

EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS
IN BANGLADESHI ENGLISH VERSION SCHOOLS REGARDING
THE USE OF COMMERCIALY PRODUCED GUIDEBOOKS

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A thesis submitted to the Brac Institute of Languages in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts in TESOL

Brac Institute of Languages
Brac University
September 2021

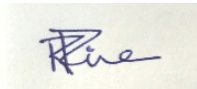
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It is hereby declare that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Ethics Statement

I declare that the thesis titled “EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN BANGLADESHI ENGLISH VERSION SCHOOLS REGARDING THE USE OF COMMERCIALY PRODUCED GUIDEBOOKS” is submitted to the Brac Institute of Languages (BIL), Brac University, in partial fulfillment of the degree MA in TESOL. I want to add that no part of this dissertation copied or plagiarized from other published or unpublished work of other writers, and all materials borrowed or reproduced from other published or unpublished sources have either been put under quotation or duly acknowledged with full reference in the appropriate place(s). I understand that the program conferred on me may be canceled/ withdrawn if subsequently it is discovered that this portfolio is not my original work and contains materials copied, plagiarized, or borrowed without proper acknowledgment.

Abstract

Guidebooks are extremely popular in Bangladesh at present. Libraries, these days, have more guidebooks than literary books stacked on the shelves. The popularity of guidebooks is worth analyzing, because it is indicative of the education system of Bangladesh. This thesis aims to shed light on the usage of and dependency on guidebooks by the students and teachers of Bangladesh, the reasons behind, and the impacts of this dependency. This is qualitative research, which means that this research is focused on the deep understanding and analysis of the issue of guidebooks in the education sector of Bangladesh. For this purpose, focus group discussions have been arranged with students, and interviews have been taken with teachers. This has allowed a clear understanding of the inner workings of the education system of our country.

Dedication

This is to my father and mother, who had been by my side with all their support and inspiration. Their constant faith in me had made me believe in myself and my abilities. This is a humble gesture from me to show my love and gratefulness for them.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my supervisor Hasna Khanom, Senior Lecturer of TESOL Program at Brac Institute of Languages (BIL), for her continuous support and inspiration throughout the journey of my thesis. I was off track for issues in my personal life, but whenever I needed support she was always there for me. I cannot express my gratitude towards my supervisor in words. I am also thankful to Dr. Faheem Hasan Shahed, Mr. Harunur Rashid Khan, Mr. Zohur Ahmed, and the teachers who had been amazing mentors and guides in my TESOL classes. In addition, my heartiest gratefulness goes towards all the teachers who have supported me in my research by answering the questionnaire for the data collection. Lastly, I thank my family; without their support I would have never been able to complete this thesis.

Table of Contents

Declaration	2
Approval	3
Ethics Statement.....	4
Abstract	5
Dedication	6
Acknowledgement	7
Table of Contents	8
Chapter 1	10
Introduction.....	10
1.1. Background of the study	10
1.2. Statements of the problem.....	12
1.3. General Objective.....	13
1.4. Specific Objectives.....	14
Chapter 2.....	15
Literature Review.....	15
2.1.Education System of Bangladesh: The national curriculum and others.....	15
2.2. Shadow Education in the Education System of Bangladesh.....	17
2.3.Influence of Guidebooks in the Education System of Bangladesh.....	19
Chapter 3:.....	23
Methodology	23
3.1. Nature of Research	23
3.2. Research Questions	23
3.3. Research Participants	24
3.4. Data Collection & Analysis.....	27
Chapter 4:.....	29
Findings.....	29
Chapter 5:.....	37
Discussion and Conclusion	37
5.1. Discussion of the Study.....	37
5.2. Conclusion.....	42
5.3. Recommendations	43

5.4. Implication	43
5.5.Limitations.....	44
6. Reference.....	45

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The education system of Bangladesh has undergone several changes throughout the years. One of the most canonical changes is the advent and usage of guide-books, which have become so influential that all the students of Bangladesh seem to be completely or partially dependent on them. This is significant, and worthy of our notice; the anthropologist Margaret Mead said, “Children must be taught how to think, not what to think”, and it has been proven to be right for ages. Children who are encouraged to learn, question, and think independently grow up to be better adults, but in spite of the abundant data and research reaffirming the necessity of independent thinking, the education system of Bangladesh keeps doing otherwise. As a result of this, even the SSC-level students have a tendency to memorize rather than write productively (Islam, Rahman & Alam, 2019).

Prodhan (2016) mentioned that 13 kinds of curriculum are being followed at the primary level of education in Bangladesh, and therefore, academic performance greatly varies from student to student. Although a lot of measures have been taken since the independence of Bangladesh, the result is unsatisfactory. There are, in general, three kinds of academic institution, as highlighted in Prodhan (2016)-

1. National-Curriculum School
2. English Medium School
3. Madrasa

National Curriculum schools can be further divided into two parts- Bangla Medium, and English Version. Both these sections follow the same curriculum and the same syllabus,

but while all the medium of instruction is Bangla in Bangla Medium, it is English in English version (Tutul, 2017). In English medium Schools, however, foreign curriculums, such as, EdExcel and Cambridge are followed (Ahmed, Mohammad & Chowdhury, 2020). It should be noted that, major cities have more English-Medium schools while the villages and suburbs have more Madrasas(Prodhan, 2016). Furthermore, the teachers are supposed to provide contact for 900 hours per year, but only a scant 10% of the total number of teachers do so(The Directorate of Primary Education, 2008). The main method of evaluating students is by assessing their memorization ability, which is rather a poor way of evaluating the intellect, according to UNICEF (Prodhan, 2016). NCTB text-books have been known to make serious blunders in spellings, and information (Khan, 2017). Moreover, researchers are now studying on the gender bias noticed in NCTB text-books and its other limitations (Asadullah, Islam &Wahhaz, 2018). Furthermore, the NCTB text-books also do not focus on the glocal perspectives (Rashid & Rahman, 2019).

It is no surprise then that the students resort to other sources, like- guidebooks, private tutors and suggestion papers, and this practice is called “Shadow Education” (Buchmann, 2010). While a number of organizations and activities can be considered as “Shadow Education”, this research will mostly be focusing on the guidebooks.

Guidebooks are books that encompass suggestions for examination, ready-made answers to previous years’ questions and solutions to the activities given in the NCTB text-book. Profiteering companies which do not really think too much about the growth of intellect of children, rather look for ways to make more profit commercially produce guidebooks. As every student wants to perform better in examinations, and the guidebooks provide them with a shortcut to good results, they buy the guidebooks year after year. However, the guidebooks do not play any role in cultivating the creativity and intellect of children, which is why it can be compared to a dark shadow that looms over the children of

Bangladesh at the present(Adnan, 2018). Guidebooks lead students to the path of ignorance and consequentially, is vitally detrimental for the students and the nation.

Several steps have been taken to reduce the dependency on guidebooks, like- The Note-Books (Prohibition) Act, 1980, which prohibits printing, publication, import, distribution and sale of note-books on text-books for primary schools and secondary schools up to Class VIII(“The Note-Books (Prohibition) Act, 1980”, 1980). Again, in December 2009, the Appellate Division upheld a High Court verdict that banned guidebooks and notebooks and directed the government to take action against anyone found flouting the ban(Alamgir, 2018). Despite laws being made, it is rare to find a school student who does not take help from guide-books. As Siddiqur Rahman, the former Director of the Institute of Education and Research Dhaka University Institute pointed out, there are hardly any initiatives taken by the authorities to stop the booming of illegal guidebook and notebook business (Alamgir, 2018). It is estimated that guidebooks worth about Taka 1,500 crores are sold in the country each year. In spite of research proving the harmful effects of guidebooks, and laws prohibiting guidebooks, the people in this business continue to insist that there is a huge demand for these books and they need to publish these books because it helps the students (Alamgir, 2018). Despite the note-worthy influence of guide-books in the education system of Bangladesh, no research has been conducted solely on this topic, which is why I found it necessary to address the prevalence of guidebooks in our education system, explore the reasons behind the significance given to it, and the possible ways this phenomenon might be affecting the students.

1.2. Problem Statement

The present situation of education in Bangladesh seems to be appalling, given the fact that education has become a platform to excel in, but not to be educated in. Most students at

present memorize the question-answers from their guidebooks instead of studying the books issued by NCTB. Majority of the students need a moment to understand that “English textbook” indicates “the main book”, because they never really studied it; they do not need to take it to school or tuition, because teachers had suggested they study the Nobodut Guide(Amin & Greenwood, 2018). Since the 1990s, the mainstream education system in Bangladesh has lost its most talented mainstream teachers due to the shadow system(Mustary, 2019). Teachers do not seem to be making too much of an effort to teach these days, rather they ask students to buy guidebooks and memorize the “important” question-answers. The system teaches the students that it is more important to get good grades than to learn, and it eventually harms the children’s intellect; according to UNICEF, the culture of memorization is a major cause of poor achievement and low retention(Prodhan, 2016).

This vicious culture of studying guidebooks in the hope of a short-cut to glory and success is fatal to the intellect of the people of our country. Therefore, this thesis is going to focus and explore the reasons behind the dependency on guidebooks, and try to figure out the effects of this dependency in hope that this research will inspire others in the field of education to contemplate on the issue. For this exploration, I will interview teachers, students. This study will further try to illustrate how this practice of Shadow Education proves to be ineffective in the long run, and what we might do in order to make the education system more effective in general.

1.3. General Objective

The general objective of this thesis is to explore the perceptions of teachers and students in Bangladeshi English version schools regarding the use of commercially produced guidebooks.

1.4. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this research is to investigate:

1. The reasons behind the increasing dependency on guidebooks among the students of English version schools in Bangladesh.
2. The effects of the increasing dependency on guidebooks and consequential changes in the education system of Bangladesh.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1. Education System of Bangladesh: The national curriculum and others

Kabir (2016) mentioned in his research that, the NCTB curriculum statement states four main objectives of learning English at Primary level area:

- a. To understand simple commands/ instructions/ requests in English and carry them out
- b. To talk and communicate in English about day to day life
- c. To read and understand different types of texts appropriate to the learners' level
- d. To write in English

Though the curriculum seems positively impactful, the lack of awareness and implementation makes its practicality irrelevant. 63% of primary-school teachers participating in a nation-wide research said that they do not have any knowledge of the Primary English Curriculum, while a staggering 72% of them said that they do not have training on the curriculum (Kabir, 2016). Even the teachers who are aware of the curriculum do not maintain it. Not only does the teachers largely ignore the curriculum, even the text-books do not adhere to the curriculum; the textbook “does not follow the instruction of the Curriculum as it mainly deals with reading and writing skills” (Rashid & Rahman, 2019). There is a very big gap between the understanding of the curriculum and the appliance of it in this country (Amin & Greenwood, 2018). Though it is obligatory for elementary school teachers to have a bachelor's degree (Trines, 2019), according to the Ministry of Education, 40% of the teachers of public primary education do not have any university degree, and less than 50% of the teachers are proficient in teaching (The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education of Government of Bangladesh, 2015). This is hardly surprising, given the fact that an individual does not require any special degree or experience to become a teacher and the only training a

school-teacher has to undergo is an 18-month long training right after becoming a teacher (Siddik & Kawai, 2020).

Many students do not want to attend examinations without intensive tutoring outside the school and this becomes more visible when students' opinions are taken into account. If this is the case, i.e. if most of the students feel that their schools are not doing enough and that they need help from outside sources, teachers must raise their standards (Zhang, Keung & Boyle 2014). Moreover, there is no fixed guideline for learning English in our country, as there is a lack of Language Education Policy (LEP), which makes education in the global village even more difficult and limited (Saha, 2013).

Another interesting point here is the steady decline in the quality of teachers which was parallel to the strengthening of Shadow Education/substitutes for text-books and teachers since the 90s (Mustary, 2019). The weakening of the teachers' capabilities can be logically linked with the flourish of Shadow Education and the repertoire of its elements (Bray, et al., 2018). While some of the teachers intentionally perform poorly in classrooms to increase the necessity of shadow-education which profits them financially, some talented and hard-working teachers lose themselves and their ingenuity in this façade of education (Mustary, 2019).

The education system of Bangladesh seems to have some flaws; according to a research done by Bray (2007) on Shadow education in Bangladesh and some other developing countries, two critical problems are pointed out-

1. The subjects are poorly taught at schools.
2. The students of secondary and higher secondary are not being taught the necessary life-skills at schools.

Tunali (2019) mentioned 27 million students study in the primary and secondary levels of schools in Bangladesh, but teacher-shortage and incapability of teachers led to inadequate education. The pressure on the students to get “Golden A+”- an informal concept unacceptable by the education board, but welcomed by the contemporary culture of Bangladesh which leads many students to be stressed, depressed, and even suicidal (Khan, 2017). Only last year, in 2020, 8 students of English and Bangla version schools committed suicide because of their poor results in a board examination (Khan, 2017).

Mustary (2019) found a clear link between the increasing demand of private-tutors, coaching, guide-books, etc. and the increasing expectation of academic performance. The students of primary and secondary level and their families rely on guidebooks and other forms of shadow education. (Malek, et al, 2013). This shadow education also leads to the dismantling of IE (inclusive education), as it creates a division between students who can afford private tutoring and guidebooks and the students who cannot. This, in turn, violates articles 17 and 28 which dictate equal educational opportunity for every student (Malak et al, 2013).

2.2. Shadow Education in the Education System of Bangladesh

Shadow Education is also an indicator of the hypercompetitive culture of our country when it comes to education. Etchells blamed this hypercompetitive attitude for the expanding market of Shadow Education (Green, 2016). The schools arrange competitive examinations, and the students are pressured to do better and better every day. Education does not remain the quest of knowledge, rather becomes a race to be won (Tiwari, 2015). Due to the increased emphasis on examination, education has become, in recent years, an area in which one can prove his/her self-worth and help the concerned business-people to make profit (Spann, 2015).

This, in turn, results in more competition and mental distress among students. The students these days always have more unenjoyable books to read, and better grades to get. Though the

education curriculum of Bangladesh is trying to include creative writing, guidebooks are becoming a major barrier in the path of creative freedom. Researches have proved guidebooks to be detrimental for the creativity of individuals. Guidebooks provide students with ready-made answers i.e. does not allow the students to think for themselves, and “suggestions” which shorten the list of things a student learns. Guidebooks are, in short, accentuating and valuing only the “least significant parts” of human learning (Spann, 2015).

As our culture focuses more on grades than actual learning, and Shadow Education and its elements provide a short-cut to better grades, it indirectly leads to a degradation in the standard education system (Liu & Bray, 2018). Many researches indicate that the students do not necessarily learn from the education they partake in; Saha mentions how dismal the performance of English is in the students of Bangladesh. It directly hampers their chances of getting a higher education abroad or getting a job where acquiring English is important (Saha, 2013). Guidebooks help the students to get better marks, but it does not help them to acquire or learn any subject, which is why the students who studied guidebooks for English as a child end up being adults who try to learn English with the help of English language learning and instruction system (ELLG). However, ELLG do not even help people to acquire English, as it only focuses on speaking which is one of the four skills a person needs to properly acquire a language (Saha, 2013). It is not surprising that the students who are dependent on guidebooks as children grow up to be adults who prefer the easy but ineffective short-cut instead of taking the long way to be properly educated. The mind-set of a child who depends on guidebooks instead of studying the text-books properly does not wear away with age, and therefore, they grow up to be incompetent and dependent. Shadow education is also detrimental to the mental health of both the students and the parents as it encourages hyper-competitiveness and creates anxiety (Bray,1999).

2.3 Presence of Guidebooks in the Education System of Bangladesh

Despite knowing about the negative impacts of guidebooks, the students are socially pressured to buy guidebooks if they want better grades. Incentives of the highest marks allure the students to study guide-books, and the flourish of guidebooks result in bad teaching and more dependency on the market of guides. As this harmful cycle goes on, some people think of breaking this cycle, which is why an initiative to introduce the “creative” system was taken. We need to understand the question pattern of Bangladeshi education system to understand the appeal for guide-books. Bangladeshi examination system is largely influenced by Bloom’s taxonomy. The question was named as Creative Question. Creative question follows four parts- Knowledge, Understanding, Application and Higher order thinking which includes the higher order skills: analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Hafiz & Rahman, 2019). So this system basically analyses the different kinds of skills of students. If it was effectively applied, it would have been wonderful for both the students and the nation at large, because theoretically this system encourages learning instead of blind memorization. However, in a country where the text-books are not interesting, informative, or even completely reliable, and where the culture suggests that high-marks is more important than learning (understandable through the several suicides and suicide-attempts by students who did not get expected results), creative question has been turned into a commercial farce.

However, shadow education is capable of quickly adapting to any changes in the education curriculum (Liu & Bray, 2018). The “creative” system of structural questions based on understanding the topics soon proved to be a failure, because the guidebooks had quickly adapted themselves to creating “creative” questions and answers which the students could memorize without understanding and perform brilliantly in examination (Iqbal, 2015).

This kind of memorization renders the students unable to clearly understand the topic, as it encourages them to take in information but not learn or know about the topic in detail. This further restricts them from making inferences and associations between the new knowledge and the old knowledge (Klemm, 2007). Overall, it discourages independent thinking, originality, and creativity. It also leads to a lack of curiosity and a disinterest to learn new things (Alamgir, 2018). As Rousseau put it, “Once you teach people to say what they do not understand, it is easy enough to get them to say anything you like”, (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1762). The kind of education the children of Bangladesh are getting from the guidebooks is contributing to the development of submissive, incurious, uninteresting people who are not capable of thinking for themselves (Alamgir, 2018). This association between guidebooks and a decline in the quality of education is not unknown to the people; the Ministry of Education has already decided on finalizing the draft of the Education Act which bans printing, publishing and marketing guidebooks (Alamgir, 2018). Scholars and educationalists have deemed the guidebook as harmful and reasons for the doom of children and their intellects (Iqbal, 2015).

Though the government has taken serious steps to stop publication, popularity, and consequent dependence on guide-books, guide-book publishing houses have been prompt in their cause. In 2020, primary schools and high schools of Raipur had been receiving bribes up to twenty thousand and one lac twenty thousand taka respectively from the publishing houses in exchange for encouraging the students to buy guidebooks. Many of the students claim that the teachers do not teach them from NCTB books, rather ask them to memorize the question-answers from the guidebooks (Dainik Shikshar Alo, 2020). Many teachers of the developing countries intentionally withhold information regarding examinations and do not clarify or teach the topics properly in class, which leads the students to seek help from elsewhere (Liu & Bray, 2018).

Some researchers claim that the inadequacy of mainstream education i.e. the inadequacy of schools, text-books, teachers leads to the development of and dependence on shadow education, while some other researchers blame the popularity of shadow education for the above-mentioned inadequacy of mainstream education. However, it seems that the decline in the quality of mainstream education and the increasing popularity of Shadow Education are interdependent (Liu & Bray, 2018). This abominable cyclical system that is existent in our country at present has long-term negative impacts. The culture of guidebooks begins as early as elementary school. As the students continue to learn in an environment which is adversarial to learning, they grow up to be incapable of creativity, curiosity, wisdom and the desire to learn. By the time they enter into universities, they partly or entirely lose their intellectual abilities (Iqbal, 2015).

Farclough suggests that his three-dimensional approach to discourse analysis is compatible for studying socio- cultural changes since the former foregrounds links between social practice and language (Farclough, 1989). This is important to note, because it suggests that the education system will inevitably affect the socio-cultural situation of the country, and understanding the link between education and the social and cultural situation of a country helps us to assess the problems and possibilities. Bray (2018) quotes Egypt's Minister for Education from a speech in 1997, "Education that starts with a crime will inevitably end with a catastrophe". This is what is happening in Bangladesh, as reported by The Prothom Alo on February 24 in 2020. People with power are expanding their business based on education, and the nation is paying the consequent price; teachers are forming syndicates to force the students to buy guidebooks in many schools (Ahmed, 2020). The heavy price is being paid with the partial destruction of children's minds; students spend hours memorizing answers from guidebooks in the hope of attaining better grades, and it results in anxiety, stress, depression, and many other psychological problems (Arusha & Biswas, 2020).

Much research has been conducted, and papers have been written on Shadow Education in general. Researchers have studied the reliance on shadow education among the students of primary and secondary level in East-Asian countries. Some of the studies are focused on coaching centers, and some are focused on private tutoring. However, no paper has been written on the usage and increasing dependence of guidebooks in Bangladesh, even though guidebooks are causing quite a stir among the educationalists of Bangladesh. My research is done with the aim of exploring the reasons behind the increasing reliance on guidebooks and the possible effects of this reliance.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1. Nature of Research

Data collection from a qualitative method helps us to critically understand a problem and also enables us to have an in-depth perspective of the problem that leads us to a better understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Puth, 2017). This study is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research has been used to collect data so that the research can be done in detail. The qualitative research paradigm appears to be better consistent with the nature of the research questions in this study. To generalize and see what the trend is with a big number of participants, a quantitative method may be appropriate (Fahmida, 2010). However, a thorough examination of the matter may not be possible. Rather than concentrating on a big number of people, this study concentrated on a select group of students and teachers. The main source of data was Focused Group Discussions for the students and to collect data from teachers one-on-one interviews were conducted. Thus, it appeared to be more relevant for this study. Furthermore, as this study has been done in a limited amount of time, and collecting data from such a big number of people would be challenging. This thesis focused on a small number of participants but interviewed them in depth, a qualitative method appears to be logical and appropriate (Creswell & Puth, 2017).

3.2. Research Questions

Primary research question: To what extent do teachers and students of Secondary level students in English version schools in Bangladesh rely on commercially available guidebooks in the market and what are the probable reasons for such practice, if any?

There are fundamentally four research questions of this thesis, which are mentioned below:

1. What are the perceptions of students and teachers on the usefulness of the NCTB textbooks in the classroom?

2. What are the perceptions of students and teachers on the significance of the guidebooks?
3. According to teachers and students, what are the reasons for relying on guidebooks, if they use guidebooks?
4. According to teachers and students, how does dependence on guidebooks affect students, if any?

3.3. Research participants

Student participants: Secondary level students from different English version schools of Bangladesh are the first participants of this research. The students belong to the age group of 12-16, these students were studying in the English version curriculum from the beginning of their education. Six of the students belong to schools located in Dhaka district. whereas, two of them belong to a school located in Mymensingh. Furthermore, three of the students belong to the upper middle class, five of them are from the middle class of our society. These participants have been dependent on guidebooks from primary level and thus they have a clear idea about the advantages and disadvantages of using a guide book. The profile of the students is given below:

Profile of the students:

Sl No.	Name	Class	Age	Gender	School Name	Do they go to any coaching class
1	S1	7	13	Male	L. International School, Dhaka	No

2	S2	10	16	Female	W. L.F School and College, Dhaka	Yes
3	S3	10	16	Female	W. L.F School and College, Dhaka	Yes
4	S4	10	16	Female	W. L.F School and College, Dhaka	Yes
5	S5	9	15	Male	W. School and College, Mymensingh	No
6	S6	6	12	Female	H.C.G School and College, Dhaka	No
7	S7	9	15	Female	S.P School and College, Dhaka	No
8	S8	8	15	Male	W. International School and College, Mymensingh	Yes

Teacher participants: Along with the students, I have also included four teachers of English version schools as participants for the research. All four teachers teach from class 6 to class 10. These teachers are in the teaching profession for minimum two years and maximum 12 years. Among the four teachers only one of them had received government training for teaching. Whereas, others have degrees on CELTA, TESOL. For detailed information about the teachers a table is given below:

Profile of the teachers

No.	Name	Gender	Experience in teaching profession (in English version schools)	Academic Background	Subjects they teach other than English	Classes they take	Professional teaching training (Government training, CELTA, TESOL)
1	Teacher 1	Female	3 years	MSC in Microbiolog	Science, Bangladesh	5, 6, 7	None

				y	and Global studies (BGS)		
2	Teacher 2	Female	More than 12 years	Honours and Masters in English	Bangladesh and Global studies (BGS), Religion	6,7,8,9, 10	Government training, No TESOL or CELTA or any other teaching training
3	Teacher 3	Female	2 and a half years	Honours and Masters in English	Bangla and General science	9, 10	No Government training but did her masters in TESOL
4	Teacher 4	Female	3 years	Honours and Masters in English	Science General, Religion	8, 9	No Government training but did her masters in TESOL

3.4. Data Collection & Analysis

To get the answer to the research questions the researcher has arranged a Focused Group Discussion with eight participants who belonged to class six to ten from six different schools. These schools are from two different districts of Bangladesh. Permission were asked from the guardians of the students before conducting the Focused Group Discussions and also permission was asked to each and every participant before recording the whole session. According to Mishra (2016) Focused Group Discussion in qualitative research enables us to look at variables in the natural setting in which they are found. Interaction between

participants is important in FGD, it allows the researcher to gather data in a detailed manner through open ended questions. The researcher has done FGD with more than 8 students. It helped in gathering information and opinion from people having similar backgrounds and experiences which eventually helped to discuss a specific topic of interest (Mishra, 2016). Along with the FGD interviews were conducted with four secondary school teachers from four different schools. The teachers were informed about the research and before sending the google form their permission was taken. Once they gave their permission then only the researcher send them the google forms and took their interviews. The researcher has used purposive sampling in order to select the teachers as well as students. Purposive sampling is a widely used technique which involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experiences with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Clark, 2011). Accordingly, as the whole research is focused on the secondary students of English version schools in Bangladesh, all the teachers and students are from English version Schools. Furthermore, all teachers teach in the secondary section and students are also between Classes 6 to 10.

All the questions asked to the teachers and students were open-ended questions. For the students a Focus Group Discussions was conducted. Students from secondary level classes e.g., from Classes 6-10 participated in the FGD. For instance, in the FGD that was conducted it had students from class 10 as well as students of Class 6. It gave the researcher the perspective of students who just started their secondary school and also of students who are about to finish it. As for the teachers, some open-ended questions were prepared in google form and send it to them before the interviews. Once they filled up the forms, the researcher and the teachers sat for the interview. The interview enabled the researcher to get opinions and thoughts on the use of guidebooks in our education system. After data collection through FGD and interviews with students and teachers respectively, transcriptions were made for

each student and teachers. After that, a thematic analysis was done, through thematic analysis patterns were identified also the main reasons and opinions were identified. Both teachers and students had some similar opinions, reasons for using guidebooks and through thematic analysis, those reasons and their impacts were clear.

Chapter 4

Findings

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of students and teachers on the usefulness of the NCTB textbooks in the classroom?

Teacher's Response:

From the interviews with the teachers, it can be assessed that the NCTB text-books do not meet the expectations of the teachers either. Teacher-1 said that she finds NCTB books to have limitations which can be overcome by the help of guide-books. According to her, the correct answers are sometimes not given in the NCTB text-books, which is why even the teachers consult the guide-books at times to prepare for a class. Teacher-2 commented that NCTB text-books do not have enough information on necessary or important topics. Teacher-3 added that NCTB text-books do not have enough sample questions to practice with. Moreover, the answers are not readily given either. At times, the teachers have to find out the answers from other sources as well. Teacher-4 confirmed that NCTB guide books do not have enough information or insight as is necessary to properly understand a topic or to perform well in the examinations.

Student's Response:

One of the research questions was concerning how useful the NCTB text-books seem to be to the students and teachers. From focus-group discussions, it has been found that the students find the NCTB books to be insufficient, vague, and superfluous. S-1 said that, "the question pattern of exams is not clearly instructed in the NCTB books, which makes it difficult for us as we need to practice to have good marks in the exams". S-2 added that, "There are several mistakes in the NCTB books; a lot of typos and misinformation which confuses us at times". S-1 remarked that, "Apart from the misinformation, some topics are difficult to

understand because of vague explanation; I mean, we do not understand some of the terminologies used in the books, and neither do the teachers". So, the NCTB books often do not provide further description or explanation for any particular topic, which makes it difficult for the students to understand that specific topic. Furthermore, there are mistakes, factual errors, and a lack of instructions on the creative question system.

The NCTB book for the subject English is English for Today, and, according to several students, this book does not teach them the extent of communicative English which is needed at present. According to S-3, "We just learn the very basic stuff from English For Today, which is not really helpful or educative, as we already know it from social media or television". S-8 said that, "English for Today is a bit of a joke for most of us, really, because it does not really teach us anything important. It just shows us how to say Hi and Hello in English". As S-2 puts it, "English for Today is confusing for the students who have no idea about or exposure to English, and it is useless for the students who know primary English". Moreover, the discrepancy between the contents in English for Today and the question-paper of English further renounces the efficacy of English For Today. S-4 disappointedly remarked, "We do not even need to study English for Today before exam, because it is of no use". S-3 clarified, "In English examination, we get questions on grammar, verbs, prepositions, essays, letter writings, e-mails and summarization. No unit of English for Today helps us to learn any of these things".

While the NCTB text-books are failing to provide what needs to be provided, and the pressure on the students to do better and better in their exams is increasing, the students are looking for substitutes which can help them. This brings us to our next research question.

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of students and teachers on the significance of the guidebooks?

Teacher's Response:

From the interviews I had with teachers, it seems that they agree on the reliability on and necessity of the guide-books, because they consider guide-books to be, as Teacher-2 stated, “the solution to the problem created by the failing infrastructure of our education system”. Teacher-1 remarked that guide-books help them to acquire “full-knowledge” about a topic before discussing it in the class. It might be taken into account that a text-book is supposed to be sufficient in terms of providing “full knowledge” about necessary topics, but that does not seem to be the case. It should also be noted that the teacher who takes help from guide-books to understand the topics graduated from microbiology, and is currently teaching English at a private-school; she has had no training whatsoever to prepare her for the role of an English teacher. It is not surprising, therefore, that she seeks assistance from guide-books which provide all the answers with explanation. Teacher-3 said that, “Guide-books are actually helpful because the language is easier and translations are provided”. When asked about the reason behind the necessity of translation, Teacher-3 said that, “You know, English is not my mother-tongue, and so it is difficult to understand some of the concepts mentioned in the NCTB text-books”. Though English is a second-language for Bangladeshi people, a teacher who teaches English is expected to be capable enough in the language to understand the text-books of middle-school. Teacher-4 added that, “the guidebooks also have model questions and answers, and the model questions help them to prepare the students for exams”. Teacher-1 also mentioned this point, “Students get a lot of help from guidebooks during exam-preparation, because oftentimes questions come from the guide-books”. It is interesting that an English teacher stresses more importance on examinations than on improving the students' competency in English.

Student's Response:

Overall, the students find the guidebooks to be very useful because they provide an in-depth view of any given subject or topic, and guidebooks help them to get better marks. S-6 said, “Guidebooks always have several model questions from which we can practice, and the answers are also given which allows us to check if our answers are right”. S-3 added that, “And the questions from previous examinations are also given along with the answers in guidebooks”. S-8 informed that, “our teachers often advise us to follow the answers given in guidebooks, and tell us that if we copy those answers we will get better marks”. S-7 added that, “One of my teachers gave me very low marks on my answers because he found the answer to be too ‘creative’, but I do not know what is wrong with that as long as I have successfully answered the question. However, when I told him that, he just scolded me and told me to copy from guidebooks in the next exams”. The model questions, which follow the same structure of the exam questions allow the students to practice before the exam, and gain confidence. Along with the questions, the guidebooks also have answers given which help the students to understand the structure preferred by the examiners. Moreover, the students are encouraged to memorize the answers so that they can write the “perfect” answers during exams. Even though guide-books are appreciated by students all over the country, because it helps them to do better in examinations, whether the process through which they help them to do so is entirely helpful in the long run is a point to ponder about.

Research question 3: According to teachers and students, what are the reasons for relying on guidebooks, if they use guidebooks?

Teacher’s Response:

The teachers admitted of their own accord that they consult guide-books to prepare question-paper, and they also copy some of the questions. When asked about the reasons behind this consultation, they remarked that there is a lot of pressure from the administration to get a lot

of things done in a very short time. Teacher-1 does not have the qualification necessary to teach the subject which she is teaching; she has graduated from microbiology but she is teaching English. So, she needs the guide-books to understand many topics. Teacher-2 said that “a guidebook helps the students to understand a topic better, because the explanation provided there is more comprehensible”. Teacher-3 remarked that, “we sometimes even consider guide-books to be the “main-book” as it provides sample questions and answers”. Teacher-4 stated that guide-books definitely help the students to learn more. Moreover, she added that, “the guide-books also help the teachers to find correct solutions to any problem, and students can find accurate information there as well. So it is a win-win for everybody”. The teachers were also asked if they had received any formal or informal training on the current question pattern after it was incorporated in the education system of Bangladesh. Unfortunately, and surprisingly, all the teachers answered in negative. Furthermore, the appeal for guide-books increases because exam questions (even the question paper of board examinations) are made with the help of guide-books, which imply that studying the guide-books instead of the text-books is more profitable if the goal is good results. As teacher-4 said, “Well, the comprehension part of English question is supposed to be unseen, but often we teachers mark the important comprehensions from guidebooks for the students to scan and skim through before exams”. The teachers do not seem to have enough time to understand each topic and prepare questions on their own. Teacher-1 stated that guidebooks are “easier” to understand, and are more “effective” for getting better marks. Teacher-3 added that, “as students are often inattentive during class, they need extra help which is why they rely on guide-books”. Students should be able to consult their teachers if they face any problem with any topic, but the teacher-2 and teacher-3 claim that they do not have enough time and opportunity to solve students’ academic problems outside the classroom.

Student’s Response:

When the students were the simple question, “why do you rely on guidebooks so much?”, their answers echo our the teachers’ responses. All the students have asserted that guide-books are useful because they provide an in-depth view of the subject. This is coherent with their previously stated opinion about NCTB text-books not being informative enough or accurate. S-4 said that, “English for Today is neither effective, nor interesting; at least guidebooks make sense”. S-5 informs us that, “guidebooks explain the topics we need to understand, and so we naturally buy guidebooks”. Moreover, guide-books are also useful for exam-based questions and they provide previous years’ questions and model questions along with model answers, which help the students to take better preparation for exams. To paraphrase the words of S-7, NCTB books can be a good source for learning some of the things, and even trying to enjoy a few texts or units, but one must use guidebooks for good grades. S-3 informed that, “all the students in my class use guide-books, so I bought one too”, which implies that peer-pressure is also a reason behind the obsession over guide-books. Furthermore, the students also said that teachers often use guide-books to prepare the question paper for examination, which means that if the students can memorize the answers beforehand, they do not even need to actively engage in education. Not only do the teachers copy questions from guide-books to make question-papers for exam, they also teach in class with the help of guide-books, which is quite concerning. S-7 said that, “I bought guidebooks on my teacher’s suggestion” while S-2 said that, “I asked my English teacher to explain right forms of verbs to me, and she just told me to buy guidebooks”.

Research question 4: According to teachers and students, how does dependence on guidebooks affect students, if any?

Teacher’s Response:

The teachers seem to have dubious feelings about guide-books. While some of them think that guidebooks are nothing but helpful, the others find some flaws in the dependency on guidebooks. Teacher-1 remarked that guidebooks help the students to understand topics easily in a short amount of time, and this is obviously beneficial. Teacher-2 hesitantly said that “guidebooks are harmful for students because it is destroying their thinking capability and creativity”. She also observed that dependency on guide-books lead to a slow depreciation of “the writing quality and content quality” of the student. According to this teacher, “following guidebooks hampers the students’ capability of comprehension and writing while promoting memorization”. Teacher-3 said that though the teachers themselves recommend guide-books to students to prepare for their exams, dependence on guide-books has “very harmful impacts” on students. The harmful impacts, according to her, include a “loss of creativity and development in studies”. She also confided in the inability of senior students to understand comprehension passages, as they simply choose to memorize the answers. Since the passages and questions are copied directly from the guide-books to their exam-question papers, memorizing the answers blindly ensures good marks in examinations. This teacher sadly remarked that, “guidebooks are limiting the knowledge and curiosity of the students. No student really ask any question regarding any topic anymore, because they know that memorizing from the guidebooks will be enough to pass the test”. Teacher-4 laid the main blame on teachers, because according to her, it is the teachers who make the students dependent on guide-books for “their own ease and comfort”, because it saves their time and energy. However, she admits that it is harmful for the students. She also mentioned the ineptitude of the people who wrote the NCTB and guidebooks, because she does not find either to be particularly interesting or educational. She thinks that, “the lack of education regarding teaching/learning on the part of the writers and editors of NCTB text-books and guide-books is responsible for the degradation in the education quality of the students of our

country”. She added that, “students could retain their creativity and curiosity in learning even after reading guidebooks if those guidebooks offered them space to cultivate their creativity in instead of binding them to mere memorization”.

Student’s Response:

When the students were asked whether they think the dependence on guide-books is affecting the students negatively, majority of the students have said that the use of guidebooks have had a positive effect on them. According to them, it is solely because of the guidebooks and test-papers that they have been able to achieve good marks in their exams. I asked the students from my FGD groups to rate the text-book and the guidebook of the subject English, and the results are quite concerning. With the lowest rating for NCTB English book being 3 out of ten, the highest being 5 out of ten, the average rating for English for Today is 4 out of ten. The lowest rating for the guidebook is 6 out of ten and the highest is 8 out of ten, and the average is 7 out of ten. S-1 said that, “Guidebooks have helped me to get better grades, I do not see the problem with it”. S-4 remarked that, “while I understand why some people are concerned about guidebooks hampering our education, guidebooks are actually quite helpful for us students. Otherwise the students would not study guidebooks, right?”

Chapter 5

Discussions& Conclusion

5.1. Discussion of the study

The collected data shows that the education of Bangladesh has gone through different changes over the years as the government has tried to implement several methods to increase the literacy rate. However, although more people are getting education freely and the scope of learning has been increased, new problems are arriving. Low performances in primary and secondary levels and dropouts are matters of concern at the present. It can be gathered from the literature review that poverty, widening disparities in educational opportunities and facilities, poor school attendance, less contact time in school, lack of skilled school teachers, increasing guidebook dependency, the burden of excess curriculum, grading system, creative system of education are the new challenges for the future. Examinations in primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels have encouraged the students to drill and rote memorization from the last few years. As a result, students do not get a chance to understand the contents or get the scope to create something independently. The increasing number of teachers has not contributed to more efficient teaching either. The interviews with teachers gave great insight and clear idea about the education system in general and the usage of guidebooks. As we have seen from the findings, most of the teachers are not trained, and are not even graduated from the subjects which they are teaching, and so, an increased number of teachers do not necessarily play a role in building a stronger infrastructure for education. Lack of proper training has led to a lack of understanding about the subject that the teachers are supposed to teach, and this has resulted in a growing dependency on guidebooks. Moreover, the incompetency of NCTB textbooks stated and re-affirmed by students in the FGDs makes the reasons for the dependence of guidebooks clear. Not only are NCTB text-books uninteresting and uninformative, they also teach misinformation. As

ShahnewazKhan reported, “In the back cover of Hindu Religion and Moral Education book of class 3, there is a quote which says, “Do Not Hurt Anybody”; in the textbook of grade one, it has been stated that goat climbs the mango tree to eat mango which is quite absurd.” (Khan, 2017). It is easily understandable that the quote should have been “Do Not Hurt Anybody”, but a mistake like this can turn an inspirational quote into a topic of hilarity. The NCTB text-books, in short, are not helpful and are not capable of attracting students (Billah, 2016).

Guidebooks were supposed to be supplementary books which would help the students from time to time, but a rough assessment of the current situation is enough to tell us that guidebooks have become the main-book now. At present, it is the guidebook, but not the NCTB text-book that is guiding the students in their formal education. Students do not only consult guidebooks to get a general idea about a certain concept, but they rely on it completely for examinations; Guide-books offer not only model questions, but also model answers for those particular questions. What is even more interesting to notice is that, the questions that appear on the guide-books often appear in school and even board examinations (Iqbal, 2015). Guidebooks, consequently, lead students to the path of ignorance and consequentially, is vitally detrimental for the students and the nation.

Mr. Hasnat Harun, a retired teacher of cadet college, remarks that the students are now “afraid” of education, which is quite concerning as education should be something enjoyable, not scary (Adnan, 2018). Mr. Harun does not only think that the teachers are failing to educate the students properly, but also that the teachers are writing guide-books and motivating the students to be dependent on guidebooks. He informs that the teachers not only consult guide-books to take classes, but also copy questions from guide-books to prepare the question paper for examination (Adnan, 2018). A news report from 2015 states that the

physics question-paper of that year's SSC examination had been copied from a guidebook (Hossain, 2015).

This increasing dependency on guide-books has resulted in an inability to adapt to the changes the education system is undergoing globally. The teaching method which is recommended for learning and acquiring languages at the international level is Communicative Language Teaching or CLT. CLT is the approach which emphasizes the significance of communication in terms of learning a language. Both the means and the goal of this approach in communication or interaction (Kasumi, 2015). This method is appreciated because it has been proven to be efficient and beneficial for the objective of learning a language. The Bangladeshi education system is theoretically following the CLT approach, but practically, the education system is adhering to the GMT approach. The GMT approach focuses on learning grammar instead of communication, and therefore asserts more importance on memorization rather than building interactive capability (Chang, 2011). GMT is the older, and almost obsolete approach. In order to transform from GMT to CLT, the creative curriculum was introduced in primary and secondary education sectors in 2009. This curriculum was created on the basis of Bloom's Taxonomy, which is followed all around the world, and which focuses on the understanding of a certain topic rather than the memorization of it (Iqbal, 2015).

According to National Education Policy 2010, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) made changes in the content of the syllabus and the question pattern to assess the learner's creativity. In accordance with the new curriculum, the English question pattern now consisted of several questions that appeared to be the result of the CLT method; for instance, the comprehension part where a student has to read a passage and answer some questions on the basis of that passage. However, guidebooks provide hundreds of model-questions in which there are hundreds of passages with questions and answers. The students

are encouraged by their guardians, peers, and teachers to memorize the passages, questions and answers, because the teachers more often than not copy the questions from guidebooks (Iqbal, 2016).

Guidebooks are the reason that even the creative-system is failing to ensure a CLT based education system in Bangladesh. Most of the teachers do not realize the importance of creative questions, and they do not motivate the students to learn properly, which results in repeating the same method used before creative questions came. The only difference seems to be that while the students had to memorize the text-books before, now the students have to memorize a bunch of guide-books along with the text-books (Iqbal, 2016). Moreover, private tutors and coaching centers have been the top dependence for the learners, specifically for the PSC and JSC examinees, and these private tutors and coaching-centers prepare the students for board-exams by marking the important questions from guide-books. The purpose of the new education system was to mitigate this troubling method of learning, but it seems that it has backfired as most students and teachers are unaware of the usage and importance of the creative system.

Competent teachers are the essential aspect of the education of a country. Teachers build and mold a student and motivate him to dive deeply into the learning method regardless of the level of education. Unfortunately, one of the more significant problems behind the education of Bangladesh is the lack of well-trained teachers to understand the students and the curriculum system. In most cases, it is seen that teachers are dependent upon guidebooks to teach the students, which is the exact opposite of what an ideal teacher should be. The lack of creativity in teaching has increased so alarmingly in our country that students of all sectors have started to despise education. Teachers should not be using a shortcut method for teaching as every student has their particular way of understanding. This lack of effort from the teachers is causing the students to shut out their creative selves, which ultimately is

causing the degradation in our country's literacy rate. Moreover, the teachers inspire the students not to learn but to get better marks, which is another reason for the increasing dependency on guide-books.

A teacher, as a mentor, is responsible for grooming a student with a sense of social and political responsibility as they are the future citizens of any nation. However, unfortunately, Bangladesh is going through a very dark phase in terms of the sanctity of the teacher-student relationship. An unfriendly and rigid approach towards students is hampering the fundamental learning process. The lack of proper training of teachers is a considerable problem for this. According to National Education Policy 2010, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) changed the syllabus's content and the question pattern to assess learners' creativity. However, the teachers cannot carry out in accordance to this plan as most of them cannot even make a proper creative question (Ansari, 2020). On top of it, most of the teachers are not up to date with the modern approach of young students. As MohitProdhan points out "Most teachers also lack any sort of training and are not mentally suitable as teachers" (Prodhan, 2016). Therefore, teachers are incompatible at teaching, and so they choose to make sure that their students achieve higher marks even if they do not understand the subjects. This has created a blockage between the relationship of teacher and students where teachers do not care about the education of the students and students need teachers to give them "suggestions" for exams but not to teach.

A law made in 1980 deems the guidebooks as illegal, and this law has been in discussion for the past few years. The government has drafted and formulated new laws proposing to ban notes, guidebooks, and reference books (Ahmed, 2020). However, guidebooks have become the principal instrument for studying for most students, school teachers, private tutors, and coaching centers. The appeal of the guidebook lies in its ready-made answers. So, the learners do not need to read textbooks, learn the content, and figuring

out their answers. The schools also prepare the question papers for half-yearly, yearly, and test exams following guidebooks.

This bland dependence on guidebooks is not only limiting the potentials and creativity of the students, but also depreciating the chances of Inclusive Education in Bangladesh. While text-books have been made free by the government, the guide-books are only accessible to the financially capable students. As the guidebooks provide the easy way to higher marks in exams, the more financially able students are doing better in general than the students who are not financially able. The poor students are gradually falling behind not only because of getting little guidance on how to tackle creative questions, but also because they do not have ready-made answers.

Even though it may seem to be a positive approach among students and teachers, guidebooks are destroying the importance of institutional learning, and negatively affecting the students. This is even disrupting the primary purpose of creative questions and learning. As a result of this, the infrastructure of the education system of Bangladesh is failing, and the students are not really learning much despite getting higher marks every year.

5.2. Conclusion

Guidebooks have been more harmful than they have been beneficial for the education system. From the given facts, discussions and discussion, it is understandable that guidebooks have several negative impacts; guidebooks lead to a disinterest and negligence towards text-books, guidebooks have been proven to be a hindrance to the creativity and learning ability of the students, guidebooks have let the teachers perform insufficiently and ineffectively as they provide the information necessary to perform well in examination, and guidebooks complement the GMT method instead of the CLT method. While the teachers more or less admit the problems guidebooks are creating, the students praise it whole-heartedly. However,

the praises of guidebooks from the students and teachers remind us that they like the guidebooks so much because it helps them to get better marks. In conclusion, it can be inferred that the negative effects of guidebooks are being acknowledged by both the students and the teachers, and the negative effects are being felt by the nation at large.

5.3.Recommendations

Given the present situation, I recommend immediate and effective transformation of the NCTB books. It is only because the NCTB books are lacking something that the students are going after guidebooks. Secondly, I recommend that the teachers' training will be made mandatory, especially before they start teaching English. It seems that most teachers take help from guidebooks because they feel an incompetency at teaching the subject alone. Thirdly, I would recommend the schools to allow teachers to have weekly meetings with students outside of class-time, when they can interact and solve the queries. Fourthly, I would recommend that if guidebooks are indeed indispensable, it should be made sure that answers are not given in the guide-books. If there are only questions and explanations given in it, I think that the problems stemming out of the use of guidebooks would decrease remarkably and the students would become less dependent on it.

5.4. Implications

I think that the implications and scope of this study is significant, which is why I have chosen to do this study. No research or study has been done before on this particular topic, and therefore, any fellow researcher who would like to do further research on the issue of guidebooks and its implications on education of Bangladesh can take help from this study. Furthermore, this study can be used as a guide to understand how effective the creative system has been so far in this country. I have tried to point out the flaws of our education system unbiasedly, in hope that the concerned parties will come forward to make positive

changes where they are needed. As for the scope of the study, this is the first study done in this country on guide-books, even though guidebooks have been an integral part of our education system since time immemorial. While guidebooks have not had the best reputation, that is all the more reason for researchers to really try and study about this phenomenon. This study is the beginning, and there are so many perspectives to explore, and so many points to incorporate. Hopefully, the interested researchers will use this study as a motivator, and a source-text to carry on further research on this topic.

5.5. Limitations

In this thesis a qualitative method has been followed and for that I needed detailed information, unfortunately because of the covid-19 situation it was tough for me to find and then contact my participants. As I decided to include both students and teachers as my research participants the challenges were doubled. Although it was easy arranging Focused Group Discussion for the students, still many students were sometimes not available. As for the teachers, the situation was very challenging. Due to the online class, most of the teachers' schedules were very packed and it was hard for me to get a fixed time from them for the interview. Furthermore, I decided to do the research on the secondary level teachers of English version schools and it was a challenge to find teachers of English version from other districts.

Chapter 6

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