. However in this study only two aspects of classroom culture were observed. The main focus was to critically observe the classroom organization and practices of BRAC schools. This study defines classroom organization as tasks or activities undertaken by groups of people within different types of sitting arrangements (small group and large group). Classroom practices can be defined as the ways of explaining lessons, retrieving knowledge, asking questions, vocabulary practices, scope for developing creativity, use of teaching aids, sense of gender equity and so on.

Rationale of the study

This study captured and documents the efforts of each programme to disseminate primary education. In doing so, it is further hoped that this study will be able to evaluate the extent of execution of planned goals and their outcome. Policy planners are expected to get information on the changes they are creating in the culture of the learners through their education system.

METHODOLOGY

This is a case study on NFPE and CLIP schools of BRAC. The methodology that has been used in this study is participation observation. Observation involves detailed description and analysis of an individual case (Becker, 1968). Case studies conducted by observation attempt to describe comprehensively and exhaustively phenomena in terms of a research problem (Danny L. Jorgensen, 1989). It is generally assumed that the verbal content of interpersonal interactions is the most important issue. However it is important to recognize that a great deal of what is important to observe is unspoken. This particular aspect of observation method is very valuable for this study, because " there are some subtle behaviors that provide significant clues to what people are thinking and feeling... some of the most basic aspects of behavior are readily

observable and recordable."(Whyte, 1984). Therefore, in examining a classroom where lots of interaction goes on between a teacher and the students, and where the behavior of each individual gives important information about the classroom culture, observation is one of the most efficient methods. Data was collected by using a checklist. Two types of school were observed in this study. These were NFPE and CLIP school of BRAC. Two schools from each type were studied and each school was observed for a week. From both types of schools, both well performing and worse -performing schools were taken in the sample.

FINDINGS

As has been mentioned earlier, the main focus in this study was to document the classroom culture of two types of BRAC schools. The classroom culture of BRAC schools will be discussed in this study under the heading of classroom organization and classroom practices.

Classroom Organization

Since both NFPE and CLIP schools are administered, managed and implemented by BRAC, the basic strategies of the projects are more or less similar except the method of classroom organization and some processes of classroom practices. However, a major distinction between the classroom organization of the two types of projects was 'small group activities' and 'large group activities'. CLIP schools were based mostly on small group activities, whereas NFPE schools were based on large group activities.

Small group

Small group work refers to academic tasks and activities undertaken by a group of pupils, which involves some degree of discussions, reflection and collaboration. The optimum size for small group work for most types of tasks is approximately five, although small group work can be undertaken by group as small as two (Waterhouse; 1983, quoted in Chris Kyriacou). Witaker (1984) has listed the value of such work. According to him, it creates a climate in which pupils can work with a sense of security, and self-confidence. It also facilitates the growth of understanding by offering the optimum opportunity for pupils to talk relatively with each other, and promotes a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect.

Classroom organization within CLIP schools is based largely on small group work, such as reading books, doing different types of exercises, playing with alphabet cards or other materials, and memorizing lessons. Hence most of the classroom work is done within small group. This method is considered to be one of the most popular learner-centered education methods. It is also considered as a methodology of knowledge creating education, which consists of knowing how to provide solution to questions, which have never been posed by the participants before. In this method all learners ought to be equally involved at all stages, because, as Carmen (1996) noted that; "genuine learning does not occur unless learners are actively involved in what is actively learned through praxis." This is the kind of discussion group in which adult literacy education takes place, and which is referred to as 'engaging dialogue'. One important aim is to increase communication within the group, whilst another aim is to gain new insight through shared perceptions (Ottoosson, 1978:39). Paulo Freire conceives the same idea about dialogue, which implies a horizontal relationship between persons involved in educational activities. He (Freire, 1972) noted; "without dialogue, there is no communication and without communication there can be no education." There are two main types of small group work, In the first one the pupils the pupils are given a specific task to achieve; and are asked to explore an issue through discussion (Kyriacou, 1990). The second type of small group work is absent in CLIP schools, the students are not given chance to discuss certain issues amongst themselves or with the teacher. In this sense it was observed that the purpose of small group was not being served in CLIP schools because in CLIP schools students read books only by rotations, copied things from the board and memorized the lessons within the group tasks which could also be also done by sitting in large group. The purpose of small group that is to discuss content or substance within the group, to exchange views, and to help solving each other's problems through dialogue was found to be absent.

Although, the CLIP project is based on this method, unfortunately, it was observed that the purpose of small group system was not effectively served due to the lack of adequate classroom management skills of the facilitators. Under the method, several groups (5 groups) worked simultaneously and the teacher had to cover every group. It was found that the teachers spent too much time with one particular group, proving that teachers have limited skill in time

management. As a consequence of these learners in other groups lose their attention – and they were found to be gossiping or playing games with each other. The scenario was similar in one of the NFPE schools.

On the other hand, the performance of another NFPE school was quite good. Although, small group activities in the NFPE schools were organized for a short time on a particular task, it did not appear to be monotonous and the learners were found to be highly attentive. Besides reading books and doing different exercises within the group, students were asking each other questions from the text. The teacher was adequately skilled in time management, large group activity organization and also in realizing and serving the purpose of small group activity.

Within the framework of the small group method, a group leader is selected from each group to facilitate the peer group tutoring, which involves one pupil helping or teaching another on a one to one basis (Allen, 1976; Morgan and foot, 1985). In many cases this arrangement causes trouble in the sense that the rest of the members find it difficult to accept the group leader's role as a tutor. Probably this practice serves to highlight one's sense of failure and lower status (Kyriacou, 1990). In fact, this type of problem was also observed in CLIP schools. It was frequently evident that the group leader beat her group members. On the other hand, the group leaders as classmates, are often unable to detect deficiencies in others. As a consequence some always lag behind and their sense of inferiority is perpetuated.

Teachers ask questions and correct the copies of the group leaders mainly so that later he or she will be able to teach his or her peers. So there exists some kind of discrimination, which may upset or discourage other students. It was felt that the teachers of CLIP schools could not realize the concept of small group activities, they were found to be more relaxed in the class and they were found taking to be attentive mainly to group leaders, whilst focusing less on other students.

Studies of group work (e.g. Kerry and Sands, 1984) have indicated that group work is more successful when the teacher shows skill in handling and understanding groups, gives a positive lead before group work begins, and follows up group work by pooling the discussion and giving feedback on the work produced. A substantial amount of the teacher's time is required to support

and guide the students in order to develop their skills. Yet in CLJP schools it was felt that the teachers as facilitator were not that skilled in handling and understanding the groups, which would make the group work process successful. As a result, despite being a very effective program, CLIP schools were not able to work that successfully.

Large group

Large group system is another method of classroom organization in both types of BRAC schools, which facilitates two way communications between the teachers and the students. In this system all the classroom activities are done within large group. Only exercises such as reading storybooks are done within small groups. As NFPE schools are mostly based on large group system, these schools are not that much affected by the problems associated small group system. In fact there are some advantages of this method. In this system the learners sit in a U shaped line, so that both the teachers and the students can see each other. It was observed that a teacher could give equal attention to all students. In fact it was found that the teacher ask question to all the students. So the system makes it easier for the learners to be more careful and aware of their studies. They were more attentive in comparison to the students of small groups. Although the students talk to each other very often in large group system the teacher is able to observe every student from her place. The teacher also keep each of them busy and engaged by asking questions or by asking them to read by rotation.

Within the large group process, much emphasis is given on the uniqueness or individuality of the student. There is a system of dividing the students of the whole class into 1,2,3 and 4 numbers and each of them will have to do tasks on different things. For example, each student will do sums with different numbers or write answers to different questions. It is expected that each student will make different sentences with a word and this is maintained very carefully.

Classroom Practices

Classrôom practices have a major influence on student's achievement level. Some important issues on classroom practices of BRAC schools will be discussed here.

Method of explaining lessons

A teacher's competence may be judged by his or her ability to explain the whats, hows and whys to his or her students, capabilities of taking into account the student's aptitude, knowledge and understanding. Thus being able to deliver a combination of explanations, questioning, example giving and learning activity to facilitate the knowledge and understanding required (Kyriacou, 1986, Wragg and Wood, 1984).

In BRAC schools of this study, it was found that the teachers repeated things over and over to ensure retention by the students. It was found that when a teacher introduced a poem, she repeated the title at least ten times and asked the students to also recall the title. This time could be used in explaining other issues related to the poem. In both types of schools it was observed that teachers read books line by line but did not explain it to the students. Khan also found similar practices in her study and said that 'actual time devoted to teaching that is explaining, expanding, simplifying- amounts to very little'.

It was observed that the teachers of CLIP schools did not explain the steps involved in solving mathematical problems. They simply solved the problem on the board. This obstructed the students from learning the logic behind the specific problems. Whilst solving mathematical problems the students did not understand whether they should carry out an addition or a subtraction or a multiplication. Thus, when an evaluative test was taken it was found that out of 32 students only 16 could do the sums and among them 5 did the calculations incorrectly. On the other hand, the other 16 students could not even understand the methodical logic.

In NFPE schools it was observed that the mathematical logic was taught very nicely and it was evident in the work of the students. It was also observed that with the exception of 3 students, the remaining number could understand the logic and solve the problem correctly. Students knew when to add, subtract or multiply. Therefore the difference between CLIP and NFPE schools may be attributed to the lack of mathematical training of the teachers.

It was observed that the teachers read the topic out loudly at the beginning in front of the students, then she asks the students to read, and finally she asks questions from the lesson but

fails to put any effort into analyzing or explaining the meanings. As a result, students fail to understand new concepts. For example, in a NFPE school, when the learners were being taught something about 'রাজধানী' (capital), 'মাপ' (map), 'বঙ্গোপসাগর' (Bay of Bengal), the teacher did not explain capital, map and Bay of Bengal was. She only gave plain information like 'ঢাকা বাংলাদেশের রাজধানী' (Dhaka is the capital of Bangladesh).

As students are learning things by following the sounds only, without knowing the words and their meanings, they were pronouncing the sentence 'who are she' (instead of 'who is she') as 'wa she'. So actually they are learning neither the pronunciation nor the meaning. Even when they were reading 'This is Abu ,This is Mina' meanings of these sentences were not being taught. Gradually the vocabulary of the students will increase and if they did not learn the meanings of words, they would not be able to remember and retain these words. This will also occur because they do not practice English in their daily life. It was also seen that the students wrote the pronunciations of A, B, C, D and apple, bag, cat etc. in Bangla in their books. This may mean that they feel more comfortable with Bangla words and meanings. Yet students were not taught the Bangla meanings.

Knowledge retrieval

Education is about acquisition of knowledge and about learning together. The act of knowing and acquiring knowledge (learning) is not a solitary but an eminently social act, education and learning imply a dialogical process, an exchange of knowledge (Carmen, 1995). From this quotation it is realized that education is a process of gaining knowledge which can not be acquired by memorizing the lesson. The practice of memorizing a lesson rather than understanding it is a significant problem for most of the BRAC schools. As a general practice, the learners are given more than enough time either in small group or in large group, to read the lessons several times and to memorize the lessons.

In BRAC schools knowledge retrieval is done through questioning the students frequently, and through monthly evaluations. It was observed that when the students were asked to give the

summary of a story, they started telling the whole story line by line. Neither in CLIP schools nor in NFPE schools has the practice of telling substance in their own language been developed.

Students can not tell the stories in their own words. They always try to memorize it by heart and tell the story line by line from the book. As a result, when they can not remember the next line they simply stop. Yet it was observed that if they were given a chance to read the story minutely only twice, they were able to recall it in their own words. This means the problem is in the system in which there is a tendency to read things several times with the intention of memorizing it.

It was a normal scene that if any one failed to answer, he or she would stand still until the teacher asked him or her to sit. Beating and teasing the students was a normal issue. As for example it was found that the teacher was teasing a student for her physical disability or for her illiterate parents.

It appeared that the teachers created a sort of deemed on students to recall each and every word from a book. For example, if a student forgot to recall the name of the vegetable, he or she was pressurized to recall that specific name. This process encourages or creates a burden to learn the lesson by heart. Khan observed that *"teachers are reluctant to give any credit for answers that may be, partially correct, evince displeasure at dissonant answers even if they reveal an element of creativity and prefer adherence to what has been explicitly taught in class rather than allow students to experiment and explore on their own"*.

There is a tendency amongst students to use bookish language whilst answering questions. May be the reason behind this is the process of asking questions. That is as the teachers ask question in bookish language students also answer in the same manner. Khan said, *" teachers ask for answers in student's own language but never insists upon that or rarely do they expect it."*

An excellent practice was observed in NFPE schools that is on Thursday the teachers concentrate only on revising the previous studies that were achieved during the whole week. This process seems to be very useful for the students to ensure or verify their understanding.

Vocabulary learning process

At primary school level the knowledge of the teacher as well as their way of delivering knowledge plays an important role in their student's level of comprehension. Both in CLIP and NFPE schools it was observed that the teachers were not serious about teaching the word-meanings at all. In fact, they had limited knowledge themselves. Sometimes it was observed that they were teaching wrong meanings. For example, it was evident that the teacher of a CLIP school was teaching the meaning of *গুপ্তধন* (treasure) as *সোনা, রোপা* (gold and silver), *গুরুজন* (elders) as *গুরুজনদের সম্মান করা* (to respect elders). On the other hand, whilst teaching how to make sentences, the teacher was making a sentence with *প্রতিজ্ঞা* (promise) as *চাচা সিগারেট খাওয়া প্রতিজ্ঞা কর* (Uncle promise to smoke). As a consequence it was found that students were making wrong sentences with *গুপ্তধন*, *গুরুজন* and *প্রতিজ্ঞা*. This was observed in one of the selected NFPE school. May be it happened because of the teacher's limited knowledge on Bangla vocabulary, and also because the exercise part of the second year Bengali book had no word meaning section.

A similar finding was observed in a CLIP school where wrong English was being taught. Whilst teaching sentences like 'who is she?', the teacher was teaching 'who are she?', and was indicating only one person when teaching 'who are they?' The teacher had misconceptions between 'he' and 'she' too.

Teaching in CLIP schools is mostly material based. Different types of charts are used to teach letters and words. In CLIP schools learners are taught the alphabet first then they are shown the picture, and finally they are taught a word based on that particular alphabet. There is no system of teaching the meanings of the words. For example, when introducing the letter N the learners were introduced with the letter N first, then the picture of a nose and finally the pronunciation of nose. There is no doubt that the process was innovative and was developed with the idea of quickly becoming familiar with the letter. Unfortunately, it was found that some learners could not get the meaning from the pictures. For example, when they were asked to give the meaning of nose, they answered *নখ* (nails), and the meaning of apple as *কমলালেবু* (orange). In fact, an apple is a very rare thing to rural children, so they probably said orange because of the round

shape. It is therefore evident that if the meanings are not taught verbally, misperceptions may be created.

Besides, the learners were not taught the different nuances of a meaning. For example, students were taught the meaning of **ভার** as sad which was contextually correct but there is another meaning to the word, and that is **ওজন** (weight) which was not introduced to the students. Students were memorizing the meaning of the word **অবোধ** as **অজ্ঞান** which itself is a hard word for students of the second year.

Developing creativity

Developing creativity among the learners is a part of knowledge creation (Carmen, 1995). The process includes in BRAC schools, writing and oral practices. In CLIP schools the learner's performance in creative writing, was found to be quite good as because when some students were asked by the researcher to write on some unseen issues, it was found that they performed well. But a tendency was found amongst some of them that they tried to write on common topics. They tended to choose the same topics over and over again.

Some learners were found to quarrel amongst themselves because they wanted to write on the same topic, which may be indicative of their fear of learning new ideas. Such a situation does not usually encourage creative thinking.

Teachers in BRAC schools, especially, when teaching poems do not ask the learners to give the summaries, rather they write it on the board and ask the students to copy it. In this way the scope of exploring the creativity of the students was being obstructed. In CLIP schools it appeared that whilst making sentences, the teachers made the sentences themselves. Often they picked up sentences from the books and taught it to the group leaders. The group leaders consequently taught it to other students. Thus, through this process, the learners were deprived of showing their own creativity. Khan (1995) mentioned that, generally the focus was on the mechanics of literacy- on pronunciation, spelling, punctuation, and copying- rather than on original writing, the creative use of words, development of analytical skills, and reasoning ability.

Culture of asking questions

The process of teaching- learning through a two way question answer method is considered as a very effective method of learning. Unfortunately, the practice of asking questions was not found in any of the selected schools. This drawback was observed in both the CLIP and NFPE schools. It was observed that instead of asking question to the teacher, some students copied from the student next to him or her. While giving lessons on a topic, the teachers often did not ask the learners whether they had any problem in understanding the topic or not. But it was expected that BRAC schools would be the place where this type of traditional classroom practices would be demolished. On the other hand in NFPE schools a good practice was evident that is the teachers ask questions on the topic frequently.

Issues related to assignments

It was observed that the teachers of CLIP schools were not at all serious about home work. They put correct signs without seeing slates or homework copies. As a result, the students learned things incorrectly. For example, in one instance, students wrote sentences like, "বাংলাদেশের জাতীয় পতাকা কাঠাল" (National flag of Bangladesh is jack fruit), the meaning of শহীদ (martyred) they wrote 'যারা অন্যদের সাথে যুদ্ধ করে' (who fight against others), and the teacher put right signs for those answers. Students bring home works according to their will. It was found that most of the students brought assignments on A-Z or 1-50 though they were students of class III. It was also observed that same student did the same home work every day. When the teacher was asked about the reasons behind this she replied that 'it is not important that on which topic they do their assignments rather it is more important that they are regular about their assignments'. If a student of class III practices lessons of class I, it is not at all useful for them because the purpose of doing home work is to practice lessons that are learnt daily in class, so that it will be easier for a student to be update and regular with lessons. In the observed cases, the purpose of homework was not being served at all. Where as in NFPE schools it was found that the teachers are serious in giving, checking, correcting assignments as well as following up on students practices.

Teaching aids

Teaching material and its effective use are the two most important factors which make the teaching process successful. As mentioned earlier since the Bengali book does not have the word-meaning section and the teachers do not have a sufficient level of educational background, they are teaching the wrong meanings.

Another material related problem was found in the Radio Interactive Instruction Programme of BRAC. This is followed only in NFPE schools. It was found that the instruction from the tape was so fast that it became hard for both the teachers and the students to maintain a similar speed. Most of the instructions were in English, so sometimes the students could not understand what they were actually asked to do. Moreover, sometimes it was found that the contents did not match the chart or the picture. For example, the cassette said 'Children, look at the chart--- a cat is sitting on the wall' but there was no picture according to the voice. There are other similar examples, such as, the voice said 'the boy is thin' where as the picture was of a girl and there was a sentence saying 'the rat is black', but the picture was of a white rat. In this programme, it is essential for the teacher to practice her activities with the tape to make the class effective. Due to a shortage of batteries teachers can not do this.

Issues related to gender balance

BRAC recognizes a women's right to equality in all spheres of life, and particularly in education. From this point of view, special emphasis is given to the BRAC education programme, especially to those who have never been enrolled in school. Although boys and the girls were found to be sitting in a mixed pattern, it was observed that in a CLIP school boys and girls sat separately. The small groups were also based on gender, that is boys and girls had separate groups. When inquired upon the teacher said that she had received no instructions regarding group formation and gender balance in school activities. It was observed that a boy refused to sit next to a girl after he had had a fight with another boy, and the teacher had selected a separate place for him to sit. In another instance, the teacher asked the girls to come out of the classroom after the boys when the researchers wanted to take a picture outside. When asked why, the teacher said that the girls may get hurt if all of them wanted to go together. Interestingly, while

making sentences it was found that male students were making sentences like "I will fight against the enemy" whereas female were writing sentences like "It is bad to fight" or like "I won't fight".

School supervision

Supervision of schools is one of the management supports for improving the teachers' pedagogical skills. As the procedure of BRAC schools supervision, the supervisors visit each school twice a week, and spend approximately 40 minutes in each school. Their works related to classroom supervision include; examining teacher's and learner's attendance, evaluating learner's progress on lessons and examining whether teachers follow the instructions given by the programme personnel.

From the experience of classroom observation, the researchers realized that the supervisors played an active role in the classroom. Their approach was seemed to be more authoritarian than participatory.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Knowledge in the classroom provides the setting in which students and teachers interact, curriculum is transmitted, and learning takes place. The teaching-learning process is at the core of what transpires in the classroom on a given day. The teachers who facilitate, and participate in the teaching-learning process can be considered to be the key figure influencing the nature and the quality of activities that take place in any classroom. Thus, any analysis on the quality of a school will have to focus on these two issues, i.e., teachers and the teaching-learning process.

Keeping the above principle in mind, a new experimental project named Chandina Learning Improvement Project (CLIP) was undertaken and aimed at improving the teaching-learning process of the existing NFPE approach. The major characteristics of the project were, small group activities as the major classroom practice, and using intensive teaching aids, such as, alphabet cards, wheel charts, word cards, pulling charts etc..

This study, however, aimed to make an analysis of the classroom management of both types of BRAC schools (NFPE and CLIP), and to examine how far the classroom practices facilitated an effective teaching-learning process. The selected schools were observed for a period of one week through a participatory classroom observation method focusing on classroom management and practice.

The researchers found that the small group and large group classroom methods were the predominant teaching-learning approach of the schools. The small group method is supported by many studies. One of these (Kerry and Sands, 1984) indicates that it is more successful where the teachers show skills in handling and understanding the groups. It also gives a positive lead before the group work begins. It follows the group work by pooling the discussion and giving feedback on the work produced. Unfortunately, the findings of this study does not support the contention that the small group method in both types of schools was effective. Although serious efforts were being made to ensure that the project was successful, the researchers think that emphasis was mostly placed on developing the teaching methods and the teaching aids and not on the shortcomings of the facilitators.

Khan (1995) emphasized that the key factor in successful schooling was the teacher's role in developing the skills of the learners' skills. She noted that for effective and successful schooling, *"developing skills of the students, a substantial period of teacher support and guidance is necessary before pupils can show what they are capable of."* ~~The researchers came to a similar~~ conclusion. They also realize that the teachers' skills should be developed through ensuring different supports such as: training, refresher courses, continuous guidance and school supervision. More importantly, the researchers further realize that it should be examined whether these efforts are effective through proper implementation of the goals.

Although NFPE is trying to incorporate gender sensitivity in to it's programmes, there are instances when this intention is not reflected in the outcome. The sitting arrangement in the CLIP classroom observed in this study could be an example of these instances. The boys and the girls wanted to sit separately. One reason could be their socialization process, through which, since childhood, they are exposed to gender segregated practices. They observe the adults behaving in

ways that implant gender bias in to their minds. There fore it is important to inform and train teachers about these sensitive issues, and ensure that they are able to deal with a variety of situations. The gender bias in which exists the classroom could be the result of the teacher's own bias as well. This can also be attributed to the teacher's own socialization process, their social environments, their low level of education and so forth. Therefore teachers training and orientation could include sections on gender issues. Making the teachers more conscious would eventually affect their classroom management and performance, and could eventually be reflect in their students.

Some of the findings in this study are similar to what Khan had previously found in her study, "Village School in Bangladesh: Caught between Tradition and Change". For example as, it was found that a sort of pressure was being created on the students to memorize and recall what was written in books. Instead of allowing the students to explore on their own, focus was given more on pronunciation, spelling, and copying, rather than on original writing and the development of analytical and reasoning ability. Above all there was an absence of good will from the teachers, and a failure in taking initiative to make students answer in their own language was evident . But Khan's comment on the teacher's role, in which she said, ' teachers are just as authoritarian as primary school ones'- has changed, especially, in CLIP schools, where teachers work as facilitators, and the group leaders almost take on the role of teachers .

Finally, it can be concluded that an innovative or improved system alone can not make effective improvement in any programme. but rather a combination of other factors such as teachers' pedagogical skills, their skills on classroom management, effective supervision of schools, and the close guidance of the teachers are also influential determinants for the success of non-formal primary education programmes, in particular.

Issues for Management

The education program of BRAC is widely known and recognized both within and outside the country. Though both NFPE and CLIP projects are running successfully, there are some problems in both types of schools, which should be sought out and solved in order to make the

programs more effective. A gap was observed between the program goals and its implementation process, specifically in CLIP project, which can be solved only by frequent visits and long term observation/supervision, since this project is still in its initial stage.

Since the quality of schools depends on the skills of the facilitators or the teachers, it is very essential to provide them with good training. As their level of education is not that high they need some additional training.

Close and frequent observation is needed at the field level especially for innovative projects like CLIP and IRI. Observations is needed to understand the gap that may exist between the goals and the processes of implementation of the program. It is important to locate the shortcomings. Other wise despite being an excellent program, it will not work effectively. Therefore, immediate steps should be taken to reduce the gap between the program, the management and the teachers.

Presently the supervision of schools, consists of a quick evaluation of the classroom based on asking students a few question from their daily lessons, checking attendance, teaching plans and so on. However this is not sufficient, as more intricate and deeper issues may escape the supervisors eyes. The evaluation process could be designed in such a way that it includes deeper observation and a longer time span. A more elaborate training schedule could be initiated for the supervisors to achieve this goal. The system of repetition of lessons should be reduced and the practice of explaining and discussing lessons should be increased. This will help reduce the tendency of the students to memorize things.

A classroom environment could be created in which students will feel encouraged to ask question to the teachers. As a result of this So that students will be able to be clarify their confusions and the teachers will also have a better understanding about her /his student's limitations in the teaching and learning process.

To make the small group method more effective, the practice of reading, memorizing and copying things could be reduced. The practice of discussing lesson amongst themselves, asking quiz questions to each other and some sort of team assignment may be introduced. This will help students to show their capabilities.

Teachers should be given knowledge and training on gender issues, so that they will be more alert or conscious about equal participation of both boys and girls in the classroom and they will be able to give the students an idea of equity. This will also help them to avoid gender biased comments and activities .

Finally, it can be said that as BRAC is planning to expand an excellent programme like CLIP in other NFPE schools, more focus should be given on the shortcomings or the gaps in its implication. As the success of CLIP schools is based on the high pedagogical skills of the teachers in managing the small group activities, it should be kept in mind before expanding this programme, that the teachers as well as the supervisors of this project need effective and frequent training, especially since the level of education of BRAC teachers is low.

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