

TEACHERS' QUALITY AND TEACHER EDUCATION AT PRIMARY EDUCATION SUB-SECTOR IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the standard of teaching, skills and based on the standards the problems regarding the teachers' qualification in Bangladesh. It highlights that insufficient knowledge about content pedagogy, not paying adequate attention to intellectual, social, and personal development, ignoring the issues about the diversity of learners, improper and limited use of multiple-instructional strategies, practicing one-way communication, assessing the students' performance through the conventional methods are the major problems related to teaching skills of primary school teachers in Bangladesh. The article also reveals the shortcomings of the curriculum of Certificate in Education (C-in-Ed), an initial pre-service training for the primary school teachers, e.g., by nature the C-in-Ed curriculum is over-theoretical and it allows the trainee teachers a little time to engage in practice teaching. Besides that, the way forward to producing better qualified teachers have also been discussed in the article.

Key words: quality of teachers, Certificate in Education, Upazila Resource Centre, Primary Teacher Training Institutes, practice teaching

I. INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the professionals who directly facilitate students' learning. Basically, the inner idea of teaching is to support the students to learn. According to Joyce and Weil, teachers teach students to develop concepts, to teach themselves skills, to use metaphorical thinking, to solve problems, and to inquire as the scientist does (Joyce and Weil, 2004). Teaching quality of a teacher also can be said significant if s/he has the ability to inspire students, facilitate mastery of a field, mentor young intellect, help students find their voice and finally help students articulate and follow their values (Stanford University, 2004).

Beyond doubt, good teaching is partly an art and partly a science that means good teaching is a skilful blend of artistic and scientific elements. If

we see the following characteristics of an effective classroom we can understand the idea of good teaching easily. According to Snowman & Biehler (Snowman & Biehler, 2006),

- a. Teaching and learning start from a student's current understanding of a subject. Therefore, a teacher's first task is to determine the completeness and accuracy of what students currently know about key topics.
- b. Teachers help students create realistic learning experiences that will lead students to elaborate on and restructure current knowledge. Teachers believe that meaningful learning involves discovering, questioning, analysing, synthesizing, and evaluating information.
- c. Students frequently engaged in complex,

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- meaningful, problem-based activities whose content and goals are negotiated with the teacher.
- d. Students have frequent opportunities to debate and discuss substantive issue.
 - e. A primary goal of instruction is for students to learn to think for themselves. Consequently, teachers use a variety of indirect teaching methods, such as modelling the thinking process they want students to use; providing prompts, probes, and suggestions; providing heuristics; and using technology to organize and represent information.
 - f. Students engage in such high-level cognitive processes as explaining ideas, interpreting texts, predicting phenomena, and constructing arguments based on evidence.
 - g. In addition to assessing student learning with written exams, teachers also require students to write research reports, make oral presentations, build models, and engage in problem-solving activities.
 - h. Student progress is assessed continually rather than just at the end of a unit and the end of a semester.
 - i. Subject-matter disciplines and their knowledge bases are seen as continually undergoing revision.

Are the primary school teachers of Bangladesh acquainted with this original and modern teaching learning approach and practice? Before going to the detail description of teachers' quality at primary education sub-sector in Bangladesh, ten key skills recommended by Robert E. Yinger related to effective teaching (Robert E. Yinger, 1999) can be briefly analysed. The key skills are as follows:

1. *Content Pedagogy*
The teacher understand the central concept, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful to students.
2. *Student Development*
The teacher understands how children learn and develop and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development.

3. *Diverse Learners*
The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
4. *Multiple Instructional Strategies*
The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.
5. *Motivation and Management*
The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behaviour to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
6. *Communication and Technology*
The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
7. *Planning*
The teacher plans instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goal.
8. *Assessment*
The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner.
9. *Reflective Practice*
The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his or her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.
10. *School and Community Development*
The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.

II. QUALITY OF TEACHERS IN BANGLADESH

The requirement of government for primary school teachers (Government Primary School, GPS and

Registered Non-Government Primary School, RNGPS) regarding educational qualification is Bachelor degree for male and SSC for female. No professional training is mandatory. Once the teachers get the appointment they are sent to Primary Teacher Training Institute (PTI) for professional training. Education Watch study reveals that, almost half of the primary school teachers in the upazilas had Bachelor and Masters degree, one forth had HSC and rest of the teachers had SSC (Ahmed *et al*, 2005). Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) states that most of the teachers in the GPS have received C-in-Ed course. Teachers of RNGPS are brought under the training programme at Primary Teacher Training Institute (PTI). So far nearly 74,000 teachers of RNGPS received training (DPE, 2006). But, two different research studies showed that a substantial percent of teachers (26-27%) are not trained (Ahmed *et al*, 2005 p.51 and Haq, 2006 p. 30).

Broadly, primary teachers are used to teach multiple subjects in classes, but only 27% of GPS teachers and 30% of RNGPS received subject based training (BANBEIS, 2007). A system of sub-cluster training is also followed for the continuous professional development of teachers and it has become institutionalised for about two decades. A good number of modules have been developed to make sub-cluster training more effective (DPE, 2006). But, considering the ten key skills related to effective teaching and the characteristics of an effective classroom is the performance of teachers satisfactory?

On the word of the Ahmed *et al* study, teachers had serious deficiency in their knowledge of teaching content and basic pedagogic techniques. Even the better-trained GPS teachers are mechanical and failed to inject enthusiasm and energy in what they are doing (Ahmed *et al*, 2005 p.93). That means the content pedagogy of teachers is not sufficient.

Another study reveals that only 23% of the teachers treat the students with love and affection, but others do not (Haq, 2006 p. 30). Moreover, a significant portion of teachers believes that the slow learners in school are inherently incapable to perform better (Ahmed *et al*, 2005 p.95), whereas the responsibility of teachers is to address the need of the students and try to identify their learning style to help them accordingly.

The teachers do not use proper instructional

strategies to make students learn any lesson in classroom. Lecturing and reading out from the textbook with occasional explanation of the text are the dominant method used in classroom for lesson demonstration (Ahmed *et al*, 2005 p.94). This is basically one-way communication. Some teachers do not explain lessons in the classroom and demand much from the students or suggest them to learn at home. The untrained teachers, basically, follow the conventional teaching method and they discourage students to ask questions (Haq, 2006 p. 33). Teachers mainly use chalk, duster, blackboard, and textbook as teaching learning aids. In few cases they use maps, charts and posters. The Baseline study showed that 51% GPS and 48% of RNGPS were provided with teaching aids and learning materials (DPE, 2007 p.57). Because of the absence of multiple instructional activities and inadequate use of teaching aids, the classes would become monotonous for the learners, and it creates an impediment to enhance learning.

Teachers ask questions or give written exercise to assess the students' performance in classroom and assign homework considering that as the rule for teaching learning activities. Due to large class size, short class period and unfavourable classroom environment teachers cannot assess work of all students and provide feedback (Ahmed *et al*, 2005 p.96). Nevertheless, the formative assessment is possible if the teachers have knowledge about multiple methods and techniques of assessment.

Parents and community-members state that teachers are supposed to make home visits, which are not being done properly. But the teachers claim that they do home visit regularly (Haq, 2006 p. 41). It shows that there is dissociation between the community and the teachers.

Why do our teachers of primary schools cannot offer quality teaching learning activities in classroom? Is there any lacking in the professional training courses the system offer to the teachers? The subsequent sections of the article discuss the current teacher education practice, its challenges and way forward.

III. TEACHER EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

The teacher education structure and responsible institutes are different at primary education and secondary education sub-sector in Bangladesh. The

teachers of primary schools usually receive in-service training namely; Certificate in Education (C-in-Ed) and in the secondary education sub-sector the teachers are mainly obtained Bachelor of Education (BEd) training. BEd training is not solely an in-service training; it is also open for those who intend to be teacher.

A. Certificate in Education (C-in-Ed)

Primary Teacher Training Institutes (PTIs) are the sole agencies to offer in-service teacher development programme for the primary school teachers in Bangladesh. The country has 53 state-owned PTIs and one privately-run PTI. The 54 PTIs have the capacity of enrolling about 13,025 trainees every year (BANBEIS, 2007).

PTIs employ the face-to-face mode for their C-in-Ed Course. Teaching materials have been developed for C-in-Ed courses by National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE). Textbooks are used as the major instructional material at PTI. Though there were no textbooks for C-in-Ed course at the time of launching the programme. NAPE developed those in 1986. C-in-Ed curriculum and textbook modification committee has specified learning outcomes for the whole curriculum and subject-wise learning outcomes based on curriculum-objectives as well as subject-objectives for C-in-Ed course. Objectives of the curriculum are very clearly defined in C-in-Ed curriculum. NAPE redesigned and renovated the curriculum lastly in 2000 (NAPE, 2001).

Objectives of C-in-Ed course. There are 22 objectives in C-in-Ed curriculum. They include participants having knowledge about national and international principles, declarations, charters, and systems of education, human rights as well as child rights. They cover the participants have knowledge of concepts, objectives and importance of primary education, different aspects of curriculum as well. It also targets the participants learning about child psychology, different teaching-learning processes, strategies of class management and evaluation processes and other classroom practices/activities. At the same time, the curriculum intends to make the participants involve in development activities, have respect for dignity of labour, scientific attitude, creativity, aestheticism and qualities of hygienic life. Moreover, objectives are written for each subject separately.

Learning outcomes. In C-in-Ed curriculum there are 46 learning outcomes for the course, based on the course objectives. Contents have been selected according to the learning outcomes of the course. Moreover, subject-wise learning outcomes are specified for each subject separately based on subject-objectives.

Content areas. This course has 4 modules, named - Principles and Concepts of Primary Education, Teaching-Learning Techniques in Primary Level, Practice Teaching and Incidental Activities & Behaviour.

Table 1: Name of the courses according to area

| Sl. No. | Area | Name of Courses |
|---------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Professional Course | Primary Education: Introductory Ideas |
| | | Importance of Primary Edu. |
| | | Primary Education in other countries |
| | | Primary Edu in B/D: Principles, Strategies and Organization |
| | | Child Psychology |
| | | Teaching Methods |
| 3 | Language | Mother tongue: Bangla |
| | | English |
| 4 | Mathematics | Mathematics |
| 5 | Environment Study | Environment and society |
| | | Environment and science |
| 6 | Religion | Islamic Studies |
| | | Hindu Religion |
| | | Christian Religion |
| | | Buddhist Religion |
| | Aesthetics and Physical Education | Physical Education |
| | | Art and Craft |
| Music | | |
| 7 | Others | Incidental Activities & Behaviour |
| | | Teaching Practice |

There are 6 subjects in module-1 (Principle and Concepts of Primary Education), Primary education: Introductory ideas, Importance of primary education and primary education system of different countries, Primary education of Bangladesh: Principles, Strategies & Management, Child Psychology, Learning Methods, Evaluation of Learning and personality development.

In module-2 (Teaching-Learning Techniques in Primary Education), 9 subjects are taught, named Bangla, English, Mathematics, Environment & society (Social Science, Population Education), Environment & Science (General Science, Agricultural Science, and Health & Nutrition), Religion (Islam/ Hinduism/ Christianity/ Buddhism), Physical Education, Arts and Craft, Music.

In module-3 (Practice Teaching) there is not any subject for theoretical practice. The module is practical base. For practice teaching 200 marks are allocated.

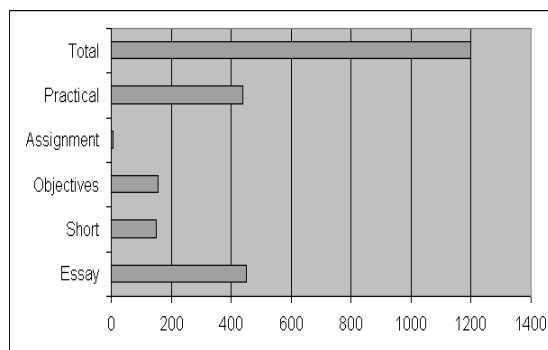
The module-4 (Incidental Activities and Behaviour) is also practical based. For the module five activities have been identified like social and cultural activity, literary activity, library use, physical exercise and conduct.

Assessment techniques and process. The participants have to sit for both internal and external examination. The C-in-Ed board (NAPE) arranges the external examination and the respective PTIs arrange the internal examination. Before the final examination two terminal examinations are held. In order to achieve pass grade at least 40% marks are needed. The test types are written, objective and practicum. In written test short questions and essay type questions are employed. Out of 1200 marks 450 marks are allocated for essay type questions, 149 marks for short questions, 156 marks for objectives, 5 marks for assignment and 440 marks for practical.

Table 2: Distribution of Marks

| Essay | Short | Objec-tives | Assign-ment | Practical | Total |
|-------|-------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-------|
| 450 | 149 | 156 | 5 | 440 | 1200 |

Chart 1: Distribution of Marks in C-in-Ed Course



B. Continuous professional development training

For continuous professional development training of teachers, Upazila Resource Centre (URC) is a new body at the upazila level. URC consists of four staffs: Instructor, Assistant Upazila Education Officer, Computer Operator & Night guard cum Office Assistant. The Instructor is the supervising officer and reportable to the Superintendent of nearest PTI. A committee consisting of PTI Super as chairperson, District Primary Education Officer, Upzila Education Officer, Head Teacher of Model School as members and Instructor of the URC as member-secretary, oversees the management of the URC. Only 174 URCs are now in operation out of 481 proposed URCs (Directorate of Primary Education, 2006). The centre is located in the campus of the model school in each upazila. At present, the URCs are organizing subject-based training for primary school teachers. Training on English and Mathematics has been offered to 39, 000 teachers (DPE, 2006).

There is another form of in-service training called sub-cluster training, which usually held on once in every two month. Local Assistant Upazila Education Officer (AUEO) conduct the daylong session in one primary school and teachers from different schools situated in the same sub-cluster attend the training. The teachers receive training on selected topic; a leaflet containing the topic is distributed prior to the training day.

IV. CHALLENGES

A. Long training at PTI

A research (Ehsan and *et al*, 2004) reveals that, C-in-Ed curriculum had many weaknesses,

particularly in terms of its over-theoretical nature and its consonance with the primary school curriculum the other limitations of the curriculum, identified by the research study, are as follows -

- a. Updated knowledge and contemporary information are absent in the current C-in-Ed curriculum.
- b. There is overlapping of contents in different subjects (i.e. compulsory primary education, preparing lesson plan and assessment of students performance).
- c. The curriculum is not life and work oriented. It also uncovered a crucial limitation; it allows the participants to be engaged in practice teaching for a very short period of time.

In each PTI approximately 241 participants join every year for their training on pedagogy. PTI can get 14 professionals to oversee the C-in-Ed programme including the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent. That means in 2-month practice teaching period they need to supervise 14/15 participants. During the practice teaching period the face-to-face classroom instructional activities for the next batch continue, because PTIs sign up participants twice a year, in January and July. It is, therefore, quite impossible for the supervisors to offer the best to the participants. Thus, the participants received C-in-Ed degree without getting intensive care and guidance from the supervisors during practice teaching.

The PTIs are also facing problems related to human resources and logistics. Shortage of human resources is common in all most all PTIs. In addition to that, the PTI personnel have to carry out extra departmental work assigned by NAPE and Directorate of Primary Education (DPE). Insufficient classroom facilities, seating arrangement, teaching-learning materials and accommodation opportunities are the everyday-matters in PTIs. Though C-in-Ed is a residential programme the logistic constraints do not support the actual philosophy of the programme; taking out the teachers from their personal and social life, and allow them to focus on the issues related to teaching and learning.

B. Short training at URC and sub-cluster

The purpose of establishing URC under Primary Education Development Project-I (PEDP-I) was

multiple but throughout the PEDP-I period it was not fully explored (DPE, 2006). The authority also failed to open and run all the proposed URCs. Therefore, the teachers of missing URC upazila are not getting training according to their need.

Offering proper guidance to the URC professionals is unmanageable for the Superintendents of 53 government-run PTIs. If DPE launches all the proposed URCs each superintendent has to oversee the training and administrative activities of at least 9 PTIs, which is absurd.

The sub-cluster training usually held as per schedule (Haq, 2006). However, without providing any incentive to the AUEO and Teachers we cannot expect effective training sessions.

C. Others

Haq shows that generally the quality of the primary school teachers is not satisfactory and their performance in the classroom and behaviour with the students does not reflect any expected attributes (Haq, 2006). The study also exposed a great concern of students being beaten or abused by their teachers in school. Students mentioned that teachers beat them or punish them for their infantile misdeeds and also for not performing well in the class.

This picture demonstrates that the training programmes offered in PTIs, URCs and cluster level are not properly designed. If we consider the Robert E. Yinger suggested ten key skills required for teaching we can see that there is not any such thing explicitly articulated in our teacher development programmes at PTI and URC. The course outlines of PTIs and URCs indicate that content knowledge gets the maximum priority compare to other skills.

V. WAY OUT

The research (Ehsan and *et al*, 2004) on C-in-Ed course suggests for revising the current curriculum to overcome the weaknesses. The recommendations are-

- a. maintaining the consistency between primary school curriculum and C-in-Ed curriculum
- b. presenting content in textbook using activity-based approach and closely related to teaching

- c. avoiding overlapping and repetitions of contents and overburdened with theories
- d. incorporating modern concepts and up-to-date information
- e. extending time for practice teaching and ensure supervision

The research on C-in-Ed course has been conducted more than three years back. But, except giving the autonomy to NAPE no concrete action has been taken. To expedite the activities a national level technical committee has formed. We do like to suggest few ideas to redesign the C-in-Ed curriculum.

- a. Public agencies like Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka and School of Education, Bangladesh Open University need to be included in the process of developing curriculum institutionally. Involving selected individuals from these agencies might create opportunity of unprofessional conduct. Interested private agencies also can be taken in the process.
- b. Only contents related to teaching skills are necessary to be incorporated in the curriculum. Subject knowledge of teachers can be improved by the URCs' continuous short training.
- c. Ten key skills of Robert E. Yinger can be worthwhile starting point to ensure teaching quality and measure the performance of teachers.
- d. Officials of URCs, Teachers of Experimental Schools and Model Schools are required to be included to supervise practice teaching of C-in-Ed participants. NAPE can provide training on supervision prior to the practice teaching period.
- e. A model for teacher education can be developed by establishing a close association between a PTI and nearest URCs, and using the resources available in upazila level. To do it successful a trial activity can be designed in one or two PTIs.
- f. Nowadays, it is fully acknowledged that distance education is particularly appropriate to reach widely dispersed teacher populations without disrupting their personal, professional and social lives. In view of the fact that, face to face institutions cannot respond urgently

and adequately to increasing demands for teacher education due to lack of space and facilities. An alternative programme for teacher education can be designed.

- g. Follow up mechanism for the post C-in-Ed course need to be designed. URC and Upazila Education Office can do the follow up activities.
- h. Both formative and summative assessment approaches need to be applied in the training. Formative assessment system should get more importance.

Recommendations for redesigning URC and Sub-Cluster training

- a. URC must offer basic and advanced pedagogical training in regular basis for the necessary up-gradation of the teachers' quality along with subject based training.
- b. Teachers of a particular upazila can be deputed to the model school for 2-3 months by rotation. URC instructor and expert teacher of the model school can coach the deputed-teacher. During this period extra teacher of the model school will fill up the place of the deputed-teacher. He or she can also arrange short discussion session at that particular school involving the other teachers.
- c. URC can arrange conference and seminar involving local actors, parents and School Management Committee members on different issues related to the insufficient facility and resources of the school of the upazila.
- d. URC Instructors must work jointly with the AUEOs for sub-cluster training.
- e. Local issues always should be the focus of the sub-cluster training.

VI. CONCLUSION

The above discussion regarding the improvement of teachers' quality, the comparison of the present context of the primary education teachers in Bangladesh with the ten key skills recommended by Robert E. Yinger would be in vain if the issue of the remuneration for primary school teachers is not addressed. In macro sense, about 90% of the education budget is expended in teachers' salary. However, in micro sense Ahmed (2007) viewed that it is not justified that with similar level of

education, skills and responsibilities the government primary school teachers are paid less than other government servants or the secondary level schoolteachers. Moreover, better social recognition, status and rewards are also required to stimulate the primary school teachers to improve the performance (Ahmed, 2007).

In addition to this, transparent assessment of the teachers' performance is needed. The local primary education authority (e.g. DPEO, UEO) can set certain criteria based on the standards of teaching (e.g., ten key skills). Not only considering the number of years in service, the assessment based on these criteria should also be used as a verifiable indicator for the differentiation in the ranks of teachers and for a career ladder (assistant headmaster, and headmaster) (Ahmed, 2007). Even a pilot project can be initiated to assess the practicability and sustainability to commence the performance-based teaching assessment. The quality and skill based remuneration are also needed to be introduced to attract the competent persons. Definitely, it can play a vital role as incentive to perform better in the classroom.

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