

BRAC'S DAYCARE CENTER:

Notes from non-participant observation

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Abstract

This non-participant observation study on BRAC's day care centre for the toddlers (started in 1997, located near the BRAC head office and run by GRC of BRAC) was done to see the existing condition of the center and how effectively it conforms to the early childhood development principles. Based on the daily schedule, four different points in time during four subsequent days were chosen for one-hour observations by two observers with the different ECD-aspects of the observation scheme in mind. To ensure objectivity, the observers tried to interact as little as possible with the children and the attendants. It was observed that the daycare center is a large place (100 m²) consisting of four different spaces for sleep, breast-feeding, play etc. The place appears very clean. It is cleaned twice a day by a cleaner and the attendants clean it as and when required. The place looks also safe. The children were allowed to move around freely and explore. Attendants only interfered when the exploring was harmful or seemed dangerous. Not many toys were available, except for some plastic squeeze-animals. Babies were supported to sit and stand if they could, but this was not frequent. Other physical development stimulation was noticed when an attendant showed a child how to draw a figure, or when an attendant was clapping her hands and a baby tried to imitate her and also when an attendant sang a song and meanwhile moved the legs of a baby. The possibilities for children to learn by touching, tasting, hearing, seeing and moving were quite limited. A lot of communication between children and attendants took place in spite of their age. The children were not taught concepts of colors, number or symmetry and their creativity was not intentionally challenged. Nevertheless, attendants demonstrated certain things to children, such as pointing out body parts or drawing little circles on a piece of paper. The children were taught some appropriate behavior, for instance to say goodbye to the observers or to share candy, to put things away or to show praise to another child who achieved something. They also got corrected in a friendly and verbal way while misbehaving. In the interaction between attendants and children, gender differences have not been observed. Most of the children seemed happy and quite at ease in the daycare center. Attendants were very patient with the children during feeding, especially when they had difficulties with eating. The possibilities for play were not very elaborate and playing was also not very much stimulated. No joint activities, like singing together or story telling, where most of the children can take part in, take place. Given the limitations, it is concluded that the daycare center's environment is stimulating for these children and gives them a head start compared to a child of the same age who stays at home and is looked after by a family member or servant. The implications of these findings and suggestions for improvement are discussed.

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Introduction

We, two Dutch students, have worked as interns at BRAC's Research and Evaluation Division (RED) on the subject of Early Childhood Development (ECD) to complete our Master-program Nutrition and Health at Wageningen University. It was our assignment to set a research agenda for RED on ECD for the next 5 years. At one point during our literature search, we realized that we did not know much about the childrearing practices in Bangladesh. The only knowledge we had originated from the books we had read during our literature search. For that reason we decided to pay some visits to BRAC's daycare center to get an impression about how Bangladeshi people interact with their children. We soon found out that the day care center is still more or less in a test phase and that our observations could be very useful for the center. Therefore we describe them in this report. This report has the following objectives:

- To describe what we have seen and learnt about the childrearing practices of the attendants in the daycare center.
- To find out what happens in the daycare center related to ECD.
- To give our opinion and ideas regarding the operation of the daycare center.

Part one of this report will cover the observation in the daycare center. It starts with an introduction of BRAC's daycare center in general. After that the methods of the observation are discussed. These are followed by the results of the observation and conclusions drawn from the results. These conclusions are divided in general conclusions and conclusions related to ECD. Finally this part ends with a discussion.

For a additional information we decided to interview Miss Begum L. Mahfuz Rosy, who is responsible for the daily matters of the daycare center, and the attendants. Because this center was started with the help of Phulki, and that this organization has trained the attendants, we also visited them. The results of these interviews and visits cover part two of this report. The report ends with our overall recommendations regarding BRAC's daycare center.

PART ONE: OBSERVATION IN BRAC'S DAYCARE CENTER

Introduction to BRAC's daycare center

BRAC's daycare started with the help of 'Phulki' (meaning 'sparks'), which is engaged in the organization of daycare centers in Bangladesh. The day care center has started in February 1997 with two children. The center is doing well at the moment, but it is still more or less in a test phase. It is located in a rented house next to the BRAC center building. Only children from BRAC staff, aged zero to three, have access to this facility. At completion of three years, they will move on to a pre-school. The costs for the parents are low: Taka 300 per month for office staff and Taka 50 per month for office assistants. The center is taken care of by the Gender Resource Center (GRC) and one of their staff, Miss Begum L. Mahfuz Rosy, is responsible for the daily matters.

At the moment there are 17 children enrolled in the center. The main objective of this center is to give mothers the opportunity to breastfeed their children at least during the first 6 months of their baby's life, while working at BRAC. In this center, mothers have the opportunity to visit their children 2 to 4 times a day while breastfeeding, and 1 to 2 times a day otherwise. If children are sick they have to stay home. There, a grandmother, an aunt or a servant most of the times looks after them. Every attendant (called auntie) has three to four children under her supervision. The attendants have received a training organized by Phulki. There is no special program in the center, besides the daily routine of playing, bathing, eating and sleeping. The daycare center is open from 8.00 a.m. until 5.30 p.m. The daily schedule is as follows:

8.15 a.m.	Entry of the children
8.45 a.m.	Get changed
9.00 a.m.	Play
10.45 a.m.	Food (fruit)
11.00 a.m.	Bath
11.30 a.m.	Sleep
1.00 p.m.	Lunch
3.00 p.m.	Play (small children sleeping)
3.30 p.m.	Food (milk and/or other food)
4.30 p.m.	Wash, change and get ready for the mothers
5.15 p.m.	Arrival of the mothers

Methods

Before starting the observations, a scheme with different components regarding the physical, cognitive, social and emotional aspects of ECD, based on different ECD-documents (*Training manual, Save the Children USA, 1998; Early Childhood Development in Bangladesh, UNICEF, 2000*) was made (see annexure I). Besides these aspects, other important matters like the environment, the feeding practices, and safety and hygiene were observed. Based on the daily schedule, four different points in time during four subsequent days were chosen for one-hour observations. These were successively 10.00 a.m., 13.00 p.m. (the beginning of a day, due to a hartal), 14.00 p.m. (lunch and bathing time) and 16.15 p.m. (the end of a day). After four days we did not observe new things. Two observers chose different positions in the daycare center to observe. Observations of the things that happened in the center were written down with the different ECD-aspects of the observation scheme in mind. The attendants were notified about the observation but they did not know exactly when these observations would take place. To ensure as much objectivity as possible, the observers tried to interact as little as possible with the children and the attendants. After observation, the observation notes were compared and written down according to the observation scheme planned before.

Results

From the 28th of June until the first of August 2002, the children and the attendants in BRAC's daycare center were observed at the following times: 2.05 p.m., 1 p.m., 9.40 a.m. and 4.20 p.m. On these days the children ranged in number from 12 to 15 and there were always 5 attendants present. On three of the four days a servant girl was also present.

First some general features of the daycare center, such as the environment/ the place itself and the safety and hygiene aspects will be described. After that the results will be discussed based on different ECD components regarding physical, cognitive, social and emotional development, completed with a paragraph on the feeding practices.

GENERAL FEATURES OF THE DAYCARE CENTER

The daycare center is a large place (100 m²) consisting of four different spaces. There is one sleeping space with some cribs, one separate room with a few mattresses where the mothers can breastfeed their babies and two additional cribs, a space behind a low wooden screen with mattresses for the bigger children to sleep on and one crib, and an open space. In the open space there is one gathering point with another mattress and a television. This is where the attendants and children sit down most of the time and interact with each other. There are two bathrooms where the children are washed and bathed during the day and before going home. There are several potties standing in line next to one of the bathrooms for children's use. There is also a refrigerator to keep the food the mothers bring for their children. There is a small balcony but, apart from drying laundry, it is hardly used. There are several closets that contain the clothes of the children. Several grilled windows ensure that the place is well lighted. Fans are present to keep the space well ventilated. Apart from the wooden screen, which is painted in bright colors, the walls of the daycare center are white. There are hardly any decorations attached to the walls and ceiling. This results in the rather dull appearance of the daycare center.

The place appears very clean. It is cleaned twice a day by a cleaner and the attendants clean as and when required. The place looks also safe. The children cannot pass the door since there is a small, wooden fence in front of it, which they cannot open from inside. Around the balcony there is also a fence so the children can wander freely on the balcony. There are hardly any sharp edges where the children can bump into or things they can trip over. The toys that were available for the children appeared safe. For the rest, there were no dangerous utensils present or within the reach of the children. The food was stored in places where children could not reach it.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT:

The children were allowed to move around freely and explore. Attendants only interfered when the exploring was harmful or seemed dangerous. The older children who had the urge to walk or run could do this in the open space of the daycare center. While the children were moving around or on the mattress the children were summoned to sit on it.

There were not many toys available, except for some plastic squeeze-animals. Children were encouraged to hold and manipulate these toys. Besides these toys children got or found other objects to play with, such as laundry pins or a wad of cotton wools. At some point children who did not want to be fed were given some pencils and some magazines to draw on.

Babies were supported to sit and stand if they could, but this was not frequent. Other physical development stimulation was noticed when an attendant showed a child how to draw a figure, or when an attendant was clapping her hands and a baby tried to imitate her and also when an attendant sang a song and meanwhile moved the legs of a baby.

COGNITIVE AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

The possibilities for children to learn by touching, tasting, hearing, seeing and moving were quite limited. During some parts of the day the television was on and showed, as it seemed, mostly programs meant for adults. Some of the older children, especially the boys, were really interacting and playing with other children. Some interactions of these older children with small children were

also observed. Often the older ones tried to imitate the behavior of an attendant in their interaction with younger children.

A lot of communication between children and attendants took place in spite of their age. The attendants in general listened and talked to the older children when something appeared to be wrong or when a child said something to an attendant. When a child had difficulties with feeding, the attendants strongly encouraged s/he by talking. When babies made sounds, an attendant often repeated these sounds or the attendant started talking to the baby in response.

The children were not taught concepts of colors, number or symmetry and their creativity was not intentionally challenged. Nevertheless, attendants demonstrated certain things to children, such as pointing out body parts or drawing little circles on a piece of paper.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Some children related well to other children, through communicating in some way or through touching each other or playing with one another. They related also to their attendants. Some children seemed to have a special bond with an 'auntie', like a second mother. Almost all the children sought in some way contact with an attendant and they always got a friendly response.

Interactions with their mothers were observed in two days. The separation between mother and child was not always easy and took some time. In most of the cases the attendant took over the mother's role immediately while she brought her child in. Almost all the children were very pleased to see their mothers again at the end of the day. In very few cases this did not happen to be the case, unfortunately.

The children were taught some appropriate behavior, for instance to say goodbye to the observers or to share candy, to put things away or to show praise to another child who achieved something. They also got corrected while misbehaving. The attendants almost always corrected in a friendly and verbal way. An explanation was not always given. In the interaction between attendants and children, gender differences have not been observed.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Praising, appreciation, encouragement and approval were given frequently to children when it concerned eating. At some point children were encouraged to play with toys or a child got praised with a kiss on her tummy for something she said. Most of the children seemed happy and quite at ease in the daycare center. Most attention was given to the babies; they were almost constantly in the vicinity of an attendant. They were almost instantly comforted when necessary. For the older children this was somewhat different. When a child did not need or did not ask for attention, s/he was more or less left on his/ her own. If a child on the other hand asked for attention, he or she got it almost immediately.

FEEDING PRACTICES

The major finding on this was the fact that the attendants were very patient with the children during feeding practices. Especially when they had difficulties with eating. If that was the case, the child was taken apart to a more quiet place, to eat there with assistance of the attendant. The attendants talked a lot while feeding the children; they also tried to distract them from the food but continued feeding. They never gave up, while doing this.

PLAY

The possibilities for play were not very elaborate and playing was also not very much stimulated. Even for very small children play is possible and necessary for their development. Based on the observed behaviour one could see that children were sometimes really searching for play or things to play with.

General conclusions

Based on the results of the observation several conclusions can be drawn. First of all, it is important to keep in mind that this day care center is still in a testing phase and that the concept of ECD is new in Bangladesh. This explains partly why some knowledge on ECD is still lacking. Another important conclusion is the fact that the children in the daycare center have the opportunity to be and play with children of their own age. This is a good thing because this promotes their social development. For that reason the daycare center's environment is very stimulating for these children and gives them a head start compared to a child of the same age who stays at home and is looked after by a family member or servant. It is also good that the attendants have not many children under their supervision. Because of this all the children get more than enough attention. The attendants showed a lot of patience with all the children, even when the children were a bit cranky. The feeding practices are good. Furthermore, the day care center is a safe and hygienic place.

On the contrary no joint activities, like singing together or story telling, where most of the children can take part in, take place. These kinds of activities stimulate the social development of children. The fact that only one of the walls was painted in bright colors, made the surroundings in the center a bit dull. More simple toys and stimulation of play seem necessary.

Conclusions related to ECD

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Children were free to move around and explore, but this was not stimulated. A lot of physical stimulation was given especially to small babies. The inventory of toys or other objects to hold was quite small.

COGNITIVE AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Enough communication occurs in a way that stimulates language development. But more attention should be paid on other aspects of cognitive development, such as encouraging their creativity and teaching them some simple concepts, as mentioned above.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

A day care center is an ideal opportunity for children to socialize, which is very positive. We have seen this happening in this day care center. In no way children are punished in a wrong way and good behaviours are being taught. Gender differences were not observed in this day care center.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Children get a lot of times positive feedback on their behaviour, but the older children sometimes lack attention. If a child is upset, s/he is almost instantly comforted.

Limitations

- First of all it is important to note that we are not experienced in observing people. This is not a part of any subject in our studies. We tried to find some information about this on Internet, but this appeared not to be very useful. So we mostly just used our common sense.
- One of the important subjects under discussion is the fact that it remains unknown whether the attendants and/ or children behaved differently, because of the presence of the observers. The fact that we were two Dutch white skinned girls already attracted a lot of attention towards us. Especially the first day, some children were even scared of us. So this points out that our presence in one way or another must have disturbed their normal behaving.

- After two days some older children were really trying to make contact with us. When something like that happens, it is very difficult to just ignore that and stay objective. Also some attendants tried at some point to communicate with us. That is something you just cannot ignore and influences their behavior and our observation.
- Another subject worth discussing is the fact that we do not understand Bangla. This makes it impossible for us to tell anything about the contents of the conversation, the children had with their attendants. For that reason it is impossible for us to decide whether the way the attendants communicated with the children was stimulating. Notwithstanding the fact that body language is very important in communication.
- Besides the language we also had to deal with a culture difference. The observations were done in our own frame of reference. Some practices just were different, but therefore not inferior to the practices in our country. The fact that we are not familiar with the culture gives us also an advantage, because it makes us more objective in our judgments. Our visits to the daycare center were a good and instructive experience for us.

PART TWO: INTERVIEWS

BRAC's daycare center

MANAGEMENT: INTERVIEW WITH MISS BEGUM L. MAHFUZ ROSY

Miss Begum L. Mahfuz Rosy has been working with BRAC for the last nine years. Since 1995 she is working for BRAC's Gender Resource Center (GRC). In GRC her major function is to collect and disseminate gender related information for BRAC staff as well as others who are interested.

The idea for a BRAC daycare center was the outcome of GRC team members' observation and interaction with BRAC staff at different levels. It was clear that many mothers had difficulties with childcare after their maternity leave ended. They were worried about their child's well being and had difficulties in concentrating on their jobs. Apart from that, their children were also deprived from breastfeeding. BRAC is always in favor of the establishment of gender equity and because of the commitment to promote a gender sensitive working environment, BRAC started a daycare center in its head office.

BRAC is always eager to learn from best practices and due to this BRAC hired Phulki to set up their daycare center. Phulki is an experienced organization in establishing and providing daycare services. Phulki trained the attendants in how to maintain a healthy environment in the daycare center and from time to time they shared their experiences with GRC. Phulki's experience enriched GRC about different issues related to daycare management and maintenance. Phulki shouldered the responsibility of developing BRAC's daycare center for one year.

Attendants require a minimum educational level (minimum class V). Besides educational qualification, relevant experience is emphasized as well as their sound health, cleanliness, patience, and sensitivity towards childhood development. The first attendant got a week long on the job training from Phulki to have a clear understanding on taking care of babies and maintenance of the center. Issues addressed during this training were cleanliness, preparation of a balanced diet, feeding practices, bathing, play-activities and other do's and don'ts related to managing a daycare center. The experienced attendants train new attendants. The duration of this training is not fixed but it depends on the attendant's ability, relevant experiences and context. GRC's role in this is counseling, giving advice and monitoring the progress of the new attendant.

Compared to other daycare centers, BRAC's daycare center is not profit driven. Furthermore, BRAC's daycare center developed a culture of sharing among the parents. Management issues as well as odds and pleasures are shared. BRAC's day care center asks for a small fee from the parents as it is highly subsidized compared to other day care centers. BRAC daycare center emphasizes on watching television where others have access to more games and toys. Although there are lots of toys in BRAC's daycare center these are not fully utilized as most of the children want to play with the same toys.

When extra money would be available Miss Rosy would like to extend the age limit of children until 12 years. She would like to introduce pre-schooling, and the possibility for children to spend time before and after school as applicable. In this way they have access to a secured and enjoyable learning center. Another thing she wants to achieve is to open the center for other children. The reason behind extending the age limit and the facilities is to allow the mothers to work with a peaceful mind. These kinds of changes might help empowering the women and also contribute to the socio-economic development of Bangladesh. Regarding the future of BRAC's daycare center, Miss Rosy quotes Mr. Fazle Hasan Abed's comments: "small is beautiful but large is necessary". Now there exists only one BRAC daycare center but these centers must extend throughout BRAC.

THE ATTENDANTS

Methods

The attendants were interviewed in an informal way. Two translators (both BRAC staff at RED) assisted the interviewer by translating and re-translating the conversation. The attendants were interviewed one by one in a corner of the daycare center. There was no official introduction to the interview, nor was our coming announced.

Results

- *What education did you receive?*

Four of the attendants have finished primary school (class five); one of them did not receive any education at all. One of the attendants points out that class five is the minimum requirement for this job.

- *How long do you work for BRAC's day care center?*

One attendant works in the daycare center since the start of the center (five years). For the others it varies from two months until three years.

- *How did you come to work here?*

Almost all of the attendants got informed by acquaintances or family about a job in the daycare center. One of the attendants was a BRAC-organization member in one of the slums. Through BRAC staff she heard about the job.

- *What did you learn in brief during your training for this work?*

The attendant, who worked in the daycare center since the start, has received a seven days practical training from Phulki in another daycare center. She mentions that she learned how to take care of children, how to feed them and to bath them. Two of the others, without prior experience, received training in the BRAC daycare center from one of the experienced caretakers for one month. Until that time they did not have a lot of responsibilities for the children. Two other attendants, who did have prior experience in care taking, received training for only two days or not at all.

- *What do you like about children?*

All the attendants like to take care of them, to bath them and to feed them. They also like their laughing and playing and to see them happy.

- *What difficulties do you face while working in the daycare center?*

When asking the attendants about difficulties they might experience in the center, three of them did not mention any difficulties. Not even after probing. The other two did mention difficulties. They said that sometimes they have to take care of four children instead of three, which is too much for them. Also to take care of the small babies is difficult. They need a lot of attention and care and they are often sick. It has also been mentioned that the salary should be increased. After inquiry, it was mentioned that Taka 1,500 (instead of Taka 1,200) a month would be sufficient.

- *If you got the money to change anything about the center, what would you use it for? And why?*

All the attendants would use such money for buying toys, especially dolls for girls and cars for boys.

- *What did you think of the observers when they were at the daycare center? What do you think they were doing?*

Normally if strangers come into the daycare center, they are not welcomed, but since Miss Rosy introduced the observers, they were welcome. The attendants thought the observers were writing about their activities and the things they did right or wrong. This made them a little afraid to make mistakes and they were extra alert.

Conclusions

- It seems like the attendants were not actually looking for a job as a caretaker of children. They more or less got this job by chance. Maybe it is normal not to have any preferences for a job in Bangladesh since there are not many jobs and most people are just lucky to find a

job. In this interview the women did make clear that they like children and they like to take care of them. This can be confirmed from the observations.

- Phulki trained only one of the attendants for seven days and it seemed like this attendant only learned some practical aspects about childcare. Altogether, this means that only one of the attendants received a one-week training and that knowledge on Early Childhood Development was largely lacking with the attendants.
- Difficulties that are experienced by the attendants relating to their job are to have responsibility for too many children and the salary was considered too low.

Discussion

The interviews were not taken in private. When one attendant was interviewed, others were surrounding her out of curiosity. Once they were summoned to go away, but during the next interview the others returned. Also some children came by. This means that some of the attendants heard the questions on forehand and they also knew what their colleagues had answered. This can result in more socially desirable answers: the attendants did not want to say something their colleagues would not approve of. It can also mean they wanted to answer the same as their colleagues because they may have thought this was the right answer.

The attendants were reluctant to mention difficulties they faced during their work. This might be because they were more or less afraid that this would endanger their jobs. Actually, after a little pressing for an answer they did come up with some problems. This idea seems to be confirmed by the last question in the questionnaire about the observers. The attendants pointed out that they were a little afraid to do something wrong. Maybe an official introduction and guaranteed anonymity might have helped. The problem is that when there are only five attendants it is almost impossible to guarantee this.

Phulki

INTERVIEW WITH SURAIYA HAQUE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PHULKI

After the early start of day care centers in the Garment Factories, Phulki has developed several guidelines regarding the space where the children are kept. Sometimes it is difficult to keep these guidelines in community based centers because it is very expensive to hire space in Dhaka. In home-based centers, the number of children that can be looked after is defined according to the size of the room. In Phulki daycare centers nothing is provided free of costs. The parents have to take care of the food of their children and they have to pay for services that are provided. This way they are more involved in the care of their children. In the company based centers all stakeholders meet monthly to discuss the course of events. These meetings are also used to spread messages regarding childcare and ECD. Phulki has had positive feedback from the mothers regarding this. They seem to claim that their attitude towards their children has changed positively. Phulki also believes fathers should be involved in childrearing, and are most welcome in the monthly meetings.

Phulki's curriculum of the caregivers training is fully based on ECD principles. Information about ECD comes from different sources like UNICEF and other ECD experts. The training course takes 8 weeks. The students get theoretical classes, practical classes and follow up. Every week different subjects related to Early Childhood Development are addressed. These subjects are: child development, communication skills with children, nutrition, hygiene promotion, child health and first aid, work place management and women empowerment (for more details: see training schedule from Phulki). The students also pay field visits to other daycare centers. They have to be able to read and write and they must take care giving as their future profession as necessity to join the program.

When BRAC wanted to start their own daycare center they came to Phulki for consultancy. After the center was handed over to BRAC Phulki staff has not visited the BRAC's daycare center. In principle there should not be a difference between the activities that take place in BRAC's daycare center and other daycare centers.

VISIT TO PHULKI DAYCARE CENTERS

Factory-based childcare centers

Together with Selma, the training manager of Phulki, we visited two daycare centers, one factory-based center and one community-based center. The factory based daycare center was in a garment factory. There were around 12 children and two caregivers. The center's capacity was twenty children, but a few parents took their children home and others did not have children within this age-span. The center was fairly new and therefore still run by Phulki. After six months the factory shall take over the management.

The center's atmosphere was similar to the atmosphere of BRAC's daycare center. It was clean and well ventilated. There were no cribs present, only one mattress. The furnishing of the room looked rather different. There were much more things for children to look at. There were for instance paper chains attached at the ceiling. These chains had all different colors and shapes and they moved because of the fan. This is a nice and stimulating sight for small children. The walls were decorated with all kinds of colorful posters with written rhymes in Bangla. According to a schedule the attendants do several activities with the children. Besides bathing and feeding, they also do things like singing songs and storytelling. While we were there we observed how the attendants put the bigger children who could sit by themselves in a circle and how they put the smaller babies on their lap. They then started to sing one of the Bangla rhymes to the children accompanied with certain movements. Even though the children were too small to sing with the attendants, they tried to move along with the movements and they really enjoyed themselves. One child was pointing to the wall and the different posters to let us know that he wanted to sing some more rhymes.

Childcare centers in the slums of Mirpur

In the slums of Mirpur we visited a Phulki community center. One of the rooms within the center was a daycare center for children aged 0 to 2 years. The other three rooms were used as childcare and development centers for children aged 3 to 6 years. The children that attend this center are mostly children of housemaids and brick-breakers. The caretakers follow a similar schedule as in the garments' daycare centers. Besides this, there was a child-to-child program organized in this center.

The design of the daycare center here was similar to the center in the garment factory, even though the rooms were made of bamboo. The space was decorated with the same kind of paper chains and posters. There were also some handmade toys for the children to play with. Everything looked simple but clean and child friendly.

The preschool is meant for children aged 3 to 6. Here, only one teacher was present. The children were very eager to sing the rhymes and do the movements that accompany the rhymes. The rhymes were about many subjects like counting, body parts and hygiene matters. By singing these rhymes, children learn to do something with other children (social skills), and they learn something about the message of the song. Also the movements stimulate motor development. The hand-made toys were objects like puzzles, telephones, cars and dolls. We found out that a lot of the hand-made toys and decorations were actually made during the training at Phulki by future caregivers. This way they can practice toy-making skills and the centers have a new supply of these objects. If children did something well, they were praised for this with applause. The children were eager to talk with the visitors and they asked them several questions.

In one of the pre-school classes some very small children were present. It was explained to us that these children were in these classes because the mothers preferred this, even when they were actually too young for the classes. The reason why mothers want this is that they think that their children will learn more than they will in the daycare center. However, in the daycare center the children are also stimulated with different rhymes and activities, according to their young age.

When we visited this center, the regular caregivers in these groups were doing a refresher course at Phulki. The present caretakers were either one of the trainees of Phulki or replacements. One could observe that the children were not used to them. Unfortunately there were several parents who kept their child at home because of this unfamiliar teacher.

Phulki's child-to-child activity program was also implemented there. The fourth batch of child leaders was trained at the center. They learned to build awareness among the slum community about personal and environmental hygiene, nutrition, safe drinking water and sanitation. Each child leader is responsible to teach ten of his or her friends and siblings. Phulki used nice games to convey this message to the children, who were selected because of their characteristics, like honesty, smartness and communicative skills. According to Phulki's evaluation it appears to be an effective method to reach many people in the slums.

Conclusion: Phulki's compared to BRAC's daycare center

A lot of things are quite similar in the BRAC daycare center and the Phulki centers. The largest difference is the stimulation of children, which takes place in Phulki centers, but not so much in BRAC's daycare center. When the first BRAC caretakers were trained, Phulki had not yet developed its 8-week training course based on ECD. Therefore the first attendants were not knowledgeable of ECD principles. The 8-week training does make a big difference as we have observed. The children are more stimulated in all different aspects of ECD.

Another difference is the amount of toys. In BRAC's daycare center there are few toys or objects for children to play with. In the Phulki center hand-made toys are used. Most of them are very easy and cheap to 'make' and they can stimulate the children in several ways.

In the Phulki centers children are also stimulated to do common activities. They even have schedules attached to the walls with the different activities performed during the day. Besides the common activities as feeding, sleeping and bathing, these schedules also contain group activities, like singing rhymes and storytelling. This way they learn to do some things together and this also prepares them for a real school in the near future. Unfortunately, these common activities were not observed in BRAC's center.

Based on the observations it seemed that Phulki has to devote a little more effort to convince the parents at some points about their reliability and quality. It seemed that some of the parents in Phulki centers did not yet have much faith in the center. Either they got their children out or they did not use them at all. On the other hand BRAC's daycare center has a waiting list. Probably Phulki should try to promote their daycare centers more (better).

PART THREE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion and Recommendations

For children to develop their full potential it is very important to stimulate them from the early life in various ways. Even though they might be very young like the babies in the daycare center, all children need enough opportunities to learn. The main way in which caregivers can support young children's optimal development is through appropriate care. Care is an interactive process, the quality of which is dependent on the caregiver's ability to respond to a child's behavior. This responsiveness takes several forms:

- The ability to respond to developmental milestones and cues
- The level of attention, affection, and involvement shown
- The encouragement of autonomy, exploration and learning, especially using the child's five senses (*Mostafa, 2001*)

Therefore, attempts should be taken to use the attendants in BRAC's daycare center in stimulating the children in an interacting way. Talking to children, asking them questions, demonstrating and explaining things, group activities etc. are all simple ways to stimulate their mental development.

It also seems that more toys or objects to play with, should be provided. Depending on the kind of toys, they can stimulate physical development (holding them, moving them), and mental development (like puzzles, building things, putting things into something else). For Child 's age appropriate play things, see annexure III. Apart from really playing with things or manipulating objects, it is also important that young children, especially babies, have enough things to look at. Their environment should be stimulating too. Phulki showed us that it is possible to make fun toys and nice decorations from cheap materials in a simple way.

Some older children showed interest in each other and wanted to interact, this can be stimulated in group activities like singing rhymes together or playing simple games. These kinds of activities will contribute to their social development. Besides, group activities will help children to prepare for pre-school where they have to interact and do things in class. Once the children were observed doing some drawing, but these kinds of activities should take place more often. Maybe some more drawing material should be made available, or some other materials to play around with. The children stay inside all day. We think it would be nice for children to have the opportunity to play outside. They should be able to play in a safe, outdoors environment, where they can explore and catch some sunlight.

In summary, we recommend that all the attendants of BRAC's daycare center follow Phulki's eight-week course on Child Development. Here they will learn about ECD principles and this will enable them to improve their care giving skills. We think that these caregivers have good child caring capacities and that the children are really fond of them. Therefore we think it is good for BRAC and the children to invest in these caregivers. Another solution for the caregivers would be to give them some kind of practical training in an existing Phulki childcare center. For the recruitment of new attendants we strongly recommend to choose a caretaker that has successfully finished Phulki's training.

To give an example of the kind of toys that could stimulate children we would like to refer to annexure II where child's age appropriate playthings are mentioned. In the library of UNICEF we found a small booklet with all kinds of tips and ideas on how to stimulate a child's development (*Swaminatan, 1990*). Annexure III contains some copies of this booklet. Altogether this might help to give an impression of the simplicity of nice and stimulating toys.

In our opinion, this BRAC daycare center has a lot of potential and a positive impact on children as well as their mothers. Therefore we support Miss Rosy's suggestion to expand daycare centers throughout BRAC. If the recommendations are followed to improve the quality of childcare, this daycare center can serve as a good example.

References

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Swaminatan M (1990) *Digest 31. The first three years: a sourcebook on Early Childhood Care and Education*. UNESCO-UNICEF co-operative programme, Paris 1990

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Annexures

ANNEXURE I: OBSERVATION SCHEME FOR BRAC'S DAY-CARE CENTER.

Physical development:

- Free to move around/explore
- Hold and manipulate objects/toys
- Support children sitting, walking, standing
- Clapping hands etc.

Cognitive/intellectual development

- Learn through touching, tasting, hearing, seeing, moving
- Interaction with others
- Interaction with their environment
- Language --> talk to children
- Encourage creativity
- 'Teach' concepts of colors, number, matching, comparing and symmetry
- Demonstrate things, explain things, ask questions
- Hiding things

Social development

- Relating to other children
- Relating to parents
- Relating to attendants
- Learn appropriate behavior --> messages to children must be clear

Emotional development

- How children feel about themselves
- How children feel about others
- Praise, appreciation, encouragement, approval
- Pay attention to child
- Take interest in what children are doing

Safety

- Playthings have to be safe
- Hygiene

Gender differences

Bad behavior --> reaction

Time --> play can be at any time

From birth

- *Objects to look at:*
faces, mobiles, moving leaves, things strung across his bed (bells, colourful bag filled with rice, colourful clothes, fish or birds woven from banana leaf), his own hands to see and suck.

From 3 months

- *Things to hold, look at and make sounds with:*
small plastic bottles or tins filled (and securely closed) with different things such as dry rice (ear-hand) and seeds.
- *Hanging things to reach out to and hit:*
soft balls made from cloth, shiny plastic balls, empty sewing spools, paper ribbon or streamers, leaves (eye-hand)

From 6 months

- *Everyday household objects to examine:*
towel, toothbrush, spoon, cup, his clothes, brush, unbreakable plate (eye-hand, finger-mouth)
- *Objects which produce sounds/noise:*
pots and pans to bang, paper or leaves to tear, rattles to shake.
- *Area where the child can safely crawl around.*

By 1 year

- *Things that are the same and different - size, shape, colour, texture and sound:*
bubbles, pots, cups, plates, leaves, clothes, boxes, bottles, baskets, flowers, seeds, mats, plastic, wood, mud, flour, pouring water, bells
- *Things to fit together and take apart:*
lid on bottle, lid on box, stacking containers, bowls, plates
- *Things to stack and knock down:*
empty boxes, plastic cups
- *Things to fill and empty:*
plastic bottles filled with sand or water, coconut shells, clothes bag, boxes filled with mud, leaves, stones, clothes
- *Things to roll, turn and twist:*
balls, wet clothes to squeeze, lids on bottles, bamboo sticks, plastic bottle, paper roll, push/pull toys
- *Things to count:*
fingers, toes, siblings, animals, stones, spoons, plates, friends
- *Things to pretend with:*
old clothes, towel to use as cape, boxes to make into cars, boats, houses, nature objects for market
- *Safe area for walking, running, throwing and balancing:*
old tires, balls, logs, simple bamboo swings, bamboo see-saws

ANNEXURE III: THE FIRST THREE YEARS: A SOURCEBOOK ON EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND
EDUCATION (1990) BY M SWAMINATAN