

Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions Towards Two Years Pre-Primary

By

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A thesis submitted to Brac Institute of Educational Development in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Early Childhood Development

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Declaration

It is hereby declared 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/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions Towards Two Years Pre-Primary

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1. Source of population: Teachers and Parents
2. Does the study involve (yes, or no)
 - a) Physical risk to the subjects (No)
 - b) Social risk (No)
 - c) Psychological risk to subjects (No)
 - d) discomfort to subjects (No)
 - e) Invasion of privacy (No)
3. Will subjects be clearly informed about (yes or no)
 - 2 Nature and purpose of the study (Yes)
 - 3 Procedures to be followed (Yes)
 - 4 Physical risk (N/A)
 - 5 Sensitive questions (Yes)
 - 6 Benefits to be derived (Yes)
 - 7 Right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study (Yes)
 - 8 Confidential handling of data (Yes)
 - 9 Compensation and/or treatment where there are risks or privacy is involved (N/A)
4. Will Signed verbal consent for be required (yes or no)
 1. from study participants (N/A)
 2. from parents or guardian (Yes)
 3. Will precautions be taken to protect anonymity of subjects? (Yes)
5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:
 1. Proposal (Yes)
 2. Consent Form (Yes)
 3. Questionnaire or interview schedule (Yes)

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Abstract:

Holistic development of a child including, physical development, language development and social emotional development are positively related with pre-primary education that facilitate school readiness. The length of pre-primary is an important issue for child development. The govt is planning to pilot two-years preprimary in Bangladesh. This qualitative study explored the perception of teachers and parents about two years pre-primary where 22 participants (12 teachers and 10 parents) participated in In-depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The content analysis technique was used to analysis the data. Findings showed that all participants were aware of early learning and child development of pre-primary age group. All the teachers said that play-based approach was very helpful for teaching-learning activities at pre-primary level. All of them acknowledged the relationship between pre-primary education and school readiness. Teachers knew that the government was planning for two years pre-primary but half of the parents knew about the plan. However, the parents appreciated it. Most of parents wanted to send their children to the pre-primary at the age of 4. Most of teachers and some parents supported two years pre-primary, on the other hand one parent preferred one year pre-primary. They also identified some challenges of pre-primary education. In conclusion, the findings of this study will be helpful for the successful implementation of two years pre-primary class.

Key words: Pre-Primary, Two Years, Parents, Teachers, Learning and Development

Dedication:

This thesis is dedicated to Professor Dr. AKM Reazul Hassan, honorable Member, Primary Curriculum, NCTB, who inspired me to do the MSc. in ECD.

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List of Acronyms

ECD	Early Childhood Development
IDI	In Depth Interview
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
GPS	Government Primary School
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education
UNICEF	United Nation International Children Emergency Fund
NGO	Non-Government Organization

Chapter I:

Introduction and Background

Introduction:

As education is the backbone of a nation and children learn their life skills through education, so pre-primary level of education is the starting point of building the backbone. If the foundation become stronger it will be easier for the children to be coped up with the next level of education. Children's learning starts from pre-primary level. Pre-primary stage of education is the most significant and basic part of education (Yasmin and Rumi, 2020). The role of teachers in early childhood education is considered as central, because teachers make the path easier for transition from pre-primary level to primary grades. The central issues in this regard are ensuring the children's learning quality, quality of school readiness, teachers' knowledge and understanding especially in the case of coping up new pedagogical changes and engage children into the learning environment (Sullanmaa et al, 2022).

Teachers implement the curriculum, carry out the teaching learning design and facilitate the activities to achieve the curriculum goal. Teachers build the level of trust and respect by providing secure and favorable learning environment for the children. Hence, the duty of a teacher is to provide right guidelines in the right time. All stake holders should contribute their valuable time, merits and fundings in ECCD. Investing time and money in early childhood development is beneficial for children, their families, caregivers or parents, societies and global community as well (Begum. 2019).

Kindergartens and Nurseries classes were first established in 19th century in Europe, North America and some developing countries of Asia (Kammerman, 2006). Different countries of the world offered different pre-primary programs such as part-day or full-day under education, health and social welfare. Some are public funded; some are private funded some are combination of private and

public fund and some run by NGOs. A UNESCO memo (1961) stated that primary school is the priority, pre-primary schools should be introduced and expanded for both care and education with free of cost, if no, it should be planned for. Lack of well treatment of children may lead to poor health such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some other related disease. It also creates poor educational attainment, abuse of children, economic dependency etc, in long run (UNICEF, 2017).

Participation of parents in early childhood education help to sustain any ECD related program (Jaafarawi, 2017). School readiness of children are influenced positively by the parents' behavior and interaction with their children. Characteristics of parents including their beliefs, attitudes and lifestyle greatly impact on children's performance in pre-school and their further education as well (Baldwin, 2011). Thus, the perception of parents and teachers must clear about pre-primary education. It is believed that pre-primary education lay foundation for children to bring social stability, prosperity and economic growth as a long run (Dibaba, 2016).

Statement of the Problem:

Pre-primary education is a preparatory level of education which starts in early childhood. Different age levels are considered for the starting of pre-primary in different countries of world. Children's brain is mostly developed between ages 2-7, this is the perfect time to lay foundation by providing intervention (Sriram, 2020). In this critical period of brain development children need love and attention. This is a preparatory level for socio-emotional and cognitive development, teachers and parents required prior knowledge and experiences to send the children in primary school (Kleeck & Schuele, 2010).

Bangladesh has a long history of pre-primary education. Officially in 2014 Bangladesh introduced universal pre-primary education for the children of 5+ years old under a common curriculum made by National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). But few studies done

regarding this. Teachers' and parents' perceptions were not taken before introducing existing one year pre-primary. The enrollment rate was not in satisfactory level (APSC, 2021).

From 2023 the government of Bangladesh is planning to introduce two years pre-primary education. Children of 4+ years of age are considered to enroll in this level. This is for the smooth and easy transition to primary grades. The development which grown in early years have the long run impact over the rest of the life. Children of early grades spend large chunk of time with their family, especially with parents and caregivers. In the early grades children also spend their time in learning by playing and interacting with other children in the school (Cherry, 2021). Clear knowledge and understanding of parents and teachers create the sense of observation to the children and it plays important role in learning new things for toddlers. Intervention in the early age whether from parents or teachers added value to the children's outcome and create a dimension for future education of children. Further the parents teachers cooperation trigger the interest of learning of children in both home and school (Jaafarawi, 2017). It also yields other related positive outcomes likewise, it aids children's critical thinking, encourage them to involve in complex, global and multi-tasking events. Annual Primary School Census showed that there are 118891 schools (GPS, private kindergarten, NGO schools, learning centers, Shisu Kallyan Kendro and Ebtedayee madrasa) where pre-primary section is currently operating. Enrollment in pre-primary level is a challenge, according to APSC, 2021, 16.96 million children enrolled in primary grade whereas 3.14 million children enrolled in pre-primary level in Bangladesh.

Justification of the study:

This research focuses on the perception of parents and teachers regarding upcoming two years pre-primary education of Bangladesh. The impact of two years pre-primary on children will

come out by this research. Proper education system is needed to ensure the quality education and to fulfill the commitment to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) by 2030.

According to the Annual Primary School Census, 2021, 16.96 million children enrolled in primary grade whereas only 3.14 million children enrolled in pre-primary level in Bangladesh. This study can provide recommendations for parents, community members and policy makers to mitigate the gaps. In Bangladesh there are limited studies done in this area, so this study may help to enrich the educators.

This study is timely appropriate and beneficial which focuses on the perception of parents and teachers regarding upcoming two years pre-primary education of Bangladesh. This study also discussed about the present infrastructure facilities, availability of teaching learning materials, classroom environment ect, and suggested recommendation to upgrade the existing system. This study will help to implement The Operational Framework for Pre-primary Education 2008 and The Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Development Framework 2013.

Pre-primary education is the beginning of learning. Children's knowledge skills and attitude starting to build in this level. It will further help to enter primary education level successfully. In this level teachers/ parents/ caregivers help to develop social and emotional learning in early years enhance children's emerging capacity to make relationship with others, express range of emotion, and regulate emotions and other activities related with children's mental health. This study is important because it will analyze the need for parents' and teachers understanding and perception of two years pre-primary education.

This research will help policy maker to identify problems related to existing one year pre-primary and problem and prospect of upcoming two years pre-primary. This research will also discuss about the present infrastructure facilities, availability of teaching learning materials, classroom environment ect, and suggest recommendation to upgrade the existing system.

Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the perception of teachers and parents on two years of pre-primary for children in Bangladesh. Identifying the awareness of parents and teachers regarding Early Childhood Care and Development was another purpose of this study. The mental readiness of parents to send their children to preschool at the age of 4 was also identified in this study. Different challenges are associated with the existing one-year pre-primary and upcoming two years pre-primary level of education in Bangladesh. This study aimed to diagnose the challenges and recommend possible ideas to overcome those challenges.

Research Questions:

- a) How much do the teachers and parents aware of early learning and child development?
- b) What is the understanding of teachers and parents about two years pre-primary for children?
- c) How much the parents ready to send their children pre-primary school at the age of four?
- d) What kind of barriers teachers will consider for the implementation of a two-year pre-primary?

Operational Definition:

Pre-primary education: This is the initial stage of education for very young children. This stage is designed to make a bridge between home environment and school environment. Children's motor development, socio-emotional development and cognitive development occurs in this level which offers smooth transition of children into primary schools.

Teachers: In this study, teachers mean the dedicated teachers/ instructors/ facilitators/ mentors by whom the children are guided to do activities in the preschools. The complex role of the teachers is to impart knowledge, take care of children and act as a caregiver for each child differently and collectively.

Parents: A parent is a person who bring up and care children but, in this study, parents are the mothers and fathers who have at least a child of 4-5 years old.

Two years pre-primary: The duration/ period of pre-primary education in Bangladesh. Currently one-year pre-primary level of education for 5+ years children is operating in Bangladesh. The government is planning to introduce two years pre-primary for children of 4+ years and 5+ years.

Chapter II:

Literature Review

Children's learning and development is mostly depending on parents and teachers. Ready school and ready family may provide support for early learning and development of children (UNICEF, 2012). Educationist and psychologist Jean Piaget assumed that the children build their knowledge based on their experiences, they learn without influence of others, learn by nature and thus they get motivated to learn. In his theory Piaget stated that cognitive development of children happened in distinct stages. He mentioned four stages from where 2nd stage namely Preoperational stage (2-7 years) is for pre-primary stage. In this stage child cannot understand the cause-and-effect relationship but he/ she tries to associate two unrelated events. The major characteristics of this stage are Animism, Artificialism, Egocentrism, Symbolic Functioning, Centration, Irreversibility, Curiosity and Seriation are the major characteristics in this stage (Rabindran and Madanagopal, 2020).

The literature review is divided in different sub-section. A good amount of research articles was reviewed regarding historical overview of pre-primary education, parents' awareness, teachers' perception, importance of two years pre-primary and challenges of pre-primary education.

Historical Overview of Pre-Primary Education:

Different literatures have stated that the contemporary pre-primary education was in different form and started in 19th century in Europe, North America and some developing countries of Asia in different name like, kindergarten or nursery (Kammerman, 2006). It not only emphasis on education but also gave importance on health and welfare of the children. It was simultaneously operated by public, private and NGOs. International organization like UNESCO gave priority on primary level and pre-primary level for both education and care at free of cost (UNESCO, memo 1961).

Kamerman, 2006 also stated that Dakar and Jomtien declaration initiated influential effort towards education for all began with a conference regarding rights for children, both the right in education (access to preschool) and legal right. The percentage of enrollment of children in pre-primary schools varies region to region. In a statistic of 2004, showed that only 12.4% children enrolled in pre-primary level in the Sub-Saharan region while 39.7% children enrolled in East Asia while at the same time 100% children enrolled in the schools in Caribbean zone (Shahjamal and Nath, 2008).

In the United States the demand of pre-kindergarten emerged in 1980s with the need of daycare for the young children to be kept in safe whose mothers were working in factories. This idea become more important in World War II while men went out for war and women were working. Daycares grew to the purpose of taking care of babies in the secure environment and to provide the basic need of children. This national program was organized by U.S. Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services. Several federal agencies cooperating the program. It was funded by Lanham Act, which was emended in 1942. The program appointed teachers and other necessary staffs to help keep the nursery schools open (Marks, 1943, cited in Cross, 2008). In United States, the daycares transformed to pre-schools and provide the basic needs for children and gave them a chance to learn some educational skills as well.

Bangladesh has achieved independent in 1971. After the independence first education commission namely “Qudrat-E-Khuda education commission” was formed at 1974 which emphasized on the early childhood education. The commission described four aims for pre-primary education. First aim is about the formation of child’s personality and ideas. Second is to create necessary habits through pleasurable activities like games and sports. Third is about to foster wellbeing regarding physical, mental and moral. Fourth one thought to train a child for his future coordination and social activities. The commission also suggest to employ female teachers for pre-primary children and emphasized the effective training for the pre-primary teachers. In In 1988, Mafizudin Ahamed

education commission was formed. The commission recommended introducing Baby Class in the government primary schools.

In continuation with that present government announced “National Education Policy 2010”. This policy also recommended the pre-primary education for 5+ (years of age) children and suggested gradual expansion of pre-primary education for 4+ (years of age) children. The policy prescribed that the pre-primary curriculum should be activity based which would inspire children to attend school, learn and cultivating their finer senses. The children would acquire necessary discipline for formal education learn to be tolerant to others. The policy also indicates the teaching learning materials for pre-primary level as “Teaching at pre-primary level will be delivered through pictures, colors, attractive and simple education materials, models, rhymes, songs, games and handiwork.”

Primary and Mass Education division announce to organize baby classes in 1994 in government primary schools. Many foreign and local NGOs such as Save the children Brac etc, contributed in ECD education in Bangladesh in late nineties. Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN) was formed at 2005 to promote ECD in Bangladesh. Operation plan of pre-primary education was developed in 2008. National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) prepared the standardized curriculum and teaching learning materials for pre-primary. In June, 2011 Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) approved pre-primary curriculum. After piloting, the pre-primary education was officially introduced in government primary schools at 2014 (Akter, 2013). Government of Bangladesh is planning to introduce two years pre-primary education from 2023 (Official circular of MoPME, 2021). Children of 4+ years of age are considered to enroll in this level. A large number of pre-primary schools were run by NGOs like GSS, BRAC, Save the Children, Care Bangladesh, Plan International, Action Aid, FIVD, CARITAS, Dhaka Ahasania Mission, BSS under MoWCA with support of UNICEF in many vulnerable areas in Bangladesh between 200-2013 (Yasmin and Rumi, 2020).

BRAC has a long history and experience in the field of education and started functional literacy program in mid 1970. BRAC started its first pre-primary program in 2 schools at 1985. Later in 1986 four more new pre-primary schools were opened, these schools were in one year duration (Ahmed, 1988). After successful initiation BRAC opened 10 new schools in 1989. In a point of experiment in 1998-99, BRAC charged tuition fees of TK 5 to 20 from the student. Then BRAC realized this may be the reason for drop out the poor children from the school. Thus, BRAC eliminate this provision of tuition fees. In 2001, BRAC got permission from government to open pre-primary school in the premises of GPS. Then BRAC widely expanded their pre-primary program in Bangladesh. The main objective of the program was to provide educational support to the under privileged children. Up to 2002 the number of pre-primary schools under the management of BRAC was below 2,000 but due to increasing demand the number of schools raised over 20,000 by 2007 (Shahjamal and Nath, 2008).

Parents' knowledge about pre-primary:

The understanding and perception administer parents to take decision to send their children to the school (Annonciata and Nadege, 2020). Parents' current level of knowledge and attitudes control and enforce the best practices for Early Childhood Development of their children. Early stimulation, feeding, child discipline, child protection etc, are related with school readiness of children (Begum, 2019). Before going to pre-primary school or center, it is needed to prepare the children by the parents or caregivers in the family environment. In this growing stage of age level (3-5 years) the children need food with perfect nutrition to grow physically and mentally. Parents believe and agreed that their role is very important for the physical readiness, language and communication readiness, literacy and numeracy readiness, social emotional readiness, behavioral or attitudinal readiness of every single child (Jose et al, 2022).

The cultural beliefs, religious beliefs and expectations are varied among families. Children learn cultural activities and customs through everyday contact with their parents. Home is considered as the first school for the children. Parents are associated with every step of children. Child's physical development, cognitive development, linguistic development is mostly depended on parents' association (Kabir and Chowdhury, 2021). Parents' knowledge and understanding enforce parents to provide necessary support for the enrollment of children in pre-primary level. Parental involvement guide children to be able to communicate their needs and ideas then children will be able to make sense of the world around them.

The developing countries like Bangladesh are facing multiple risk including malnutrition, poor health, poverty, unfavorable home environment. This hostile condition detrimentally effect child's holistic development such as, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, cognitive and socio-emotional development (Grantham-McGregor et al, 2007). Parents of all developing countries need to be more responsive about their children. Parents' clear perception (knowledge, attitude and practice) is very important for children's pre-schooling. Children's emotions or conflicts, manners, self-esteem, safety etc, is directly or indirectly depend on parents' practice or awareness. The first five years of a child is considered as a critical period and it is needed to assist and provide intervention to all children to overcome their developmental disadvantages to achieve potentials (Britto et al. 2017). Early intervention from parents has no alternative for the children.

Teachers' understanding about pre-primary:

The contribution of teachers in early childhood development is very important. Teachers are considered at the heart of education (Chong and Lu 2019). Children emphasis more on their teachers than parents. The professional and personal perception of a teacher impact his/her identity as a professional. Teachers' clear perception is obviously helpful for the children.

Teachers gave importance on pre-primary because it is utmost important for the school readiness of children. Teachers defined school readiness as the smooth transition from early learning settings to primary grade (Murphy, Giordano and Deloach, 2023).

Once there was a time when teachers emphasis on the cognitive aspect of children only likewise, letters, numbers, words etc. but now the days have been changed and teachers emphasis on the socio-emotional developmental skills of children. Teachers noted that social emotional skills help better for the school readiness of the children and gave more preferences on the communication and emotional skills of the children (Hustedt, et al, 2017).

Four-dimensional conceptualization is needed for pre-primary teachers, these are humanistic, academic or cognitive process, technological ability and socio-emotional reconstruction orientation (Cheung, Keung and Tam, 2022). For managing children, all teachers should be humanitarian in nature. Using technology in teaching-learning activity make the academic process easier for teachers and children as well. More over teachers should aware about the socio-emotional development of children. Teachers are the pivotal character in pre-primary level. To make the children in a good human being teacher's roll is very important because he/she involved directly with the holistic process for the development of the children (Khandaker, 2021). According to Piaget, during pre-operational stage, the logical reasoning is not built properly and the teachers should make specific plan to build logical thought towards children (Rabindran and Madanagopal, 2020).

Importance of two years pre-primary:

Pre-primary education helps to provide many benefits to develop children's higher order skills like problem solving, socio emotional development, family functioning etc. Studies showed that children from disadvantaged population are highly benefited from pre-primary education (Lamb, 1988). Many risks such as poor health, malnutrition, poverty, unstimulating home

environment etc, associated with the disadvantage group of people and their children. Intervention is highly required for them and pre-primary schools or centers are the place from where parents and their children can be benefited. Thus, the larger tenure of pre-primary can provide more benefit because pre-primary program lays foundation for primary schooling and children can learn early years key skills, literacy and numeracy in this stage.

Pre-primary education has multiple positive effect including family functioning, social adjustment and positive thinking of children (Ou and Reynolds 2004; Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2007; Sylva et al.2004; UNESCO 2007, cited in Nath, 2012). Prior to enroll in primary school its need to organize 1-3 years of pre-primary education (usually age 3-6) for physical, language, cognitive, gross motor, fine motor and socio-emotional development of children. Young children will get foundational skills which is needed for school readiness and school success. It also opens a promising avenue for reducing inequalities in society across the life span (USAID, 2022).

Many research showed that the socio-emotional development of children occurred by the practices they do in their surrounding and environment. It is found that the children attending pre-primary school for two or more years have gained better cognitive and social emotional development than the children not got opportunity to attend preschool (Polat and Yavuz, 2016). Two years duration help to enhance the self-concepts and self-confidence of the children thus, children become more confident to carry on their next step of education in primary grade and further. Polat and Yavuz, 2016 also found that the longer length of pre-primary education upsurges self-concepts and self-esteem of children. Children's phonological skills, mathematical skills, drawing skills and linguistic skills expand accordingly.

It is proved by the research that the longer length of pre-primary results better performance for children. The children who spend two years or more duration in the preschool have advanced

level of self-concepts that the children who concentrate pre-primary in one year duration (Zincirkiran, 2008, Ikiz, 2010 cited in Polat and Yavuz, 2016). In another research alternatively found that the duration or pre-primary form 1-3 years has no significant differences in children's self-concepts (Dundar, 2010, cited in Polat and Yavuz, 2016). All educational activities should be in accordance with the interest of children, such as music, drama, science, arts etc. The hands-on educational tools should be used and applied together collaboratively (Pekdogan and Akgul, 2016). Children's literacy and numeracy positively affect by the preschool or a center-based program (Magnuson and Waldfogel, 2005). As long as the children get the opportunity of practicing in the pre-school, their literacy and numeracy will be strong enough for their primary level.

Challenges of pre-primary education:

The quality of later life is enlightened by the quality of experience in early life. Involvement in worth activities in early years of a children may help them to keep in the right track in future and hopefully enhance the future development (Chowdhury and Choudhury, 2002). Pre-primary education is a common concern for all countries. Curriculum implementation, availability of curricular document, emphasis of the content of curriculum, teaching method, teaching learning materials, assessment technique, record keeping, inadequacy of classroom space, organization of outdoor space, teachers training for pre-primary education, opportunity for in-service-training, parents-teachers relationship and participation of parents in management are the important issues considering challenges (Dibaba, 2016).

Dibaba, 2016 also found out the acute scarcity of skilled and knowledgeable teachers, lack of promotion of effective partnership with parents and teachers. Challenges including distance of pre-primary center from home of children, deficiency of quality teachers, scarcity of teaching-

learning materials and inadequate classroom are the common phenomenon (Mghasse and William, 2016).

One of the challenges teachers concerned about the communication with parents (Hobjila, 2014). Positive relations between teachers and parents are needed to increase children's educational attainment. It also needed for the social and emotional development of the children. Parents should share the problems related to his/ her baby with teacher and teachers should convey the messages and instructions applicable for the particular child to his/ her parents. Well connection among child-teacher-parent may produce better results for the cognitive and socio-emotional development of children. Thus, children can perform better in the home, school and in the society. Lack of proper parents teachers relation may negatively affect the future of the children.

Chapter III

Methodology

Study approach/ design:

Qualitative approach was used to understand the perception of teachers and parents about two years pre-primary. The qualitative research approach is flexible, have a lower chance of missing data, offered in-depth and detail information, cost effective and respondent can exactly feel and express their understanding regarding a particular phenomenon (Mwita, 2022). Qualitative component as In-Depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were be used for the research. That helped to explore and afford deeper insights in the real-life scenario of two years pre-primary education. The detail description of participants' opinion, feelings and experiences are produced through qualitative research and can easily interpret the meaning of their actions. Human experiences are holistically understood by this approach (Rahman, 2017). Denzin and Lincoln (2002), mentioned "Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary field which encompasses a wider range of epistemological viewpoints, research methods, and interpretive techniques of understanding human experiences".

Research Site:

This research is related with education and designed to find out the parents' and teachers' perception towards two years pre-primary education of children. The study area was Dhaka city. Both mothers and fathers participated as parents and dedicated pre-primary teachers of different government primary schools of Dhaka city expressed their feelings and understanding regarding two years pre-primary education.

Research Participants:

Parents as both fathers and mothers who have at least a child aged 4-5 years and dedicated teachers of pre-primary stage of different government schools of Dhaka city were selected as study population. The parents from Dhaka city are considered as sample population who have children of that age limit. Both fathers and mothers included in this study.

Sampling Procedure:

There were 22 participants in total for the study. Among the participants' male female are participated in the study. Four dedicated teachers for pre-primary or the trained teachers involved in pre-primary level of the government primary schools and 4 parents (both father and mother) who have 4-5 years old child offered for In Depth Interview (IDI). Two Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) were held. One FGD for the teachers and another for parents. In each FGD group, there were 6 parents and 8 teachers participated in FGD. Parents and teachers have been taken from different parts of Dhaka city. Participants are selected conveniently who were willingly participate in the study.

Data Collection Tools:

As it is a qualitative research, two qualitative methods and tools were used in this study. In Depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guideline prepared to collect data from parents and teachers. There were some yes/no questions but most of the questions were open ended. The detail demographic information was also collected from the participants through asking questions in the beginning of IDI and FGD. Researcher conducted IDIs and FGDs by himself and ensured the reliability and validity of the data. Two methods were used to justify the strength and weakness of the data considering variety of data sources including time, person and space of the study which helped to upsurge the validity and reliability of data. The cross verification of two sources have enhanced the validity of data and also enhanced the chance to control. Thus, the reliability and validity of the result and findings can be ensured.

After preparing the IDI guideline and FGD guidelines they are verified through piloting in a nearby school teacher and a parent.

Data Collection Procedure:

Researcher prepared IDIs and FGD guidelines for collecting data. The guidelines were verified by ECD experts and revised after testing in the field. Researcher himself collected data. Oral consent was taken from the school authority and participants. Oral consent also taken from DPE personnel over phone. Researcher explained the objective of the study, asked questions following the guideline, took note manually and recorded in the mobile phone with the permission of the participants. Researcher wrap-up the sessions with thanks to the participants and said good-by.

IDIs were conducted with 4 teachers and 4 parents. The length of each IDI was 30-45 minutes. Participants are asked to answer according to the IDI guideline. The guideline was prepared based on the research objects and research questions. Participants' details answers were noted down for further actions. In the FGD guidelines there were 6 to 8 questions. The pattern of the questions was mixed with structure and unstructured questions. Questions have been prepared such a way which satisfy the research questions. Answers of all questions noted down in a note sheet for further analysis. It was also be recorded getting permission from the participants.

Data Management and Analysis:

Researcher himself has collected and analyzed the data. Data was checked for completeness after collecting because incomplete data may not usable for analysis. The information taken from IDI was transcribed and researcher's short note was detail out in the description form under content analysis technique. Information taken from FGD and IDI and detailed out in different analysis presentation. Following by the step-by-step process like, categorized data into topics, themes and pattern. Finally, based on consistency, relevancy of concepts and

themes to apprehend the meaning of the findings data was interpreted. Researcher categorized data by method and participants.

The plan was as follows-

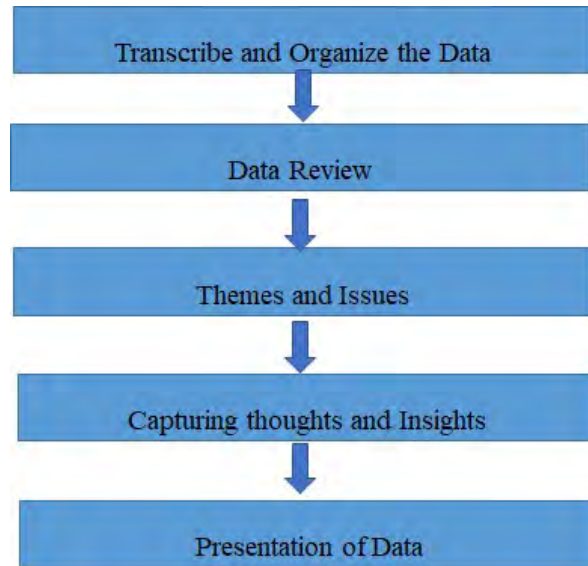


Figure 1: Diagram of Data Analysis

Validity and Reliability:

In the qualitative research validity means appropriateness of tools, process and data (Leung, 2015). All collected data are triangulated for checking authenticity. Tools are prepared based on research questions. Tools are verified by ECD expert and checked by field test in a nearby school. Both FGD and IDI guidelines are tested through piloting by a parent and a teacher. Researchers asked some same questions in different way to cross check the answers. Data are reviewed by different themes and issues. The findings are detailed out and all issues are discussed and compared with different literatures. The study recommend some important thoughts and ensured reliability.

Ethical Issues:

All ethical procedures are followed strictly. The research carried out by following the principles of ethics. First, researcher got prior approval from Brac University to conduct the research. The participants were asked for permission to participate in the In-Depth Interview (IDI) and FGD. The oral consent has been taken from the participants to assure them the information will be taken to use only for research and no personal information will be disclosed to anyone else. Oral consent also taken from the competent authority. The participants who willingly participated in the study, were included the study. Further, all particulars of the research like, context of the study, purpose of the research, objectives of the study, reason for approaching them and researcher's profile was given to them. The participants who were not interested to take part or avoid to answer any specific question their wishes were given priority and they were skipped. Code number was used instead of name of the participants. Researchers ensured confidentiality and anonymity.

Limitations of the study:

This is small-scale research. This study was conducted for Masters thesis as the fulfillment of MSc in ECD. This research has some limitations as follows-

- Time constraints
- There were only 2 FGDs and 4 IDIs
- Only city area was covered
- Parents of different socio-economic background were not considered
- Number of participants was very small which did not represent the whole scenario.

Chapter IV

Results and Discussion

Results:

Findings revealed from the data collected through IDI and FGD of parents and teachers regarding the perception of two years duration of pre-primary education. Government of Bangladesh has made the plan to introduce one more year pre-primary education for 4+ years of children. The primary objective of the study was to find out the perception of fathers and mothers as parents and dedicated or trained teachers of preprimary level of government primary schools regarding upcoming two years pre-primary level. Collected data are analyzed in thematic approach and emergent by theme and sub themes. At beginning of the chapter, the demographic details of the participants are discussed. Following by that four to five themes are presented with sub themes. Themes are- existing one year pre-primary, importance of pre-primary, two years upcoming pre-primary, knowledge and understanding of parents and teachers-parents recommendations. The themes were categorized based on the research questions and the tools, by which the data are collected help researcher to meet the research objective.

Demographic Information:

There were two types of participants (parents and teachers) in this study. The demographic information of parents and teachers are discussed below.

Respondents' Demographic Information:

Parent's Demographic Information:

Parents demographic profile are examined based on age, location of living, educational qualification, profession, socio-economic condition and number of children they have. In

Depth Interview were taken for four parents, three were mothers and one father. All three mothers were housewives and the father is involved in small business. The age range of the parents are 30-42 years old. All parents have a child of 4-5 years old. Two parents were taken from Uttara region, one from Shere-E-Bangla road, Mohammadpur and one from Loharpool, Ganderia area. All of the parents belong to nuclear families. Six parents were participated in FGD. Three mothers and three fathers joined group discussion. Fathers run small business in local area, two mothers were housewives, one mother part time helped her husband's business. All are from lower income family according to their socio-economic status. The yearly income range of parents are BDT 2,40,000 to 3,60,000.

Teachers' Demographic Information:

Teachers demographic profile are examined based on their age, sex, location and experience in teaching. The age range of the teachers of the study was 32-44 years. Four teachers were participated in IDI. Two teachers taken form Ganderia Government Girls Primary School, old Dhaka, one form Mohammadpur Government Primary School, Mohammadpur and one from Azampur Government Primary School, Uttara. No male dedicated teachers for pre-primary were found in the study area. One teacher is experienced of 7 years, two for 8 years and one senior teacher found who has 19 years of experience in teaching. Eight teachers participated in focus group discussion (Three male and five female teachers) from different government primary schools of Dhaka city. All teachers got the 15 days basic training for pre-primary teaching. Teachers got more training on different subjects, such as Bangla, English, Mathematics, Bangladesh and Global Studies, ICT, Music, Fine Arts (*Charu-Karu*) and Assessment.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants

Study tools	Parents	Teachers
IDI	Total: 4 Mothers : 3 Occupation: Housewives Father: 1 Occupation: Small Business Age range: 30-42 years Education: HSC Maximum Living area: Dhaka city.	Total: 4 Female: 4 Age range: 32-44 years Experience: 7-19 years
FGD	Total: 6 Mothers: 4 Father: 2	Total: 8 Male: 3 Female: 5

Findings are analyzed in four themes such as importance of pre-primary, one-year existing pre-primary, two years upcoming pre-primary and parents-teachers' expectations and recommendations. Themes are divided in different sub-themes.

Theme 1: Understanding of Parents and teachers on early learning and child development

Sub theme 1: Early Learning and Child development

All the respondents of both parents and teachers are aware of early learning and child development, particularly at pre-primary level. All the respondents have expressed that early learning is very important for the holistic development of the children.

Almost all parents and teachers have a common understanding that children learn to control their impulses, able to share things, take turns, compromise and express emotions, able to sit in the classroom, attend and listen in the classroom and behave in the expected way.

One parent said

“The early learning and child development run through pre-primary education, children will play in the school or center with peers and group, learn rhymes, literacy and numeracy through play and copy the behavior and attitude from teachers or caregivers.” (IDI#1, February 13, 2023).

Teachers emphasized on early learning and discovered that children completed one year pre-primary are more knowledgeable than the children directly enrolled in grade one.

“So, we expect that parents should send their children to pre-primary level, then they will be promoted automatically to grade one. Thus, it will be easier for us to teach them and give them intervention for socio-emotional aspect”. (FGD#1, February 13, 2023).

Sub theme 2: Play based pre-primary curriculum for early learning

All the teachers said that play-based approach was very helpful for teaching-learning activities at pre-primary level. They also stated that play based curriculum supported the children to develop the physical, cognitive and socioemotional skills. One teacher said,

“The existing play-based curriculum is very effective for teaching-learning activities of pre-primary level. This curriculum may works for upcoming two years pre-primary”. (IDI#1, February 13, 2023)

Few teachers said

“A little bit revision is needed to make curriculum fit for the 4+ children and it should be more play based”. (FGD#1, February 14, 2023).

All teachers agreed that two years pre-primary will be better for the holistic development of children. Teachers also agreed that two years pre-primary will be helpful for the kids, parents and teachers as well. Children will be benefited because they will take two years' intervention from teachers. They will do more exercise, play with peers, learn more rhymes, letters, words,

read pictures from zero text to minimum text and get behavioral learning. Moreover, children will spend quality times in the school. One teacher said

“The foundation of children in terms of loving school, doing physical exercise and learning words and numbers will be stronger in two years”. (IDI# 2, February 13, 2023).

Few teachers felt that existing pre-primary curriculum has no option for teaching in second language, they hope two years pre-primary should have such opportunity for learning English letters and words for the kids. One teacher said

“In the first year of pre-primary children will learn the letters through play and in second year they will learn words both Bangla and English through play” (IDI#3, February 13, 2023).

Most of the teachers agreed that, if English letters will be introduced in pre-primary level children will be familiar with English words in grade one and English phobia will be removed in future grades.

Parents agreed that they will be benefited because their child will admit in grade one with strong background and their further study will be easier for them. As the pre-primary level is play-based, so children will fall in love to school. Most of the parents hope that English will be added with the existing syllabus.

Teachers and parents agreed that the development of children’s was essential in this stage. They also mention that home environment alone was not enough for the development.

Sub theme 3: School readiness

School readiness refers, the physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development which is needed for a child before sending to school. All the stake holders like parents, teachers and

caregivers want that their children will control their impulses, able to share things, take turns, compromise and express emotions, able to sit in the classroom, attend and listen in the classroom and behave in the expected way.

All respondents acknowledged the linkage between school readiness and pre-primary class.

One teacher stated

“Obviously, pre-primary level helps children for their next course of action regarding cognitive, social and emotional learning. Children learn behavior, conversation, mixing with other children which will help them to continue good performance in primary grades. Children also learn letters, words in both spoken and written form and it will provide benefits them in primary grades.” (IDI#2, February 13, 2023).

Parents had the same opinion in school readiness. Most of the parents emphasized on the need for pre-primary for the smooth transition in primary level. One father express his thought

“If children directly admit in the primary grade, it becomes very tough for them to adjust in the classroom with peers and teachers. So, I suggest every one to enroll every single child in the pre-primary school for the betterment of your child. This level is very helpful for children for their school readiness.” (IDI# 3, February 14, 2023).

One mother explained school readiness in this way

“My daughter is now in pre-primary level, I took her in the school from last two months, in this two moth she felt love for the school and said that she will be in grade one next year. She expressed her feeling and thoughts with joyful attitude. When she come home after school, she told me the things happened in the school, she feels very happy in the school. It seems to me that she is fully ready to cope her up in the school environment and get herself ready for the primary grade one”. (FGD# 2, February 14, 2023).

Most of the teachers gave emphasis on the issue of school readiness because they realized that all children passed from pre-primary level must admitted in the primary grade. This process of pre-primary help to reduce dropout rate of primary education. After completing pre-primary level children become fully ready for primary schooling.

Theme 2: Understanding of two years pre-primary

Sub theme 1: Knowing of two years pre-primary

Government took the plan to introduce two years preprimary education form 2023. MoPME did all necessary steps regarding this. NCTB prepared and finalize the curriculum for 4+ and 5+ children. Teaching learning materials ie, textbook, teachers guide, exercise *khata* and reading materials all are sent to the respective schools. DPE selected 3,214 schools covering all 64 districts for piloting purpose. Teacher’s training is under process.

All the teachers knew that government was planning for two years pre-primary. Most of the teachers said 4+ years is the perfect age of sending children in the pre-primary section if it is two years duration, then they will be in grade one in six plus years.

Half of the parents of this study knew about the plan. After knowing the plan all the parents congratulated government for two-years pre-primary education. One parent stated

“Next generation will get the benefits of this decision.” (FGD#2, February 14, 2023).

Sub theme 2: Duration/ Length of pre-primary education

Parents and teachers are asked about the ideal duration of pre-primary education. Most of the respondents said that the ideal duration of pre-primary should be 2 years. They said that the pre-primary level is the high time for childhood development. One year is not sufficient for the things needed for the kids. They expressed that at the age of four children starts learning many

things like physical movement, running, jumping, sharing, playing in a group. Home environment alone is not enough for those motor development. If children meet the foreign body like peers or teachers, they can remove their inertia easily that can help them to do well communication with teachers for teaching learning activities and also help them in socio-emotional development in future. Two years duration for pre-primary as starts from 4+ years is better to cope up the mentioned learning for the children.

One of the parents shared her words like

“It is needed to send the children in pre-primary school at the age of 4+ and the duration must be 2 years because in the first year children should learn playing, sharing, rhymes, conversation and some other behavioral and social norms. In the 2nd year they will learn some partial literacy and numeracy such as letters, words, numbers ect, in both first language and second language”. (IDI# 3, February 14, 2023).

One of the parents said that one year pre-primary education is decent enough for the toddlers because in the pre-primary age range the children can not take much pressure in learning, if the duration become more than one year, it may harmful for the next part of their life.

Maximum teachers expressed their opinion and emphasized on two years duration. They felt the importance of two years pre-primary for the children. Among them one teacher explained his opinion this way

“If the duration become 2 years, children will get the opportunity to learn essential behavioral needs and the needs for expected numeracy and literacy in the pre-primary level and then it will helpful for the children to smooth transition in primary grade. It will also helpful for the teachers to tech the children who complete two years pre-primary level.” (FGD# 1, February 13, 2023).

One teacher uttered her feelings that the ideal duration of pre-primary should be three years and should be started from 3+ years of age because children start learning from the beginning of their childhood. This is the perfect time to give intervention to them for behavioral learning.

She also said

“The longer the duration of pre-primary may bring the better result for the children in future. In the first year, they will play in the school or center, play with peers and group. In the second year, they will learn rhymes, literacy and numeracy through play and copy the behavioral attitude from teachers or caregivers. In the third year, indoor and outdoor play will remain same, in addition they will be taught letters to words, numbers to counting and learning 2nd language.” (IDI# 4, February 13, 2023).

One parent stated

“The length of pre-primary should be one year because the children of this age level may not take the load of teaching-learning activities.” (IDI#3, February 14, 2023)

Most of the teachers expressed their opinion and voted on two years length. On the other hand, it is remarkable that one teacher said

“I believe that 3+ years is the perfect age of sending children in the pre-primary school because if we start from 3+ years, children will gradually learn many things needed for holistic development”. (IDI# 1, February 13, 2023).

Sub theme 3: Expectation about learning from pre-primary level

Parents and teachers all expect different types of learning happen in children in pre-primary level. One of the parents describe her expectations in this way

“I hope my child and other children will learn how to talk nicely with others in the school and in the home. I am satisfied to teacher that she taught general greetings to

my child like, good morning, salam, thank you, good bye, sorry and many more things for general conversation. My child now practicing such little words.” (IDI#4, February 14, 2023).

All parents anticipated that their children will converse in a good manner. They hope their children will learn it from pre-primary level.

Parents also expect that their children will behave nicely with other kids, they will share and care for everyone surrounded with them. One mother expressed her sad feelings this way

“My daughter cannot share her toy with others, I always told her to share toys and tiffin with others but she did not. I think this is alarming for her future, now I expect from the teachers to rectify this behavior in the school environment so that she will make herself social and emotional in nature.” (IDI# 3, February 13, 2023).

Another mother agreed with her and said her son has the same behavior and she also want that from the school.

Most of the parents wanted that their children will fall in love with school, children will learn both Bangla and English letters in the pre-primary level. Children will also learn numbers in this level. One of them expects this way

“I am very happy that the teachers are very expert for handling children, their teaching-learning activities are excellent. My daughter learns many things by this time. Now I hope that teacher will teach them english language.” (FGD# 2, February 14, 2023).

Children learn many rhymes in pre-primary level. Few parents expect

“More physical activities should be included with the class schedule.” (FGD# 2, February 14, 2023).

Few parents desired that some class for fine arts like, drawing and music should be added with class schedule. There may be class party every month where children will participate and compete each other in drawing, music or dancing. This is for happy feelings of children, no award or gradation is needed for these activities. A father wanted that government should increase the class duration or time period, it should be from morning to afternoon and school will provide food for the children.

Most of the parents hope that English will be added in the existing curriculum. Parents also hope that two years pre-primary will be more play-based, so children will be interested to go to school.

All respondents expected different types of learning happen in children in pre-primary level. Most of the parents wanted that their children would fall in love with school and children would learn both Bangla and English letters and numbers in the pre-primary level. One parents said,

“I hope my child and other children will learn how to talk nicely with others in the school and in the home.” (FGD#2, February 14, 2023)

Theme 3: Parents’ willingness to send their children at the age of four

All the respondents of both parents and teachers are concern about existing pre-primary level. What is going on in pre-primary section, what are the process of admission, duration or schooling hour, teacher’s role, parents role, parents-teachers relationship etc, are clear to parents.

Sub-theme 1: Age of children sending in pre-primary center:

Majority of the parents felt that children should sent to pre-primary school at the age of 4. They realized this kinder age is perfect time to shape up children’s behavior. One father stated

“I sent my daughter to pre-primary school at the age of 5 because one year pre-primary education for 5+ children is available in government primary schools. If government starts two years pre-primary education, I think I will send my younger son to the school at the age of 4+ years. In this age we can shape the children easily as our expectation”. (IDI#3, February 14, 2023).

One mother urged

“It is better to send children in the school at 4+ age but it is more important to provide facilities to the children, we are ready to send our children at the age of 4+ but current facilities are not sufficient for that” (IDI#1, February 13, 2023).

One of the mothers discovered that 5+ is the consummate age for pre-primary level because, before this age the children may face pressure of learning or may feel mental pressure for schooling. If a child admits in pre-primary at the age of 5, then he/she will admit in grade one at 6 years, then this child will complete Secondary School Certificate at the age of 16. This should be a great combination. She disagreed to send her child in 4+ age because she thought

“If we give more pressure to our children in this kinder age, it may be harmful for their future.” (IDI# 3, February 13, 2023).

Sub-theme 2: Parents’ planning:

Most of the parents Planned to send their children in the pre-primary school at the age of 5+ years then children will be promoted to grade one at the age of 6+ years. They thought only one year duration of pre-primary is available. Few parents knew about upcoming two years pre-primary, they planned to send their children at the age of 4+ years. One of them express her feelings in this way

“My elder son is now enrolled in pre-primary school. He was admitted this year. I have another daughter of 2 years old and I have already made a plan to send my daughter to the pre-primary school at the age of 4”.

After getting the news about upcoming two years pre-primary level, all parents agree to make plan to send their children in the pre-primary center at the age of 4 years. They realized and said

“It will be a great opportunity for the next generation”. (FGD# 2, February 14, 2023).

Another mother disagreed with others and stated

“We should consider the maturity and age of our children before making plan about their education. We should not send our immature babies in the school before 5 years of age otherwise they will be mentally upset to bear the routine work, home work etc,” (FGD# 2, February 14, 2023).

Sub-theme 3: Children learning in the home:

All parents are aware about their children’s learning. Parents found very serious and careful about children’s learning. Most of the parents sit with their children for two hours daly evening for regular study. One of them described this way

“I think regular study is must for every child because it helps children to be attentive and make them regularize in future.” (IDI# 3, February 13, 2023).

One father said that he did not give pressure his daughter for the study at home but her daughter recite rhymes to family members everyday and try to count objects, utter letters and words she learnt from school. Few parents said

“It become regular habit that children sit every evening with their book and exercise khata, try to read out the pictures, draw something and ask parents if did not understand anything.” (IDI# 3, February 13, 2023).

Most of the parents use one or two more books in the home for the kids. The books are basically pictures book, rhymes book and work book (Letters or number writing book) etc,. They use this books in the home for the better learning for their children. Children learn and practices gross motor activities like running and jumping from their siblings at home. One of the teachers said

“We discourage parents to give pressure to the children in their home, school time is sufficient for learning in this age level”. (FGD# 1, February 13, 2023).

Theme 4: Barriers in pre-primary in Bangladesh

Sub-theme 1: Academic and instrument’s availability

Many challenges of one year existing pre-primary were found in this study. Both parents and teachers are agreed about the challenges. The teachers found many problems and they tried to remove the problems but some problems went out beyond their capacity. One teacher told

“In my class, some children cry continuously, I tried to make them happy by giving them toys but sometimes they through them to other children. This is a regular phenomenon for initial 2/3 months.” (IDI#3, February 14, 2023).

Most of the teaches agreed with the same problem they faced.

Another teachers stated

“It is surprising that some parents entered the classroom and wanted to sit with children.” (IDI#4, February 14, 2023).

Teachers feels uneasy and bothered by the parents. Normal teaching-learning activities are hindered by the parents.

One teacher explained another problem

“I several times told some parents to keep the dresses clean for children but parents did not care for that. School authority arrange parents meeting namely ‘Maa Somabesh’ regularly and advice to do needful for the betterment of children. It is very sad that maximum of parents did not follow the request of the teachers.” (IDI#1, February 13, 2023).

All the government primary schools have one dedicated classroom for pre-primary children. The dedicated classroom is well decorated with paintings. Toys such as, dolls, games set, slipper, plastic rocking horse, plastic rocking ducks, blocs, ball, plastic fruits set, plastic animals set, other playing instruments and some teaching-learning materials are available there. There are four corner available in each classroom for different types of playing and amusement for kids. But unfortunately teachers were not able to utilize all facilities due to less time allocation for pre-primary class.

Most of the teachers said that the instruments like toy sets, game sets, story books and other teaching-learning materials are enough for two batches. Few teachers said

“It will be better if extra sets of plying materials will be provided by the authority for 4+ children.” Few teachers said *“There may be an extra room for playing because we have options and corner to play with water and sand, children made the room dirty if played with water and muds.” (FGD# 1, February 13, 2023).*

Some teachers found the scarcity of instruments/toys in terms of number of children. Sometimes number of enrolled children become higher than the capacity of classroom but number of playing materials remain same as before, in that case it become very challenging to

manage all kids in the classroom. Support staff is another big challenge to run the activities related with pre-primary education. There were one or two support staffs locally appointed but they did not get government salary and other benefits. One teacher stated

“I have 40 children in my class, it is very tough for me to manage all 40 students because children in this age level are restless in nature, want to go to washroom, playing in small groups, so I need one more teacher to support me in my class otherwise it is very challenging”. (FGD# 1, February 13, 2023).

Sub-theme 2: Infrastructure for Pre-primary Class

Teachers and parents are agreed with one important issue that is wash block. There are wash block available in every school but most of the pre-primary children in their age level can not use washroom alone they need someone to help them. One teacher explained

“In our school we have wash block far from the pre-primary classroom, sometimes I took help from parents waiting beside the classroom to help children to use washroom. The washroom should be adjacent to the classroom.” (FGD# 1, February 13, 2023).

Parents also faced some challenges. Parents expressed their feelings this way

“In the morning we come with our children and wait till finish classes. Most of the time we remain standing, or sitting on newspaper, we don't have any waiting room and washroom, no drinking water available.” (FGD# 2, February 13, 2023).

Most of the teachers said that current infrastructure is not sufficient for two batches of pre-primary like 4+ and 5+ aged children. One teacher said

“If government will introduce two years pre-primary, it is needed to arrange one more well decorated classroom with facilities accessible for 4+ children and there should be an attached washroom for the 4+ children.” (IDI# 4, February 14, 2023).

Teachers feel that existing classroom will be used by 5+ children and 4+ children will use different classroom.

Few teachers felt that it is possible to continue two batches at a time in a single classroom with two shifts. One shift may be from morning 8 am to 10:30 am and another may be from 11 am to 1:30 pm. A teacher said about multimedia classroom with projector or smart TV may works better for the kids.

“It will ease our work load” (FGD# 1, February 13, 2023) she said.

All the mothers and fathers are demanding for the attached washroom for their kids. One stated

“In this school the washroom is in different floor and it is hard for my daughter in this age to go there, that is why she tried to avoid washroom and it may be harmful for her health.” (FGD# 2, February 14, 2023).

All the parents raised their voice in a same wanting for an extra washroom for the pre-primary children only and it is must if there will be two years pre-primary. Parents also expressed their demand for a waiting room for the guardian inside the school compound.

Sub-theme 3: Manpower for Pre-primary Class

In this theme manpower means the human resources needed to carry on the pre-primary level. Human resources included teachers, female support staffs called *Aiya* and extra caregivers, extra teacher to assist existing teacher.

A teacher express her feelings this way while asking about two years pre-primary

“One more teacher must be needed to control and teach the kids.” (IDI# 3, February 14, 2023).

Almost all the teachers agreed with her and think there will be tremendous pressure for them to continue two batches at a time. Support staffs have a sheer necessity, especially one or two female support staff is demanded by the teachers.

One of the parents want to send her request to the authority

“No matter one shift or two shifts, there must be a caregiver in the classroom to assist teacher” (IDI# 1, February 13, 2023).

Most of the parents agreed with her and emphasis on the presence of an extra caregiver or teacher in the pre-primary classroom.

All the teachers agreed in a common issue, that is in-service-training. They felt training is needed to make operation in 4+ children. As it is a new batch with younger children, new training is needed to continue with them. One teacher demanded this way

“Sometimes we face difficulty to control special needs children, so we need special training to handle special child” (IDI# 2, February 13, 2023). A newly appointed teacher stated her need this way *“I need basic training and curriculum dissemination training to make myself fit with the teaching-learning activities.” (IDI# 4, February 14, 2023).*

Discussion:

In this discussion chapter the findings from the research are presented and the inquiry evidences are analyzed with the references of active literatures. Four themes and several sub-themes are used for interpretation of findings. Following by that a short conclusion is placed. Finally, several recommendations are suggested.

Theme 1: Understanding of Parents and teachers on early learning and child development:

Sub theme 1: Early Learning and Child development

All respondents are agreed about the importance and needs of early learning. Parents thought that early learning helps their children to express and control emotions, share things with others, creating attention to the task and to be an attentive listener. Parents also believe that pre-primary schools are the vehicle of early learning. This is supported by the research that the children's physical, mental or intellectual, linguistic, socio-emotional development is boosted by ECEC (Early Childhood Care and Education) programs (Maundeni, 2013).

Respondent agreed that pre-primary level is very important for the holistic development of children because this early year is the best time for laying foundation. Parents emphasis on the learning of the children in early years and said pre-primary schools are the only platform for the ultimate early years learning. A research done by Cheung and Ostrosky, 2023 ensured that the learning from early years in preschools mainly engagement in motor activities plays vital role to develop different skills like, physical, cognitive and social emotional skills of children.

The parents are advised by the teachers to enroll their children in the pre-primary schools for the betterment of their physical development. Teachers also urged that early physical exercise or activities can lead children to do the best practices in future so that they cannot be addicted on the smart phone or other harmful devices. It was also suggested by the World Health Organization, "Preschoolers should be engaged at least 3 hours in physical activities and the screen time on smart phone, TV, laptop etc, should not be more than an hour" (WHO, 2019).

Sub theme 2: Play based pre-primary curriculum for early learning

This study revealed the need for play based curriculum for the young children's holistic development. Learning through play is emphasized by all parents and teachers. Teachers also

suggested that the existing curriculum for 5+ pre-primary should be a bit revised to fit with the 4+ children and it must be more play-based.

Lev Vygotsky, who is considered the initiator of socio-cultural viewpoint on intellectual growth through play emphasized on the learning through interaction and play. According to the Social Cultural theory, human development is social process where children learn perception, values, cultures and critical thinking through interaction with the senior or experienced member of the society (Vygotsky, 1978).

Play-based learning is mostly practiced in Japan. The preschool teachers in Japan encourage children to involve in the play according to their interest. Teachers update their play pedagogy by their understanding, choices and findings based on the practical learning. They set up a play-based learning environment instead of giving force to children to read the books.

In the beginning of the 21st century the policy makers and the parents gave more pressure on children's academic learning instead of play. Children were busy with academic activities from dawn to dusk. Children took extra tuitions in the afternoon instead of playing in the ground that become harmful for their physical and mental health (Alam, 2022). Alam also found the reasons behind this problem are ignorance of parents, lack of trained teachers, lack of governance, insufficient play materials and lack of facilities in preschools.

This study found the need for play-based curriculum and the implementation of curriculum in the pre-primary schools because the home environment alone is not sufficient for holistic development of children.

Sub theme 3: School readiness

Research results showed that the children learn all necessary things needed for the school readiness from the pre-primary school. To avoid the emotional complexity about the school and classroom, school readiness is required for all children. Children's immediate environment

including parents, families, neighbors, relatives and pre-school are the main components for school readiness. Children need some prior knowledge and skills for smooth transition in primary grades (Maxwell & Clifford, 2004, cited in Pekdogan and Akgul, 2016). Pekdogan and Akgul in their research in Turkey also found that the children who did not enrolled in pre-primary level like nursery school or kindergarten, their primary schooling become more difficult than the children come through pre-primary school.

In this study all parents agreed that the children learn gross and fine motor skills and get developed in cognitive, physical and emotional areas in the pre-primary level which help them to get ready for their primary grade. Teachers also united in the idea of school readiness and also agreed that children learn letters, words, conversation, behavior, mixing with other children that are pre requisite for primary grade.

Theme 2: Understanding of two years pre-primary

Sub theme 1: Knowing of two years pre-primary

According to the government decision of introducing two years pre-primary the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education took essential paces to make the initiative successful. 3,214 schools were selected for the purpose of piloting. National Curriculum and Textbook Board prepared play-based curriculum including teaching learning materials.

As the teachers are government employees and doing their job in the government primary schools, they were known about the government's planning for two years pre-primary. But the parents mostly unknown to the initiative. After knowing the fact parents gave theirs thanks to the government for this novel initiative. Parents request the authority to spread this news to the community so that the parents and community members will be aware and contribute to make two years pre-primary successful.

For the fruitful implementation of two years pre-primary, a good partnership of all stake holders is mandatory. The people of where the children living have high responsibility to influence the development of a child. Development including preparing favorable environment and learning strategies (Visnjic, 2021). The respondents of this study emphasized on the smooth relation among the stakeholders.

Sub theme 2: Duration/ Length of pre-primary education:

Parents and teachers all are sensible about the benefits of pre-primary education. They thought pre-primary education is needed for the holistic development of every single child. The duration of pre-primary got importance to parents and teachers as well. It is derived from the study that the ideal duration should be 2 years. Like Bangladesh pre-primary section is attached with primary school in Argentina and they have 3 years duration for pre-primary level covering the children of 3 to 5 years age (Haque et al., 2013).

Different types of pre-primary schooling are available in India and the duration is varied but the age limit of children enrolled in pre-primary level is from 3 to 6 years (Raja, Banumathi & Thangam, 2011). All parents and teachers realized the importance of pre-primary level in Bangladesh. Toddlers should spend more than one year in this level to make the foundation stronger. The higher the duration may result better in physical, language, cognitive and socio-emotional development for the children.

Sub theme 3: Expectation about learning from pre-primary level

The findings from the data comes from IDI and FGD showed that both parents and teachers expect some common and some different demand in learning for children from pre-primary school. Parents believe that their children will learn talking nicely with friends and families, learn general greetings like *salam*, good morning, good bye, *nomosker* etc, good behavior, morals, sharing toys and other utensils with near and dear ones.

Parents also expect that the children will love school and love to learn letters and words both Bangla and English, rhymes, numbers, counting, acting, follow the good behavior of others. It is evident by the research that preschoolers age range is the sensitive period for learning. Pre-primary level is the preparation period for future academic success and also considered as a waiting room for school. Children in this level learn different skills, values, norms, socialization and role as a co-creator of his/ her own development (Visnjic, 2021).

Theme 3: Parents' willingness to send their children at the age of four:

Sub-theme 1: Age of children sending in pre-primary center

This study found the expected age of sending children in pre-primary school is 4 + years. Parents and teachers emphasized on learning expected behavior, learning sharing, playing with others, learning letters, learning small words, rhymes, numbers, conversation, learning second language in the early age of the children. Respondent agreed that the age level 4-5 years are the perfect age to learning mentioned things. In a discussion Paper on Child Rights Education with Children Aged 0–6 Years, UNICEF, (2021) stated “Children aged 3-6 years are sensitive and receptive, in this age level children loves to learn new things”. Mothers agreed to send their children in the age of 4+ years because in the home they see the babies in this age are interested in color and pictures, keep repeating words, physical movement. So, parents thought necessary intervention form preschool may works better for the holistic development of children in the age of four.

In case of second language, many research has done regarding starting age of pre-primary schooling. Successful acquisition of foreign language is correlated to the assumption of Neurological Hypothesis and Critical Period Hypothesis. It is concluded by the research that the children acquire foreign language better in their early age than the adult. Additionally, the

scholars believed that children are better in second language than those who starts to learn second language later in adolescences (Hu, 2016).

Sub-theme 2: Parents' planning

Study revealed that the parents understand the importance of pre-primary education of their children. It is known to them what activities done in the pre-primary class room. Parents understanding is important to take decision or to make plan about their children. Children acquire different experience from different family environment. Parents' planning and decision regarding child's birth, care and contribution towards their rising, action and activities for education and overall parenting trigger children to get positive outcomes (Ceka & Murati, 2016). Currently parents made plan to send their children to the pre-primary center at the age of 5+ years because only one-year pre-primary education is open in the government schools of Bangladesh.

After knowing that the upcoming pre-primary of two years will be available in the same school. Parents decided to make plan to send their babies in the pre-primary school at the age of 4+. The reason behind this planning that the parents thought by these two years the children will improve their concentration, will learn diversity, raise team spirit, build flexibility, boosts confidence that trend the children to lifelong learners.

Teachers also support that the parent should make plan for two years pre-primary for their children because children will capable more about language, cognitive and socio-emotional skills. Pre-primary stage greatly impacts over learners' social development and constructing their socio-emotional skills (Parikh, 2021).

Sub-theme 3: Children learning in the home

Two different thinking were found in this study. Parents were found very serious for their children's learning. Most of the parents sit with their children 1-2 hours daily for reading writing or drawing. Few parents thought altered and did not do any pressure to their children in the home for learning. On the other hand, teachers were liberal enough and don't think to give pressure on children. They thought favorable environment leads children to learn new things automatically.

Teachers gave importance on children liberty and want parents will let children free in the home. Excessive and unscientific load and pressure may be harmful for children. Research found the similarity of this evidence. Generally, the parents are not expert in pedagogy and may not understand the perfect teaching method. They sometimes may impatient and exhausted, children might be the victim of their parents' frustration. This turns to be a psychological violence for the children (Herlina, Kristiawan and Anggraini, 2021).

Theme 4: Barriers in pre-primary in Bangladesh

Sub-theme 1: Academic and instrument's availability

This study found out many barriers like children's abnormal behavior, scarcity of teaching learning materials and play materials, parental behavioral problem, time constraints lack of facilities in technology. Country like Australia, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Portugal, Sweden and Denmark recognize the role of Information Technology in ECEC services. They are planning to introduce the IT in early childhood curricula (Plumb & Kautz, 2015). But in the study area no school found with technological facilities.

Almost half of the children initially in first 2/3 moths crying in the classroom without any reasons, damage or destroy playing materials, quarrels with each-others in the classroom or outside the classroom. Parents entrance in the classroom without the permission of teacher is

another big issue for teachers. Teachers feel armbrace for this unwanted behavior of the parents.

In some schools the number of enrolled children become more than the class capacity. Thus, the class size become bigger and teachers become unable to manage and control all the children within the assign class period and felt shortage of play materials to give all children at a time. Forty children were found in a school. Teacher of that school felt this is a huge class size. Many research found the ideal pre-primary class size should not more than 20 students and teacher students' ratio should not more than 1:10 (Bowne et al, 2017).

Sub-theme 2: Infrastructure for Pre-primary Class

Class room, wash block and parents' waiting room are the main infrastructural barrier for two years pre-primary found in this study. Most of the teachers demanded the bigger size classroom for pre-primary children. They also wanted different classroom for the 4+ years children. To implement the curriculum and to follow the Teachers' Guide to do all designed activities teachers need a larger class room. The classrooms should be in favor of academic activities along with developmental benefits of play (Russell, 2011; Ashiabi, 2007, cited in Islam et al, 2021).

Wash block for the children is another big issue. All schools have wash block available in the compound. But most of them are far from the pre-primary classroom and hard to use by the younger children. Preschoolers need help from others to use washroom. Both parents and teachers agreed in this common issue that the attached was block is needed with all pre-primary classroom.

Almost all the parents specially mothers come with their babies and normally stand

outside till the class finished. They generally wait beside the classroom or nearby road side pavement because they don't have the facility to wait inside the school. Parents strongly appeal for a waiting room. Teachers also support this need because they need to contact with parents at any time.

Sub-theme 3: Manpower for Pre-primary Class

The term manpower in this study is used for the human resources needed to run the pre-primary classes. Human resources including teachers/ facilitators and support staffs. All GPS has a dedicated pre-primary teacher who is trained in teaching learning activities. Most of the teachers are experienced and capable to work under pressure. Most of them handle 20-40 children in a single pre-primary class. This becomes harder for teachers to manage all the children at a time. Thus, they need one more teacher to assist the existing teacher in the classroom for taking care all the children of the class. Research support that the teacher should recognize the level of every child of a class (Islam et al, 2021).

There were no support staff namely *Aya* in the study schools. Both parents and teachers were in same voice that it is needed to employ at least one *Aya* for the pre-primary classes. Children need to go to washroom but they alone cannot do the job. *Aya* can help them in this purpose. Sometimes children do toilet inside the classroom, in that case parent of that particular child come to help cleaning the room. A special need child is found in a school. Teacher of that school explained that in every year they got one or two children like this. Teacher also asked for one trained support staff for the special child.

Teachers Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is needed to do smooth teaching learning activities. All teachers need training to update them with new ideas and technologies. Training directly helps to increase the understanding of the responsibilities, confidence, skills,

and performance of the teachers. The support staffs also need training because they are to work with young children. Researchers argued that the pre-primary teachers are doing their work with little kids, they need some special types of knowledge and skills to increase their ability to manage the new trends (Olowe and Olujoba, 2016).

Conclusion:

Two years length of pre-primary can bring massive positive changes for the holistic development of children. This initiative of government makes a difference in the total education system in Bangladesh. Parents, teachers and children will be benefited by this process. It will provide huge contribution for the school readiness of the toddlers.

This study supports the need for two years pre-primary education. Both parents and teachers felt the need of this procedure. Some lack of knowledge of parents are seen but this can be removed by the awareness campaign or media coverage. For further improvement of this mission, a little bit infrastructural development should sanction. Infrastructural development such as additional classroom, wash block and parents' waiting room should be confirmed.

Teachers did not get much training needed to continue their work. Training on child management and child psychology is must for all teachers of pre-primary level. There are some special children found in some schools. Teachers should have the training on special child management. The playful teaching-learning activities in pre-primary level will bring the upward trend in further education. The triangular combination of government' initiative, teachers' dedication and parents' awareness accelerate the positive outcome of upcoming two years pre-primary education in Bangladesh.

Two years pre-primary education in Bangladesh is a significant issue and will bring sever changes in the current education system. It will enrich the children's productivity and will

enlighten the future education of children. The holistic development of children forces the positive changes in future economy.

Recommendation:

As the two-years pre-primary will be piloted next year, the findings from this study have shed light on the perception of teachers and parents on two years pre-primary would be helpful for the implementers. The following recommendations are being suggested on the basis of these results.

- Well decorated and large classroom are needed for the 4+ years children. There should be sufficient flow of light and air in the room. Children cannot move freely in the small or congested room. So, the area of the classroom should support the children to play and explore play materials and teaching learning materials. Children will do activities individually or with peers or in a group in the class room. By considering the children's interest areas of learning, sometimes it may need to divide the room into different corners. So, pre-primary classroom needs to be large enough for the betterment of managing children.
- For two years of pre-primary the syllabus should be a bit larger. There may be some more rhymes covering sense and non-sense. Second language should be included. Games like age-appropriate puzzles, number games may be included.
- There are need for wash block adjacent to the classroom. In the current setting washrooms are available in every school but most of them are far from the pre-primary classroom and some are hard to use by the young children.
- There should be adequate supplies of teaching-learning materials and play maerials. The children who do not get the play materials he/ she might be demoralized and may not want to come to school next class days.

- Outdoor playing facilities are needed with soft surface play ground. The children of 4+ years of age need soft surface play ground because physically they are not mature enough to play in the normal surface
- There should be waiting room for parents with drinking water supplies. Generally, the parents come with all children and they wait outside the school, standing beside the busy road or sitting blocking the pavement.
- There should be two teachers in a classroom for smoother management. For the better management and smooth operation for teaching learning activities two teachers in a single classroom will do better.
- Parents meeting (*Maa Somabesh*) should be in regular basis. Most of the parents come with the children are mothers, so *Maa Somabesh* is important but school authority should invite both fathers and mothers in the parents meeting.
- Support staff is needed for every class. To bring the children in the washroom, help them to drink water, make them in a line or group and other related works female support staff like *Aya* is needed. Sometimes children need to change their diapers in the class, in that case *Aya* is must.
- Wide media coverage is needed to aware parents regarding two years pre-primary. This two years pre-primary program is not known to all stake holders. So, wide media coverage needed to let everyone know regarding the advantages of two years pre-primary.
- Teachers training regarding new ideas and techniques in teaching-learning should be regularized. Teachers Continuous Professional Development (CPD) need to ensure for the development of teaching-learning activities.
- Policy makers and community leaders should take necessary steps for ensuring children's enrollment in 4+ years.

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Appendices

Appendix: A

IDI Guideline for parents

Name:

Age:

Sex:

Location/Area of Living:

Profession:

Educational Qualification:

Yearly Income:

Family type: Single/ Joint

Interview Date:

1. How many children do you have?
2. Please express your idea about school readiness of your child?
3. What does your child do when he/she is at home?
4. Does your child participate in any learning activities at home? Please explain the activity.
5. What is the perfect age of sending your child in the school?
6. What should be the duration (years) of pre-primary level?
7. Do you think pre-primary is important? Why?
8. What is your plan about sending your child in pre-primary school?
9. Do you know that government is planning for two years pre-primary for children?

10. What may be the potential and challenges of two years pre-primary level of Bangladesh?
11. In your opinion what things children should learn in pre-primary level?
12. Do you think play based pre-primary curriculum is helpful for children? Please explain.
13. What is your opinion regarding the integration of two years pre-primary?
14. Would it be easier for young learners to adjust two years pre-primary? Please share your opinion.
15. Any other comments or suggestions regarding make the initiative successful?

Appendix: B

IDI Guideline for Teachers

Name:

Age:

School Name and Location:

Sex:

Educational Qualification:

Interview Date:

1. How long are you in service?
2. Please explain the current infrastructure is sufficient or not for two batches of pre-primary class?
3. Do you think pre-primary level help for school readiness of children?
4. Do you think in-service-training is needed for pre-primary teachers? Why?
5. What is the perfect age of sending children in the school?
6. What should be the duration (years) of pre-primary level?
7. Do you think one year existing pre-primary education is sufficient for children? Please explain.
8. Do you think two years pre-primary is better than existing one year pre-primary? Please explain.

9. What are the challenges you faced in teaching in existing pre-primary level?
10. What may be the potential and challenges of two years pre-primary level of Bangladesh?
11. What is your opinion regarding the integration of two years pre-primary?
12. Would it be easier for young learners to adjust two years pre-primary? Please share your opinion.
13. Any other comments or suggestions regarding make the initiative successful?

Appendix: C

FGD Guideline Parents

Name:

Age:

Sex:

Location/Area of Living:

Profession:

Educational Qualification:

Yearly Income:

Family type: Single/ Joint

Interview Date:

1. What do you know about Pre-primary education?
2. Please express your idea about school readiness of your child?
3. What should be standard age for sending your kids to the school?
4. Do you think parents teachers' relationship is needed for effective pre-primary education? Please explain.
5. What are your expectations from pre-primary level?
6. How long should be the duration of pre-primary level? Why?

7. What may be the potential and challenges of two years pre-primary level of Bangladesh?
8. What is your opinion regarding the integration of two years pre-primary?
9. Would it be easier for young learners to adjust two years pre-primary? Please share your opinion.
10. Any other comments or suggestions regarding make the initiative successful?

Appendix: D

EGD Guideline Teachers

Name:

Age:

School Name and Location:

Sex:

Educational Qualification:

Interview Date:

1. Could you please explain your job description and job satisfaction?

2. How important is the pre-primary for children learning?

3. Do you have any ideas about pre-primary education of other countries?

4. Make a comparison between one-year pre-primary and two years pre-primary education regarding contribution readiness for primary grades.

5. What advantage children will get from two years pre-primary?

6. Does two years pre-primary helpful for the nation as a whole? Why?

7. What may be the potential and challenges of two years pre-primary level of Bangladesh?
8. What is your opinion regarding the integration of two years pre-primary?
9. Would it be easier for young learners to adjust two years pre-primary? Please share your opinion.
10. Any other comments or suggestions regarding make the initiative successful?