

**Preschool in the Hill tracts: Facing the Challenges of Geography, Culture and
Language**

A thesis presented to the BRAC University Institute of Education Development

Mohammad Nazrul Islam

MASTER OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT
BRAC University Institute of Education Development

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Ethical Approval Form

Date: 11.01.2012

Student name: Mohammad Nazrul Islam

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Date:

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Expected Date of Graduation: ~~February 1st, 2012~~ July, 2011

Thesis Topic: **Preschool in the Hill tracts: Facing the Challenges of Geography, Culture and Language**

Examiner's comments:

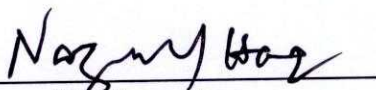
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Approval from the supervisor

In my judgment the thesis and the candidate meet recognized scholarly standards for the degree and is therefore ready to submit his/her thesis to the Thesis Committee.



Signature of the Supervisor

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A thesis presented to the BRAC University Institute of Education Development

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Executive Summary

It is well accepted that the bigger the indigenous community the wider the cultural variations and greater the challenges for the program designers to respond to the learning needs keeping up the cultural variations of the indigenous children. ECD no doubt has a very strong and positive impact on children's learning. Research confirmed that learning begins at conception. Both nature and nurture could help children to maximize their potentials. As part of its commitment to ECD, Bangladesh has been one of the leading developing countries who recently have incorporated preprimary into its national education policy 2010. Although there is national commitment to ECD and preprimary yet very little has been done in the field to implement ECD and preprimary. Meanwhile a number of non-governmental and international organizations have started programming on ECD especially on preprimary. Bangladesh Shishu Academy, Dhaka Ahsania Mission and Save the Children –USA are some of the front line organizations implementing pre-primary program across the country. All the three organizations have been implementing pre-primary school in both plain and hill tracts of Chittagong divisions. The main objective of the program is to get children ready for better performance in school.

Although, there are major differences between hill tracts and plain land in terms of language, culture and geography, pre-primary curriculum and program strategy have not considered the two different contexts. Therefore the study focused on the challenges hill tracts pre-primary children face compared to plain land pre-primary children. Young children's learning is affected by many factors. Culture, language, family pattern, parents' education and parents' support, curriculum particularly teaching learning strategy are the issues need to consider while designing program for young children. It's however quite important to know that whether the same curriculum and teaching learning strategy benefit equally to children in hill tracts and children in plain land. Its also important to know what are the challenges hill tract preschooler face due to geographic condition, culture and language compare to their counter part in plain land. The study nevertheless tried to find out those issues through a small descriptive close study.

Therefore the objectives of the study are:

- To describe the children's background, nature of their participation in the class, parental support and curriculum of the education.

- To compare preschool education in the Hill tracts with that of preschool education in plain land in terms of strengths and weakness, challenges and opportunity.
- To make recommendations to improve the ECD in hill tracts.

Methodology: This is a descriptive study with a small sample of 6 pre-schools using qualitative method. The sample was selected purposively from the three leading organization namely Bangladesh Shishu Academy, Dhaka Ahsania Mission and Save the Children. The schools were selected in consultation with the organizations. They were requested to identify two preprimary schools one from the hill area and the other from the plain area having comparable characteristics between the two.

Data were collected through session observation, interview with teacher and parents. Out of 6 preschools 3 were selected from Hill tracts and the rest three were selected from Plain districts of Chittagong division. A classroom observation sheet and questionnaire used as tool to collect data. Data were analyzed in descriptive method.

Findings: the major findings of the study are:

There are some common features found both in hill tracts and in the plain land, these are:

- Children in both places lack adequate learning materials.
- Large numbers of children sit in class what creates problem for teacher to manage class.
- Age variation was found between 4 to 6 years.
- Physical structure of the school house was almost same.
- Other than SC, DAM and BSA follow the same curriculum.
- Children in the hill area have to cross long distance including hills while the children in the plain do not.
- In the hill district schools teachers use local language but the books are in Bangla what creates discrepancy between spoken and formal learning style.
- Hill tract preschool children are well behind in spoken language compare to plain land.
- Hill tracts preschooler face much more challenges than their counterpart in plain land, in terms of language, geographic accessibility, parents support, weather etc. which have negative cumulative affect on attendance and may affect children's achievement.

- There are some similarities in both areas e.g. curriculum, teaching learning strategy, materials, contact hours etc.
- Sustainability has been a concern for both the areas.
- Plain land Preschool children have an advantage as medium of instruction and all books and text materials are in Bangla that has an effect on their language development particularly spoken language.

Although it's a small study in size, the study drawn attention to the diverse need of hill children. National policy should look into the matter of educational needs of the people living in the remote areas like in the hill districts.

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Glossary of Terms

BSA - Bangladesh Shishu Academy

BU-IED - BRAC University-Institute of Educational Development

CAMPE - Campaign for Popular Education

DAM - Dhaka Ahsania Mission

DPE - Directorate of Primary Education

ECCE - Early Childhood Care and Education

ECD - Early Childhood Development

EFA - Education For All

GoB - Government of Bangladesh

IER - Institute of Education and Research

MT- Mother Tongue

UNESCO-United Nation Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF-United Nation's Children Fund

1. Introduction

Getting ready for formal schooling and later learning is a challenging process for young children. A number of factors and challenges affect a child's progress and achievement in school. This challenge increases when a child's mother tongue differs from the language that is spoken in the school and when the child comes from a background with limited economic resources and low parental education. It becomes harder when there is no necessary support provided from home and schools. Research shows there is a gap in achievement between bilingual learner and monolingual learner (Ballantyne 2008). Many children speak language that differs from the language of instruction in the school. Research confirms that children between one and five years of age learn best in their mother tongue than any other language (UNESCO, 2010).

Early Childhood Development (ECD) initiatives and or effective Early Childhood Education intervention in the early years could reduce the gap between children who face non mother tongue in the school language and live in difficult geographic and socio-economic condition. A variety of aspects in the very early years could influence young learners' school and later life preparation. ECD is the process of physical, cognitive, social- emotional and language development of a child from conception to age 8. The early years of children's life are critical for survival, growth and development (Aboud and Llewellyn 2004). In recent times Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) are being used in many countries' programming. The period from birth to age 3 is critical formative period where parents and family support play vital role to maximize children's growth and development. The later age, 4-6 in particular is the state and other relevant responsibility to work together with families for supporting children to get prepared for school and further learning. This period is particularly crucial for children to get prepared for later learning and further development.

Realizing the importance of ECD, Global agencies e.g. UNICEF, UNESO, World Bank have come forward to support ECD activities in many countries around the globe. Many international agencies have realized and recognized the importance of ECD and keep pursuing countries to take ECD initiative to support their children's optimal development. Bangladesh is not far behind the endeavor. Showing its commitments to international agreements Bangladesh has been one of the first signatories of CRC. Bangladesh is also keen to achieve EFA goals set by UNESCO. As step forward, Bangladesh has developed Policy frame work for Pre-primary education and

eventually Pre-primary has been included in the National Education Policy. Although, a curriculum for pre-primary education is yet to develop, no clear cut guide line is given for the non-Bengali aborigines children whose mother tongues are different. However, along with government initiatives, many of the non government organizations have been playing active role in achieving the goals.

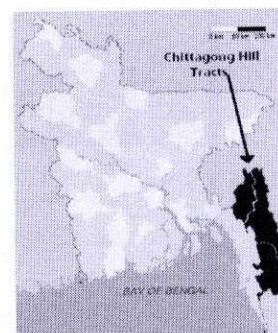
UNESCO has mandate and strong commitment to quality education for all and to cultural and linguistic diversity in education (UNESCO, 2003a). Its 2008 GMR report calls for unwavering political will to ensure that education from early childhood onwards is a priority of national governments, civil society and the private sector in order to ensure educational inclusion for the 72 million children out of school and to reduce the numbers of young learners who leave school without acquiring essential skills and knowledge. UNESCO (2007a) emphasizes the role of early childhood care and development in laying the foundation for learning and setting the stage for successful engagement in formal education.

It has encouraged mother tongue for instruction in early childhood and primary education since 1953 (UNESCO, 1953). Yet, monolingualism in official or dominant languages is still the norm around the world (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani, & Merali, 2006; Wolff & Ekkehard, 2000). In its report, 'Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education', UNESCO (2007a) points out the overlooked advantages of multilingual education in the early years. When children are offered opportunities to learn in their mother tongue, they are more likely to enroll and succeed in school (Kosonen, 2005) and their parents are more likely to communicate with teachers and participate in their children's learning (Benson, 2002). Education through mother tongue benefits disadvantaged groups, including children from rural communities (Hovens, 2002), and girls, who tend to have less exposure to an official language and tend to stay in school longer, achieve better, and repeat grades less often when they are taught in their mother tongue (UNESCO Bangkok, 2005).

Increasingly, cultural groups are realizing the need to ensure the transmission of their linguistic heritage to the youngest members of their communities. A compendium of examples produced by UNESCO (2008b) attests to the resurgence of international interest in promoting mother tongue-based education, and to the wide variety of models, tools, and resources now being developed and tested to promote learning programs in the mother tongue. However, most examples focus on the primary school level. Few empirical studies or well-documented programs

promote the family's role as a child's first teacher in learning their first, and often more than one primary language, or the role of early childhood educators in supporting mother tongue development or bi/multilingual learning in programs that serve very young, linguistically diverse populations.

Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) the only extensive hilly area in Bangladesh lies in south-eastern part of the country bordering Myanmar on the southeast, the Indian state of Tripura on the north, Mizoram on the east and Chittagong district on the west. The CHT consists of three hill-districts of Bangladesh Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban districts. The area of the Chittagong Hill Tracts is about 13,184 sq km, which is approximately one-tenth of the total area of Bangladesh. Total population enumerated in the 1991 census was 9,74,447 of which 5,01,114 were tribal and rest are from different communities. The local tribes, collectively known as the Jumma, include the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tenchungya, Chak, Pankho, Mru, Murung, Bawm, Lushai, Khyang, and Khumi. Among the non tribal communities most of the inhabitants are Bengali Muslim settlers. They are followers of Hinduism, Christianity and Animism. The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is a distinct region in terms of its ethnic, cultural and environmental diversity to the rest of Bangladesh (retrieve from MCHT website).



There are 13 aborigines living in the three (Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban) hill districts of Chittagong division. They all have their own mother tongue which is different from school language. Like the many other aborigines in the country children of the Hill tracts faces multi-faced challenges in their schooling. In primary schools they have to study by using Bangla as medium of instruction which is different from their spoken or native language. Other than language they face the problem of transportation of going to school from home because the schools are located far from their homes. In the hill district particularly in Khagrachari Net enrolment rate is 90%, while repetition rate and survival rate is respectively 14% and 45% which is close to national rate. Therefore, they need additional support to cope with the new language and new environment. After the peace accord, to assist children in the hill tracts many of the leading national and international NGOs started working with diverse ethnic children. Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Bangladesh Shishu Academy and Save the Children are the leading agencies started preschool in the hill districts to support young children. The study however tried to unveil

the different context and challenges of hill tracts preschoolers are facing compared to their counterpart preschoolers live in the plain land of Chittagong division.

2. Background and Literature Review

The Benefits of ECD Programs

Early Childhood Development (ECD) is a holistic, approach to programming, research and policy for young children from 0-8 years of age and requires a healthy, safe and nurturing environment that includes opportunities to support the emotional, social, physical, cognitive, and spiritual aspects of children within the context of their community that welcomes their participation and empowers them as a basis for their future (Mary 2002)

There are solid evidences that- children who participate in ECD programs do better in school and in life (Operational Framework 2008). Neuroscientists, educationists and economists have substantial data providing that program which promote and development of young children are the best investment for developing the human capital (World Bank 2007). Followings are some of the evidences that support the value of ECD in the early years.

School Success

Study conducted through SUCCEED project of Save the Children showed that children who are graduated from the preschool do significantly better than the children who did not have preschool experience (Aboud 2008). Research also shows that billions of neurons in the brain must be stimulated to form sensing pathways, which influence a person's competence and coping i.e. learning and behavioral skills, and behavioral process, which affect a person's physical and mental health (World Bank 2007). So we must use it or lose it.

Economic Return

Study conducted by the World Bank (give reference) showed that:

- ECD program lays the foundation of human capital formation
- It has the highest rate of return in economic development
- ECD is the most cost effective way to reduce poverty and to foster economic development

Economic Data:

On a purely economic basis, it makes sense to invest in very early years. Nobel Prize Laureate Economist James J. Heckman commented “Early learning begets later learning and early success breeds later success” (Ref.) {you can explain this section little more}

Program effective data:

High quality early childhood programs lay foundation for success in schooling and positively impact development, more generally.

Just 1 year of preschool potentially increases a child’s earning capacity and income as an adult by 7-12 percent (World Bank 2002)

In the Brazilian PROAPE, it was found that the total cost of schooling the early learning program itself, for pupils up to grade two of primary education, was 11% lower for those who participated in ECCE than for those children who did not. Drop out and grade repetition on primary education turn out to be lower as well (Myer 1002). Similar outcomes were found for the integrated Child Development Services in India, a project serving 32 million children (Young 2002). Besides these international researches studies conducted by Plan Bangladesh, BRAC and ICDDRDB indicated that early stimulation and preparation for education enhances student learning in school and increase the possibility of retention up to the terminal grades. Thus ECD is receiving international attention from the government, non government and civil society.

Language Impacts Learning

Language is one of the most important skills needed in relation to schooling (Aboud and Llewellyn 2004). A variety of aspects in the early years work simultaneously to create environment that optimally prepare children ready for school. After 16 months and up to the age of 6 years, language development skyrockets in terms of vocabulary and grammar (Siegler, 1986). Children’s expressive vocabulary doubles each year until reaching 6 years. However, language acquisition in these early years is learned indirectly through conversation, but it is a necessary underpinning to school literacy. Studies on literacy acquisition in first grade have found differences of 6,000 words in the vocabularies of underprivileged and privileged children; experts now believe that a focus on early childhood vocabulary development may be a pivotal skill for success in learning to read (Aboud and Llewellyn 2004). A study conducted on Head

Start Program in America showed that many of the teachers struggle supporting language development and others domain of the development when children come from families who speak different language at home (Head Start Program 2010). They are also struggling with knowing how best to promote children's language acquisition, both their home language and school language, when children come from diverse language and cultural backgrounds. Because of the inextricable link between culture, language and learning, supporting children's language development is essential to attaining mission of ensuring school readiness for all its children. The findings said that serving children from different language and cultural background cannot be accomplished without a program-wide, comprehensive plan. Supporting children in the acquisition of two languages is a complex, multifaceted task that requires intentional support at all levels of a program. The study however, comes up with number of recommendations e.g. promoting family involvement, and assists families in identifying, addressing, and advocating for their family needs. Develop culturally and linguistically appropriate child development assessments in multiple languages for all domains of learning. Develop staff language skills on both the languages etc. The other research titled 'Dual Language Learners in the Early Years: Getting Ready to Succeed in School' mentioned that the children whose mother tongue is non English (medium of instruction) are achieving at rates below than their peers whose mother tongue and medium of instruction is same. Therefore educators and policy makers have a responsibility to educate themselves about the specific and individual needs and background of these children. The study also found that dual language learners are more likely than children in the general population to come from communities in poverty. They are less likely to have had access to the early learning experiences which come from attendance of high quality –despite this the fact is that preschool attendance has a greater effect in closing the achievement gaps. In their longitudinal study, Hammer and her colleagues examined the role of preschool language development on children's early reading abilities in kindergarten and first grade (Hammer, Lawrence & Miccio, 2007; Davison, Hammer, Lawrence & Miccio, 2009). {What they found give some information}

Research on within and cross-language relationships showed that within language relationships existed among various components of language and children's letter-word identification abilities and reading comprehension. Such relationships were found for preschoolers when children's language *growth* was considered and for school-age children when

relationships were targeted at specific points in time. Additionally, cross-language relationships have been found between preschool language and later reading outcomes when children's language *growth* is considered.

Language and Cognitive Development

The first 3 years of child's life are critically important for language and cognitive development. Studies reveal that children's early language development set the stage for later literacy and school success. During the early years lower income families exposed less language in their homes which lower their language skills and cognitive development (Hart & Esley, 1995). (new inclusion)

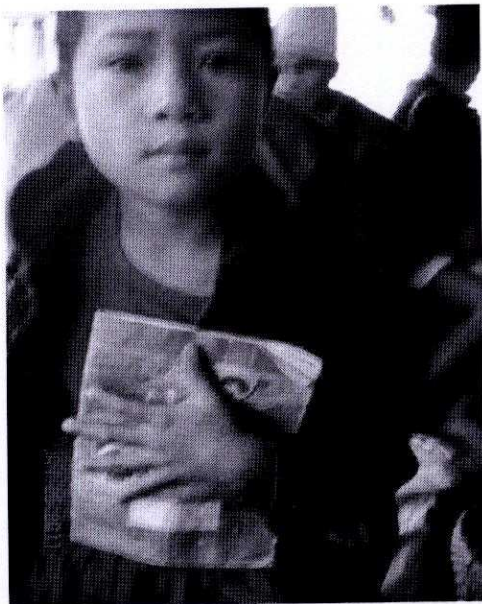
Other Relevant Studies:

Vocabulary has been a key to contribute substantially to success in school. Prekindergarten vocabulary differences, which are relatively stable over time, are potent predictors of academic achievement from third grade onward, especially in reading comprehension (Storch & Whitehurst, 2002) Books turned out as source of rich language input. Extra textual conversation, however may be key to unlocking the full benefits of Shared Book Reading (DeTemple & Snow, 2003). Study showed that asking questions boosted children's performance on both comprehension and production measures of word- referent association in comparison to reading alone. Most children acquire vocabulary at an impressive rate during the preschool years (Anglin, 1993) the study titled 'Benefits of Regular Reading and Dialogic Reading' revealed that children with poor vocabulary skills learned new vocabulary from shared book-reading. Children in the dialogic-reading condition made significantly greater gains in language than children in the regular reading condition. The result of this study show that sharing books in a dialogic mode is feasible and effective within the adult –to-children ratio found in typical preschool situation. All these study findings has a relevance to this study. As all the study showed how important books, reading, interactions to increase vocabulary which eventually helps in language development particularly those whose mother tongue is different form the school language.

ECD for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children

Although much research has been done on ECD for low-income children in general, there has been much less research on the importance on ECD program for different language and cultural groups. In Bangladesh it's hardly found any research done on ECD in non mother tongue

Research showed (UNESCO 2006) children successfully retain their mother tongue while acquiring additional languages depends on several interacting factors. To retain their mother tongue, children whose first language is not the medium of instruction must have: (1) continued interaction with their family and community in their first language on increasingly complex topics that go beyond household matters; (2) ongoing formal instruction in their first language to



develop reading and writing skills; and (3) exposure to positive parental attitudes to maintaining the mother tongue, both as a marker of cultural identity and for certain instrumental purposes (e.g., success in the local economy or global trade). {drop the picture above}

Though experts widely agree that the use of mother tongue is essential for an effective, child friendly learning environment (Dutcher, 2004; UNESCO, 2003; Pinnock, 2009), there exists a major gap between theory and practice, both in developed and developing countries. Particularly at the early childhood level, there is a dearth of evidence as to how mother tongue

can be used successfully to ensure educational quality and access for linguistic minorities (Ball, 2010). Though limited in scope, this study thus serves as a step toward building a rigorous evidence base for the use of mother tongue to support school readiness in the early years.

The research reviewed in this section indicates that young DLLs did not make much progress in their emergent literacy abilities during the preschool. However, in early elementary grades, children's English phonological awareness, letter and word knowledge and reading comprehension were within the monolingual norm.

The Relationship between Early Oral Language and Later Reading Outcomes

It is well established that oral language serves as the foundation for children's reading abilities. Numerous studies have revealed significant relationships between monolinguals' oral language and their later reading abilities. For example, phonological awareness has consistently been shown to be associated with children's letter knowledge and later reading outcomes (cf. Burgess & Lonigan, 1998; Lonigan, Burgess & Anthony, 2000; Schatschnieder, Fletcher,

Francis, Carlson & Foorman, 2004).

A study conducted by Save the Children (SKP 2010) in preschool of “Shishur Khamatayan” Project in Khagrachari revealed that SKP’s mother-tongue-based preschools do offer children a significant advantage. SKP children have better quantitative, communicative, and environmental skills than their peers. On average, children learning in a MT setting outperformed their non-MT peers by 10 percentage points on a general school readiness assessment and 5 percentage points on an assessment of concepts about print. The largest difference between MT and non-MT children was in the competency area of communication, language and literacy, in which MT children scored 26 percentage points higher than non-MT children. The study showed that differences between MT and non-MT curricula become even sharper, as the analysis above indicates. In addition to the better skills that children in a MT preschool environment develop, they develop these skills in an environment that involves more child engagement and participation and more integration of local culture. However, these questions do not diminish the finding that children emerging from a MT-based curriculum, in this study, are in a better developmental position to succeed in school – as active, enthusiastic participants – than children who enter a non-MT preschool environment.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Bangladesh:

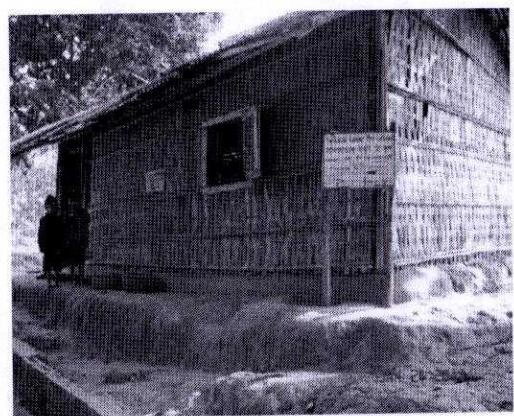
UNESCO has encouraged mother tongue instruction in early childhood and primary education since 1953 (UNESCO, 1953). Yet, monolingualism in official or dominant languages is still the norm around the world (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani, & Merali, 2006; Wolff & Ekkehard, 2000). In its report, ‘Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education’, UNESCO (2007a) points out the overlooked advantages of multilingual education in the early years. When children are offered opportunities to learn in their mother tongue, they are more likely to enroll and succeed in school (Kosonen, 2005) and their parents are more likely to communicate with teachers and participate in their children’s learning (Benson, 2002). Mother tongue based education especially benefits disadvantaged groups, including children from rural communities (Hovens, 2002), and girls, who tend to have less exposure to an official language and tend to stay in school longer, achieve better, and repeat grades less often when they are taught in their mother tongue (UNESCO Bangkok, 2005).

Increasingly, cultural groups are realizing the need to ensure the transmission of their linguistic heritage to the youngest members of their communities. A compendium of examples produced by UNESCO (2008) attests to the resurgence of international interest in promoting mother tongue-based education, and to the wide variety of models, tools, and resources now being developed and tested to promote learning programs in the mother tongue

The Chittagong Hill Tracts although Bangladesh is relatively a small country there are many difference and diversity found in some parts of the country. Additionally hill tract has history of conflict which has contributed difficult situation which affected their development. In the hill tracts still 15% of the children drops out before completing grade one and survival rate up to grade V is only 55%. As mentioned above there are thirteen aborigines living in the hill tract whose language, culture, religious belief are different. All these issues have an influence on young children's learning.

3. Justification

Access has been an issue for most of the countries who are currently trying to scale up their ECD programs. Bangladesh is no exception to that. Here in Bangladesh one tenth of the total country fall under hill tracts region. The whole area is mountainous. The situation of the Hill tracts is totally different from the majority part of the country. The geographic condition, culture, language, political situation, economy, ways of livelihoods all are different. They face some challenges which generally do not draw attention to people live in the plain land. One of the big challenges is access to school. Going school from one hill to another hill is a problem for the younger children. The other challenge is language. Their mother tongue is completely different from the language of instruction in the school. Apart from the language geo-social condition has been another challenge for them. All this have an impact on children's schooling. It's however drawn attention to GO and NGOs. A number of NGOs have begun to institute ECD program in the Hill tracts, however, no research has been found on the characteristics of those ECD program and their children they serve, in comparison to ECD program that serving children other parts of the country.



The focus of the study is to find the challenges young preschooler face compare to the young preschoolers in the plain land area of Chittagong region. The NGOs are running pre-school following almost same curriculum. It's worthwhile to know how the same curriculum works in the two different situations. It's very reasonable that for the two different situations two different curriculum and interventions are needed. So, this study would help to determine what sort of curriculum needed for the two different situations.

Language has been key to interact and learn in preschool. There is an urgent study needed on how language troubles learning for the children whose mother tongue is different from the language of instruction. At the same time teaching learning strategy should be different for the children whose school language is different from their mother tongue. Therefore this study will look at the language difficulties and whether teacher uses same teaching learning strategies. If we want to bring changes in the teaching learning strategy we must know the challenges children faces. Thus the study will help to know such challenges. The study will also help to take up intervention which suits best in the two different circumstances. This research begins with small way to look at this problem through a close study.

Like the differences, it's expected that there are some similarities in Hill tracts and plain land preschools. This study will figure out those similarities which would help to determine what are the commonalities preschool curriculums and teaching learning strategy could consider. Physical location and culture are also important elements that could influence schooling and learning of the young children. The study however looked at both the issues so that preschool programmer could consider the issue while designing the program.

4. Operational Definitions

In the operational Framework of Pre-primary, the preschool has been defined as the developmental and educational support provided to the child in the age range of 3 to <6 years in order to ensure the child's right to protection, care, survival and preparation for school education through play, amusement and introduction to literacy and numeracy, irrespective of the child's physical, mental and social status. In this study preschools meant one year school readiness program of 5+ children. This is one year program mainly to get children ready for formal schooling.

5. Objectives

There are three main objectives of the study. These are

- This study will describe the characteristic of three preschool in hill tracts and three preschool in plain land
- To see the challenges what hill tract children face in learning language and other subject in school
- To compare ECD in the Hill tracts with ECD in plain land in terms of challenges and opportunities
- To make recommendation to improve the ECD in hill tracts

6. Methodology

Design.

The study used descriptive, qualitative methods to identify characteristics of preschools and the children attending preschools in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and to compare those with the situation in the plains area. Classroom observations and interviews with teachers and parents were used to obtain data.

Sample.

This is a descriptive study with a small sample of 6 pre-schools using qualitative method. Since hill tracts and plain land of Chittagong region is a vast area and its quite hard to move around to collect data. Its hard in terms of both geographical accessibility and security. So it was kept in manageable size for smooth collection of data. Therefore, in total, 6 preschools have been chosen as sample. All the schools were chosen purposively. While selecting sample it was considered that selected school should be from leading NGOs and those NGOs which have preschools both in Hill tracts and in plain land. Out of 6 pre-schools, each 3 preschools were selected from Hill tracts namely Khagrachari districts and 3 pre-schools from plain land of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar districts. In the Hill preschools 1 Tripura preschool which has been supported by Save the children, 1 is Chakma which was run by Dhaka Ahsania Mission and 1 mixed preschool run by Bangladesh Shishu Academy where Bangali, Chakma and Tripura

children were found. For the comparison, same number of preschools were selected from the Chittagong and Cox's Bazar districts as well. Other people were not interviewed from the consideration of their remote contact with the field.

The schools were selected purposively for the following reasons:

As leading national and international NGOs, Bangladesh Shishu Academy, Dhaka Ahsania Mission and Save the Children are implementing ECD programs in both the Hill tracts and Plain land of greater Chittagong region. So data from the said NGOs will be representative from curriculum point of view and experience in implementation of ECD programs.

Preschool selected from the following organization, district and locations

Name of organization	Hill tracts	Plain Land
Dhaka Ahsania Mission	Dighinala, Khagrachari	Patia, Chittagong
	1	1
Bangladesh Shishu Academy	Sadar, Khagrachari	Pahartoli, Chittagong
	1	1
Save the Children	Panchmail, Khagrachari	Ukhia, Cox's Bazar
	1	1
Total	6 preschools	

so that in each of the two they would have different NGOs,

Tools

Semi-structured questionnaire used for interview. See appendix 2.

Classroom observation tool was used. The tool has been developed following ECERS an international scale to measure preschool quality. Since the ECERS is a well accepted international tool that's why classroom observation indicator was used following the ECERS items. This tool has been used by SUCCEED program of Save the Children.

Data Collection.

I myself visited preschool for 10 working days in Khagrachari, Chittagong and Cox's Bazar Districts of Chittagong region. Each day one preschool has been visited taking assistance from the local staff of the concerned organization. Data collection includes class observation from the

beginning to end, interview with teacher and parent after the class was finished. Gathered information through classroom observation using a tool that has been used by save the children in their SUCCEED program. After the class three randomly selected children were given three topics to talk about something. All six Teachers' were interviewed to gather information about teachers' background, opportunities and challenges they face. Children's oral language was assessed using a general topic. One parent was interviewed from each six preschool. Three officials who head the respective programs were interviewed. Detail lists of visited preschools are given below.

Salkatal Ankor Pre-school Village: Kalapanichara, Panchmile, Union: Perchara
 Sadar, Upazilla: Sadar, District: Khagrachari, Resuarvechara Pre-school Village:
 Resuarvechara, Union: Kabakhali, Upazilla: Dighinala, District: Khagrachari Bangladesh
 Shishu Academy pre-school, Implemented by Bangladesh Shishu Academy Village: Shishu
 Academy Premise, Union: Pourashava, Upazilla: District: Khagrachari
 Name of the Pre-school: Dokter Sona Miar Bari pre-school, Lead by Dhaka Ahsania Mission Got
 technical support from Plan-B, Village: Laikkhangchari Union: Laikkhangchari Upazilla: Patia,
 District: Chittagong, Madhur Hashi shishu bikash Kendra, Implemented by Bangladesh Shishu
 Academy, Technical support provided by Plan Bangladesh, Pahartoli, Chittagong City
 Corporation, Chittagong, Dokter Notonpara J. Chowdhury preschool, Implemented by CODEC,
 Supported by Save the Children, Village: Purba Shikderbil, Union: RajaPalong Upazilla: Ukhia
 , District: Cox's Bazar

Data analysis:

The comparative analysis consisted of three components.

- a. classroom observation to see teaching learning approach, child to child interaction and child – teacher interaction, use of material and physical facilities.
- b. interview with teacher to know the strength, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities
- c. interview with parent to know their view about the preschool facility Emphasizing the characteristics the study uses a comparative analysis of the ECD program in the hill district and plain land in a descriptive way. As data collected through mixed method, a descriptive summery were developed, to make a comparison among the preschools of the two regions.

7. Findings

First I present the summary of characteristics of preschool in hill tracts as compared to plain land.

Curriculum

In the Hill Tracts DAM, and BSA run preschools session continues for 2.5 hours. They all use same kind of materials. Children exercise book, charts routine, teachers' guide, and assessment procedure everything is same. Similarly, both the organization follows the same curriculum for both the hill tracts and plain land. While save the children use 2 hrs for sessions. It introduced mother tongue based teaching learning approach. Medium of instruction is fully mother tongue based. Teacher teaches rhymes in both Tripura and Bangla language. They have set of story books in Tripura language. Save the children has a transition plan in their curriculum. They use local kokborak language in the first six months, than they gradually introduce Bangla language to introduce them to mainstream education. The main activities are Start up sessions which include national anthem, warm up etc, Rhyme session, Story telling session, Indoor and Outdoor game, Free play, Math and Language based activity. Except for free play all the activities are in big group. While free play children use their home language in conversation. While story telling teacher use both home and Bangla language.



In the plain land DAM and BSA use the same curriculum as they use for hill tracts. Session hours, set of materials, routine, primars, books and charts all are same. While save the children uses different curriculum for the plain land. SC continues 3 hours session for main land. Medium of instruction is national Bangla language, Charts, writing exercise books, story books, set of materials all are in Bangla. SC preschool in the plain land is little different. In the SC's preschool session continues 3 hrs. They use dialogic reading approach in story telling session. In language and math session teacher use small group strategy.

Children participation

In the Hill preschool children are relatively more teacher lead. Children participation is less. During observation time children have not asked any question to the teacher. Children participate only when they are asked to do something. During free play its found children participate, do talk and do play together. There was no literacy material found given in the corner. I tried to talk with them but the children seemed reluctant as the language was different.

In the Plain land preschool activities are also teacher lead. Children are more active, easy, and spontaneous and ask lot of questions to the teacher compare to Hill tract preschool children.

Parents' education

There is no big difference found in the education of parents of preschool children. In both the condition there is similarity in parents' education. In both cases most of the parents do not have education, among the literate, majority of the parents have I to V level education. Exception was BSA preschool in Khagrachari. There, 30% of the parents found highly educated. These parents are government official. Most of them are post graduates. Almost all parents have some sort of education. BSA preschool children's parents found very serious about their children's education. They support their children at home. In terms of learning they are much more advanced than the other two preschools in the Hill district. What accounts for this difference between parents? It seemed this difference influence the performance of the children. Although no performance test was taken it apparently seen children of the highly educated parents do learn academic things (letter, number, reading, writing etc.) faster than the children of less educated parents.

In the plain land almost half of the parents do not have formal education. 40% of the parents have grade I to V level education. Although they have poor education level, they are keen to educate their children. It can be easily understood when its seen that many of the parents bring their children to the preschool, they provide space and build home for the preschool. How did you come to this conclusion?

Challenge

Geographic Accessibility

In the hill districts preschools are located in remote mountainous area where on an average, for children, it takes 30 minutes to reach the school. Children have to walk a long distance crossing many hills. Children have to go from one hill to another hill. In the shishu academy preschool in Khagrachari a small percentage of children come even from 10 km away. The distance affects the attendance particularly during monsoon. During monsoon rain becomes big pain for hill tract children. Road becomes very slippery. There is fear of



land slide. So parents don't allow their children to go to school. As they come after long walking with insufficient breakfast The long distance may affect children's concentration to learning too. In both the case most of the children come alone except Bangladesh Shishu Academy school in Khagrachari. In BSA school children must come with their parents. It's a rule set by BSA school authority. At the initial stage when the course start in January parents stay with their kids. But gradually when children are used to with the classroom environment parents wait outside of the classroom.

On the other hand plain land children come from very near end. It takes on an average 5 minutes to come to the school. Since its plain land it becomes easier for the children to come. It gives an advantage in children attendance. Children mostly come alone. In the monsoon they do not face difficulty like the Hill children face

Language:

Two out of three hill tracts preschool use ethnic language (one Tripura and the other one chakma language) as medium of instruction. Children also use their home language (Mother Tongue) in the classroom. But materials they use in class room are in Bangla. All the posters and charts, writing exercise book, primer are all in Bangla. So children do not have the opportunity to use and interact with books and pictures to increase their literacy skills. Little different is SC supported preschool. They have 8 story books which are written in Kokborak (Tripura) language using English script. There was no child found who could response in Bangla, although all the materials are in Bangla. That may be one of the reasons why hill district children found less

interactive, less responsive which affects their skills in expressive language, although there may have other reasons. It's found that teacher speaks in children's mother tongue in full sessions, but when exercise book was given, they were asked to write Bangla letters. This condition may have an affect on the normal pace of their learning. It's however found good that all the children come from the community speak same language except for BSA school.

In contrast in the plain land preschool teachers use national Bangla language as a medium of instruction. Consequently all the materials which include writing exercise books, set of story books, charts, letter blocks all are in Bangla. This gives an advantage to the preschoolers. They can interact with books, can use charts, manipulate story books. As result it affects their literacy skills. Those children found more advance in oral language. As they get an advantage in both ways, their teacher speaks Bangla at the same time all materials are in Bangla. So they can manipulate books, writing and other materials

However there are some common weaknesses found in both the hill tracts and plain land preschools. One of the weaknesses was child to child interaction. This was found only during corner play. Otherwise most of the teachers interact with children in big group activity. DAM preschools are found lack of materials and the existing materials are fade and torn (the reason was, the projects was supposed to end in last December, its now extended period for the project). Age has been a problem for both the situations. There are some children found over aged and some children under aged. Teachers face problem to manage them. Space, in school house was inadequate for the children. Literacy material found insufficient in both the cases. There was no clear cut direction or strategy about what would happen after the project ends.

Although DAM has community based organization who supposed to continue the preschools after the project ends. For BSA the there is no such uncertainty as there would be government support for those school. For save the children there is no such initiative evident,

Para Center

Para center (small unit of a village) is two years school readiness program run by Hill tracts Development Board. The program is funded by UNICEF and technically supported by Plan International. There are 3500 para centers running in the three hill district. Curriculum is pretty similar to the curriculum used in BSA run preprimary. They have added two issues one is health that includes vaccination and nutrition which includes WFP provided biscuit.. in the para center

teacher is recruited from the same community. The language of instruction is mother tongue and Bangla. First they use mother tongue and then they translate it into Bangla. Materials are also in Bangla. There is no yearly assessment provision. Para centers are providing good early childhood services in the hill districts. Program officer, who are responsible for coordinating the program said that Para Center is playing significant role in the education of Hill areas. Although there was no study. It is evident that graduates from the Para Centers go to school regularly, dropout less and performing better. As a result Chittagong Hill Tracts Board is planning extend the project. However the para center has not been included in the sample as the centers are only run in the hill districts. Para center does not exist in plain districts. So its not comparable as a result its excluded from the sample.

Why adaptations were not made?

The question was asked to the Program Heads of the organizations. DAM said adaptation was not made in the curriculum and materials because many other issues had to be incorporated in the project design and the design did not really consider language issues separately. He however said that although no adaptation was made in the curriculum, in the program implementation approach it adapted a few initiatives. One of the approaches were selecting teacher from the same indigenous community with same language. The other approach was using mother tongue in teaching learning process. So the medium of instruction was eventually mother tongue based. Similarly BSA official said that they had considered language issue. Although all materials are in Bangla, they recruit teacher who knows both the languages. The teacher first instructs in Bangla and then translates it to their mother tongue. The whole class runs that way they claimed. This is good approach that they recruit teachers who is capable in both the language. But this single initiative is not enough to boost their literacy and language skills. There could have some literacy materials written in children's mother tongue and in Bangla. There could have a literacy/books and art corner where children can converse, manipulate books, draw picture etc. there can be some emergent literacy book written in both form. Teacher can tell/read story written in both language.

School Readiness

Both in hill and in plain land preschools are ultimately preparing children for school. Their curriculum components are as follows:

- National Anthem and warm up for 10 minutes

- Rhymes, Songs and Story telling for 20 minutes
- Reading and Writing Activity for 40 minutes
- Play (free play and Guided play) 30 minutes
- Math for 25 minutes
- Environment and Health for 25 minutes

Like a formal schooling there are school, teacher, books, learning materials which make children used to school readiness. As they come to school and go back everyday following a routine time, it prepare the for formal schooling.

Despite language challenge children learn rhymes, counting,

knowing colors, Bangla letters, numbers, social norms, and practice writing etc. all these help them in school readiness.

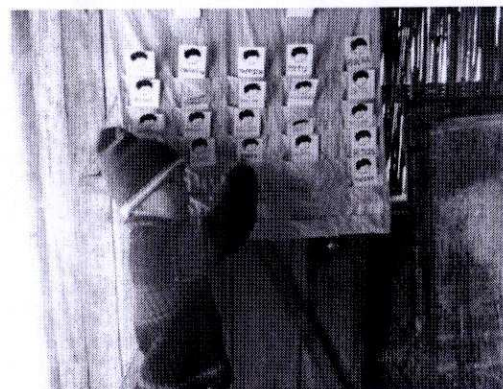
Outcome measurement

None of the organization has any internal evaluation mechanism. No organization measures outcome of the children or conduct any examination to assess children's achievement. It was tried to get record of the previous year. But school/office does not keep any record relating to children's performance outcome. This has become a big flaw not keeping record of changes. Neither have they known how to measure and how to keep record. Teachers do not have any training about measurement. There are activities on letter recognition, mathematical concepts, rhymes and its found that children know name of letters, know numbers, learn social norms. Lot of such changes takes place. But these are not recorded. It would be better if organizations take measures to measure changes and do record of the changes. Otherwise, many positive changes will not come into light

Cultural Difference

Hill community has very diversified culture. There are 11 tribes and each tribe has different culture. Some leading tribes and their culture re as follows:

Chakma: the Chakma are the largest ethnic group in Bangladesh. The Chakma language belongs to the Indo-European family of languages and has close links with Pali, Assamese and Bengali. The Chakma have their own script in which their ancient religious literature is preserved in palm leaves. The script has similarities with Mon Khmer and Burmese. Although many elderly



Chakma still sign their names in the Chakma script, most Chakma youths no longer use the script. At school Chakma children study in Bengali and in English. The Chakma have perhaps proved to be the most adaptive and innovative of all the indigenous peoples of the CHT. By nature, most Chakma are down-to-earth and socially shy, but nevertheless romantic, although they will seldom admit it.

Marma: The Marma are the second largest indigenous ethnic group in the CHT. The Marma have their own script and speak a language which is almost identical to that of the Rakhine or Rakhaing of Cox's Bazar and Patuakhali districts in Bangladesh and Arakan state in Myanmar (Burma). The Marma language is soft and poetic and even people who do not understand Marma love to hear Marma songs. As with the Tripura and other peoples speaking a Tibeto-Burman tongue, the Marma start out with a disadvantage with the medium of instruction in schools being in the Bengali language. Introduction of primary education in the Marma language is believed to be a necessary step for the progress of education among the Marma. They have a beautiful language which deserves official recognition. The Marmas are very fond of fairs. They have the particular knack of converting even their religious festivals into occasions of fun and gaiety. Traditionally, both men and women are fond of smoking pipes and cigars, all locally made. Rice beer or distilled rice spirits are very popular among the men

Tripura: The Tripura were traditionally swidden cultivators although they have now diversified into many occupations. The Tripura have many university graduates nowadays, but their language is so different from Bengali that they face disadvantages in studying in Bengali from their earliest years. The introduction of primary education in the Tripura language will most likely lead to a vast improvement in the rate of literacy of the Tripura

Generally (in all tribes) it is seen that they talk very less. Even they do not ask any question. So it was quite hard to know how much they learn. They feel shy more than that of Bangali children. Young children help their parents in their occupation particularly in horticulture. This is part of their culture which affects their schooling. Children have very less exposure to modern things. Very few have television, radio and audio facilities. Compared to plain land children this situation has become a disadvantage for the hill children.

8. Discussion

In most countries that are trying to implement ECD, access is an issue, in Bangladesh, access to ECD also has been an issue for many parts of the country. DAM, BSA and SC have been trying to reach as many children as they can in the geographically remote linguistically diversified and culturally different hill tracts as well as other parts of Chittagong region. Otherwise many children may lose the opportunity to have better preparation for further learning. The study found that despite very good attempt to reach the door step of hill children, program has not considered the different learning need of the hill children. It's become visible in curriculum. Almost same curriculum is used for the hill tract although their mother tongue is totally different from the curriculum set for them. The text materials are unfamiliar to them which slow their learning and affect spontaneity. Its seen children are comfortable with their teacher, as they use same language that children speak. It's also seen that teacher is speaking their home language while instruction but providing materials in Bangla language while giving task.

Under such circumstances teacher could help hill children in school in different ways. For example, teacher could label print in both language. Teacher can give instruction using both Bangla and mother tongue. Calling the names of materials in both language. Teacher also can write some of the rhymes using both language and hang tem on the side wall.

There should be a well balanced curriculum and materials both in mother tongue and in mainstream Bangla language, so that children can be skilled in both language. Another way can be a bridging from mother tongue to mainstream language. There can be some materials written in both mother tongue and mainstream language form and while teaching learning teacher can use both the language.

That may trouble their rhythm of learning. Except for SC preschool, hill context has not been considered in designing the program. There was no special training for teachers on how to deal with this situation. As hill preschools are geographically remote for the children it could have been more schools for fewer number of children so that schools get closer to the children. .

As a supplementary initiative, there can be after school circle in the afternoon with smaller number of children at their door step. In after school circle there will be opportunity to play more

with both languages. Materials and play design should be in such a way so that children can be used to both languages.

Although there is similarity in both cases half of the parents are day laborer, plain land parents earn more than the hills, they get job easily which makes their livelihood more secured than hill parents. It has influence on their children's schooling. When they do not have work parents are less likely to send their children to school. Generally parents in both sides want their children go to school. Getting a preschool teacher has been a challenge for hill tracts, as there is very less number of tenth or more grade female available. Relatively plain land program has an advantage. There are teachers available. Access in terms of road communication is easy. Their home language is school language. Parents are relatively more supportive. Text materials are in Bangla. In reverse, in the hill access is very difficult, text materials is not in their language, parents are not as supportive as in the plain land.

9. Conclusions

It's well established that language of instruction has an implication within ECD programs. It's important to understand in what extent mother tongue of the children and language that dominant population speaks would be used in the classroom. balanced.

The study evidence shows that there is a need to look at the different need of hill preschool children. There should be national policy realizing different culture and language need. As hills areas are scattered and mountainous there should be more schools even for small number of children. As many researches show there is a direct link between food and learning both in the plain land and hill children need a good snack sometime during sessions in school. It's needed more for hill children as they have to cross long distance. There is an urgent need for the text materials which should be well balanced in mother tongue and national Bangla language. There should be special additional training for the teachers who help indigenous children. The study however could not figure out the difference in overall out come of hill and plain land preschoolers. One of the objectives of the study was to draw attention to the diverse need of hill children. It has been evident that the need is different, the context is different. So it needs more study to revealed more aspect that affects preparedness of hill children.

However its not only preschool which will prepare children well for school. As hill children are learning two languages, they should be provided with some extra opportunities. These are as follows:

- Borrowing books (picture focused) to home and read them for children. There can be a tin trunk library from where mother/parents can borrow book, take it home and read to children.
- Involve fathers to read to their children. Father talking is very important for children to learn language.
- Introduce dialogic reading in the classroom. Shared and reading in dialogic form could help children well in extending their vocabulary. As children spend most the time with their parents, Parenting program can be very good way that can support hill children at home.
- Story telling and responsive parenting can enhance both language and school readiness of the children.

Limitations:

Small number of study sample is a limitation for the study. Although its expected that the study would draw an attention of GO, NGOs to the different context of Hill children learning at preschool, its difficult to generalize the outcome of the study for whole country. Language had been a challenge for the data collector. It was very difficult to interact with children as language was different for both sides. It could have been better if direct interaction could hold.

10. Acknowledgements

Since it was a difficult task to collect data from such remote hill locations without the help of Mr. Pratul, technical officer of DAM and Mr. Pradip of Zabarong, local partner of save the children. So I would like to express my sincere thanks to them. I would particularly thank Mr. G. F Hamim of DAM , Ms. Meherunnahar Shapna of Save the Children-USA, and Mr. Tariq Hasan of BSA who have given permission and provided all necessary supports.

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Annexure 1 Thesis Proposal

MSC Thesis Proposal

**Title: A comparative Study of Pre-primary School Education between the Hill District and Plain
Land Areas in Chittagong Division**

Submitted To:

**Institute of Education and Research-IED, BRAC University
MSC in ECD**

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October 30, 2010

A comparative Study of Pre-primary School Education between the Hill District and Plain Land Areas in Chittagong Division.

Introduction

Learning begins at birth. Neuro-scientific data says young children's intellectual capacities must be nourished or they will be lost. So the period from birth to the entry to primary education is critical formative stage for the growth, development and school preparedness of children. Early childhood interventions therefore play crucial role in advancing children development and learning. Stimulation and nurturing in the yearly years help children learn to listen, pay attentions, follow instructions, establish relationships, resolve conflicts, stay on task and be motivated; abilities attributed to strong school readiness skills. Positive experience during the early years and in early learning settings increase the likelihood of attaining further education, resulting in better quality of life as adults (Sharon). Its increasingly accepted that preschool can be a sound public investment especially for the children disadvantaged by poverty or other adverse circumstances (Heckman and crueger, 2004) Research evidences show children who have preprimary education do better performance (Aboud. Frances SUCCEED 2008) in primary

grades, reduce dropout and more likely to attend school regularly. In the Brazilian PROABE it was found that total cost of schooling is 11% lower for the children who did participate in ECCE program. Dropout rate and repetition on primary school turnout to be lower as well (Myers 1992). The abecedarian longitudinal study (2002) which had early childhood care and education program for children as young as 6 weeks through preschool, findings demonstrated that the intervention remained a significant indicator of children's academic outcomes. Preschooler scored significantly higher on intellectual and academic measures. Beside those international studies, In Bangladesh, a research conducted by Plan Bangladesh, BRAC and ICDDRDB indicated that Early stimulation and preparation for education enhance student learning in school and increase the possibility of retention up to terminal grades. Pre-school program also help reduce social inequality by compensating for disadvantage resulting from factors such as poverty, gender, ethnicity, caste or religion (UNESCO, 2007).

In Bangladesh, despite the significant improvement in expanding primary education, gender parity and child survival, still half of the children drop out before completing the five year cycle of primary education (Education watch 2008). Those who pass the fifth grade achieve very low competencies set for the grade. As one of the front line signatories of CRC, EFA, MDG and WFFT (World fit for Children) Bangladesh has put provision for one year pre-primary class with primary school in the latest National Education Policy 2010. With the publication of the Operational Framework for Pre-Primary Education, Bangladesh made a big step forwards to EFA Goal One Early Childhood Care and Education has been conceptualized, standards have been set, and a vision has been formulated by the frame work. Realizing the essence of the preprimary, many NGOs have been running preprimary class/schools across the country for more than one decade. BRAC has more than 20 thousands pre-primary schools running across the country, likewise Plan Bangladesh, Save the Children, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Bangladesh Shishu Academy are the leading NGOs implementing pre-primary schools for many years. Despite, uncoordinated efforts in terms of using curriculum, teaching methodology, materials, selecting program locations, setting own implementing strategy etc. many graduated children are entering into formal school that positively impact their learning and performance into the later grades.

The general objective of this study is to compare and contrast the challenges and opportunities that preschool education of children of hill districts and plain land districts face in the country.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- To compare the education system of hill district and plain land pre-primary schools in Chittagong region of Bangladesh
- To identify the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of the education programs of the pre-primary school of Hill districts and plain land preschools in Chittagong region.
- To identify the challenges that the ethnic children face in the school due to their language and for geographic background.
- To make recommendations for improvement.

Rationale of the study:

In the recent years, there has been a remarkable progress evident in the field of pre-primary education particularly in the Non government development sectors. Government of Bangladesh in the new education policy incorporated pre-primary schooling as part of the primary education. Consequently Ministry of Primary and Mass Education has decided to open pre-primary classes in the Government Primary Schools in phases. But the initiative started and expanded by many NGOs from the early ninety's. A good number of local, regional, national and international NGOs are running preschools across the country following their own curriculum and program strategy. Despite several attempts by different NGOs and private sectors only around 14.6% children have been covered by some sort of pre-primary education (Operational frame work for pre-primary education, 2008). Still there are many uncoordinated efforts keep continuing in the preprimary program sectors. Although majority parts of Bangladesh are similar in terms of geographical, cultural and socio-economic condition' there are few exceptions in the hill districts. The culture, language and socio-economic condition of hill districts are very different from the main land. Similarly, the nature, resource' outcome, opportunities, challenges of the program are also different. Since the pre-primary field is relatively new, there are few studies found in the area e.g. Nath, and Kathy (2007), Children's access to preprimary education in

Bangladesh, Aboud and Deborah (2004), A scientific case for Early Childhood Care and Education for development of Bangladesh, are some of them. But these studies did not give attention to the diverse nature of the Hill area programs. So there is a need for looking at the pre-primary schools at that area so that the strengths, challenges and opportunity could come into attention to all concerned. The result of the study could benefit the individuals and agencies to address the issues in improving the program.

Methodology:

The study will investigate qualitative aspects of the selected preschools. It will also compare the school readiness of the children of both the areas. Therefore mostly qualitative methods will be applied for the study. The study will compare the following areas of the preschools:

- Curriculum (book, materials, teaching methodology, medium of language, length of schooling etc.)
- Teachers background
- Teachers preparation
- Supervision
- School readiness of the children
- Medium of language
- Advantage and disadvantage of the children (language, geographic location)
- Assessment tool and procedure

Selection of the study site:

The study intends to compare the preschool program in hill districts and plain land. That's why two hill districts Khagrachari and Bandarban and two plain land districts; Chittagong and Cox's bazar have been selected for the study. As the study focuses on comparison between hill districts preschool program with main land program so naturally two of the hill districts where NGOs have preprimary schools have been chosen while Chittagong and Cox's Bazar have been selected as both the districts are geographically close and there is similarity in culture and natural settings. Moreover it would be easy to compare the situations.

Sample and Sampling:

A total of 6 pre-primary schools will be purposively selected for the study. They will be equally divided into two groups; therefore 3 pre-schools will be selected from hill districts and the rest 3 from the plain land of Chittagong region. In order to gather in-depth, diversified and reliable data the schools that are run by leading NGOs namely Bangladesh Shishu Academy, Save the Children, Dhaka Ahsania mission will purposively be chosen. As there is no intention to evaluate the programs so it's decided to select sample schools purposively. In this case the study will try to choose equal number of school from each NGOs. Selecting schools from leading NGOs will give a picture of the program for rest of the country.

Sampling Plan:

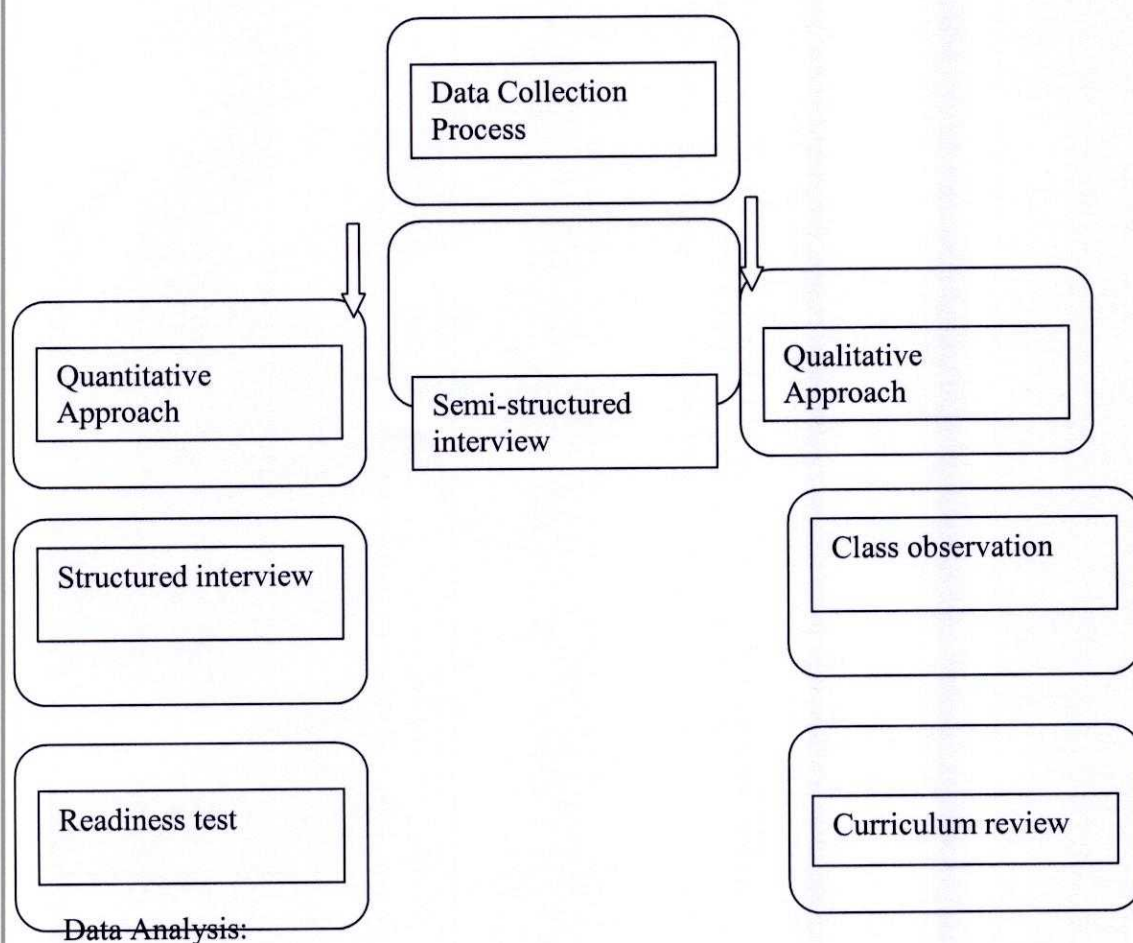
# of preschool	To be selected from
1 preschool	Hill tracts, run by Zabaron, supported by Save the children
1 preschool	Hill tracts run by Bangladesh Shishu Academy
1 preschool	Hill tracts run by UNIQUE project of DAM
1 preschool	Plain land, Run by Bangladesh Shishu Academy
1 preschool	Plain land, Run by CODEC supported by Save the children
1 Preschool	Plain land, run by UNIQUE project of DAM
Total: 6 preprimary	

Time line

Date	Activity
October, 2010	Write proposal and getting feedback from Mentor
8 th November 2010	Presentation of draft Proposal and review proposal
November 30, 2010	Submit Final Proposal
December 2010-January 31 , 2011	Collect Data
February 1-15, 2011	Writing thesis, getting feedback from Mentor
February 20-25, 2011	Incorporate feedback
February 28, 2011	Submit final Thesis
15 – 17 th March'2011	Oral Thesis Presentation
24 th March 2011	Submission the thesis to the course coordinator

Method for data collection:

The mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) will be followed to gather information. So, varieties of data sources will be used in the study.



Data Analysis:

Data will be analyzed mainly qualitatively; therefore a descriptive report will be prepared. However for the readiness test an adapted version of School Readiness Tool will be used. This tool has been prepared by Frances Aboud, Professor Child Psychology, McGill University, Canada to test Bangladeshi preprimary graduates and adapted by Save the Children ECD team. The readiness comparison will be analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical issue now a days has been very important in research particularly research concerned with children. The study will follow the international guide of ethical issues. Moreover the proposal has been sent to IED, BRAC University research team for necessary feedback.

Limitation of the Study:

Language could be a challenge for both sides (data collector and respondents) for meaningful communication. Sample size may not representative for the whole country. Despite these limitations the study will reveal the opportunity and challenges preprimary children faces through comparing the program.

Submitted by:

Mohammad Nazrul Islam

MSC in ECD, 2nd batch, IED, BRAC University

Reference:

Aboud, Frances, Llewellyn (2004) A Scientific Case for Early Childhood Care and education for development in Bangladesh

Nath, Samir Ranjan & Sylvab Kathy 2007 Children's access to pre-school education in Bangladesh

McGregor, Sally Gratham et al. Lancet 2007, Developmental Potential in the first 5 years for children in developing countries

Vijiaykumar, Gowri & Shapna, Meherun 2010, Getting Ready for School in the Hill tracts: A comparative analysis of Mother-tongue-and national language based preschools in Adivasi communities

Aboud, Frances 2008, Aboud, Evaluation of SUCCEED preschool

Operational Frame work for Preprimary Education, 2008, Government of Bangladesh

National Education Policy 2010, Government of Bangladesh

Comprehensive Early Childhood care and Development Policy Framework (final draft) 2009, Government of Bangladesh

Education Watch Report 2008, Campaign for Popular Education

UNICE, 2009, Situation assessment and analysis of children and women in Bangladesh,

Annexure 2

Data Collection Tool

1. Basic Information

Name of the Pre-school:

Village:

Union:

Upazilla:

District:

Name of the Program/Project:

Implemented by:

Funded by:

Supported by:

Duration

of children enrolled:

Boys:

Girls:

of children present:

of children with disability

Boy:

Girls

Types of disability

2. Curriculum related information

- a) What is the contact hour of the school?
- b) What is the actual contact hour of the school?
- c) What is the medium of instruction?
- d) Is there any prescribed/listed materials? What are these?
- e) Is there any materials developed considering local context? If yes what are these?
- d) Is there any mother tongue based text/literacy materials? If yes what are these?
- e) Is there any punitive measures? What sort of?
- f) Is there any assessment system for children? If yes, how frequent, what tool is used, explain.

Questionnaire for teacher

4. Geographic Information

a) Where does the school located at?

On the hill ☐

in the Plain land ☐

others ☐

b) What is the longest distance children come from? Tell in kilometer and in time

c) What is the distance most of the children come from? Tell in kilometer and in time

d) Do children come alone? If not with whom

5. Information about Language, Culture, Ethnic identity, education and income

a) what is the name of the community

b) What is the ethnic identity of the children?

c) What is the mother tongue of the children?

d) What is the religious identity of the children?

e) What are the main occupations of the parents of preschool children?

f) What is the average daily income of the parents

g) What is the education level of the parents (father or mother)? No education ☐

Grade I to V ☐ VI to VIII ☐ IX to SSC ☐ HSC and above ☐

h)

6. Challenges

a) What are the strengths of your school?

b) What are the weaknesses of your school

c) What are the challenges you face?

d) What are the opportunities this school have?

e)

7. Teacher Background

a) Name of the teacher

b) Age of the teacher

c) Education background

d) Training information

- Name of the training received
- Duration

Questionnaire for Parents

- a) How does preschool benefit your children?
- b) What are the strengths of this school?
- c) What are the weaknesses of the school?
- d) In your view what are the challenges of this school?
- e) What do you contribute to the school?
- f) What would happen after the project ends?

Oral Language Test for children (3 children from each school)

Tell us something about:

Your Mother

Your School

Your home

3. Classroom Observation

Classroom observation sheet

Name of Pre-school:

Starting Date:

Name of Teacher:

Area:

Number of Enrolled children:

Boy:

Girl:

Disable Children:

Boy:

Girl:

Number of children present	B: G:
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Area of Observation	
A. Classroom & Material:	
1 Play area is safe and Comfortable	
2 children's work displayed (variety of children's recent work including 3 dimension)	
3 Correct and sufficient material are in the 5 corners	
4 sufficient space and materials for out door play : individually and group	
5 Children have access to latrine and hand washing	
B. Teacher:	
6 Teacher knows the objective and follow it to activity	
7 Equal attention and opportunity to all children and make sure all children are included (eg-irrespective of ethnicity, disability, poverty & religion)	
8 Teacher balance listening & talking (eg-giving time for children's response, structuring children's talking, ask open ended question, prompting)	
9 Teacher use positive discipline to manage the group	

10 Teacher prepare new materials for children to play	
11 Teacher does individual conversations with most of the children	
C. Child:	
12 Children get opportunity to work alone, in pair, group and large group	
13 Children take an active role by discussing vocabulary and logical relations in story	
14 Each child call by their own name	
15 Each child is welcomed in the beginning of the class and say good bye at the time of departure	
16 Most of the Children most time seemed enjoying each activity	
17 Teacher shows children the linkage between spoken language and writing	
18 Interact effectively: Teacher-children, child-child, children-children (converse, play, work)	

Annexure 3

Date: December 12, 2010

To
The Director General
Bangladesh Shishu Academy
Dhaka, Bangladesh

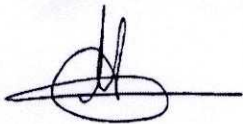
Subject: Approval for the access of program field for the research of Masters' in Early Childhood Development.

Dear Sir/Madam,

This is to inform you that Mr. Mohammad Nazrul Islam is a students of MSc. in the Early Childhood Development, IED-BRAC University need your support to conduct a research for his/her Masters program.

I would therefore request you to allow this student to use the field under your authority for the purpose of the research of Masters Thesis. I am ensuring you that, information, documents, data, manuals, materials, as well as the research findings shall remain confidential by the students and will not be used or disclosed without your consent.

With Regards



.....
Mahmuda Akhter
Head of Early Childhood Development Resource Centre
IED-BRAC University

Annexure 4

ECDRC, IED-BRAC University
Masters in ECD, 2011
Monthly Report

Month _____

Week 1

Date of meeting: _____

Time: _____ to _____

Subject of support: _____

Week 2

Date of meeting: _____

Time: _____ to _____

Subject of support: _____

Week 3

Date of meeting: _____

Time: _____ to _____

Subject of support: _____

Week 4

Date of meeting: _____

Time: _____ to _____

Subject of support: _____

Sign of Student

Sign of Supervisor