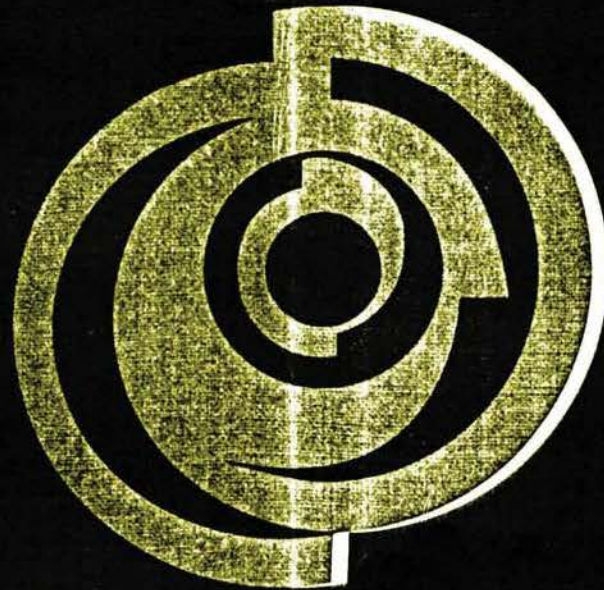


School Management

Learning from Successful
Schools in Bangladesh



National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM)

Brac Research and Evaluation Division

School Management: Learning from Successful Schools in Bangladesh

Proceedings of a National Seminar

**National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM)
Brac Research and Evaluation Division**

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vii
List of Tables, Boxes and Figures	ix
Acronyms	xi
About the Seminar <i>Samir R Nath</i>	1
School Management for Quality Education: Introductory Remarks <i>Imran Matin</i>	5
Management in Successful Primary Schools <i>Samir R Nath and Mirja M Shahjamal</i>	9
Management in Successful Secondary Schools <i>Roohi Zakia Dewan, Siraj Uddin Ahmed, Md. Abdul Maleque and Ashrafunnesa</i>	37
Case Studies of 'Successful' School Management: What can be Learned? <i>Manzoor Ahmed</i>	65
Comprehensive Research Needs for Educational Development <i>M Osman Farruk</i>	71
Photo Gallery	75
Annexes	79
Annex 1 Programme of the Seminar	
Annex 2 List of Participants	

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We are grateful to the Honourable Minister for Education Dr. M Osman Farruk, UNESCO’s Programme Specialist Mr. Ichiro Miyazawa, and the Director of the Brac University Institute of Education and Development (BU-IED) Dr. Manzoor Ahmed, for being with us in the seminar. We are grateful to all of them for their time and valuable contributions.

The schools under study, particularly the head teachers and the programme organisers, the school managing committees and the local education authorities including *upazila* and district education offices, were so cooperative that without their help it would have not been possible to conduct the studies. We are also grateful to the students of the study schools and their parents who sacrificed hours upon hours to provide us with the data. They all deserve special acknowledgement.

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List of Tables, Boxes and Figures

About the seminar

Figure 1	Framework for analysing school functioning	2
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Study on primary schools

Table 1	Techniques used and sources of information	13
Table 2	Number of sections and learners by grade in government schools	15
Table 3	Number of centres and learners by grade in Brac schools	24
Box 1	A SMC meeting in Narail government school	17
Box 2	Some comments about the head teacher of Narail government school	19
Box 3	Opinion of the head teacher of Godagari government school about the factors responsible for school improvement	20
Box 4	A science class in a Brac school	29
Box 5	A mother's visit to a Brac school	30

Study on secondary schools

Table 1	Some basic information about the schools	42
Table 2	The schools by various performance indicators	46
Table 3	The head teachers' profile	50
Box 1	Head teacher dealing with adolescent problem in Motijheel school	53
Box 2	Head teacher's meeting with the class captains in Uttara school	54
Figure 1	In-school management structure of the study schools	47

Acronyms

ACR	Annual Confidential Report
AD	Assistant Director (in divisional primary education office)
ADEO	Assistant District Education Officer
ANTRIEP	Asian Network of Training and Research Institutions in Educational Planning
AUEO	Assistant Upazila Education Officer
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BEd	Bachelor of Education
BISE	Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education
BU-IED	Brac University Institute of Education and Development
CBO	Community Based Organisation
C-in-Ed	Certificate in Education
DD	Deputy Director (in zonal education office)
DEO	District Education Officer
DIA	Directorate of Inspection and Audit
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education
DSHE	Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education
EFA	Education for All
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GPS	Government Primary School
HSC	Higher Secondary School Certificate
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
MEB	Madrassa Education Board
MEd	Masters of Education
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MPO	Money Payment Order
NAEM	National Academy for Educational Management
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NIEPA	National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration
PO	Programme Organiser

PSPMP	Primary School Performance Monitoring Project
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RED	Research and Evaluation Division
RM	Regional Manager
SMC	School Managing Committee
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
TTC	Teacher Training College
UEO	Upazila Education Officer
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
URC	Upazila Resource Centre

ABOUT THE SEMINAR

Samir R Nath

This proceeding is an outcome of a national seminar jointly organised by two Bangladeshi member institutions of the Asian Network of Training and Research Institutions in Educational Planning (ANTRIEP). The institutions are the National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM) under the Ministry of Education of the Government of Bangladesh and Brac – a national private development organisation. These two institutions participated in a multi country study on *Successful School Management* with other members of ANTRIEP. The findings of the Bangladesh studies were disseminated through a national seminar.

The ANTRIEP

With support from the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP/ UNESCO), a number of national and regional institutions of Asia involved in training and research in educational planning created the ANTRIEP network in 1995. Including the IIEP, the network has 20 member institutions from ten countries, three of which are from Bangladesh. In addition to NAEM and Brac, the third Bangladeshi institution is Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE). The networking revolves around following four activities:

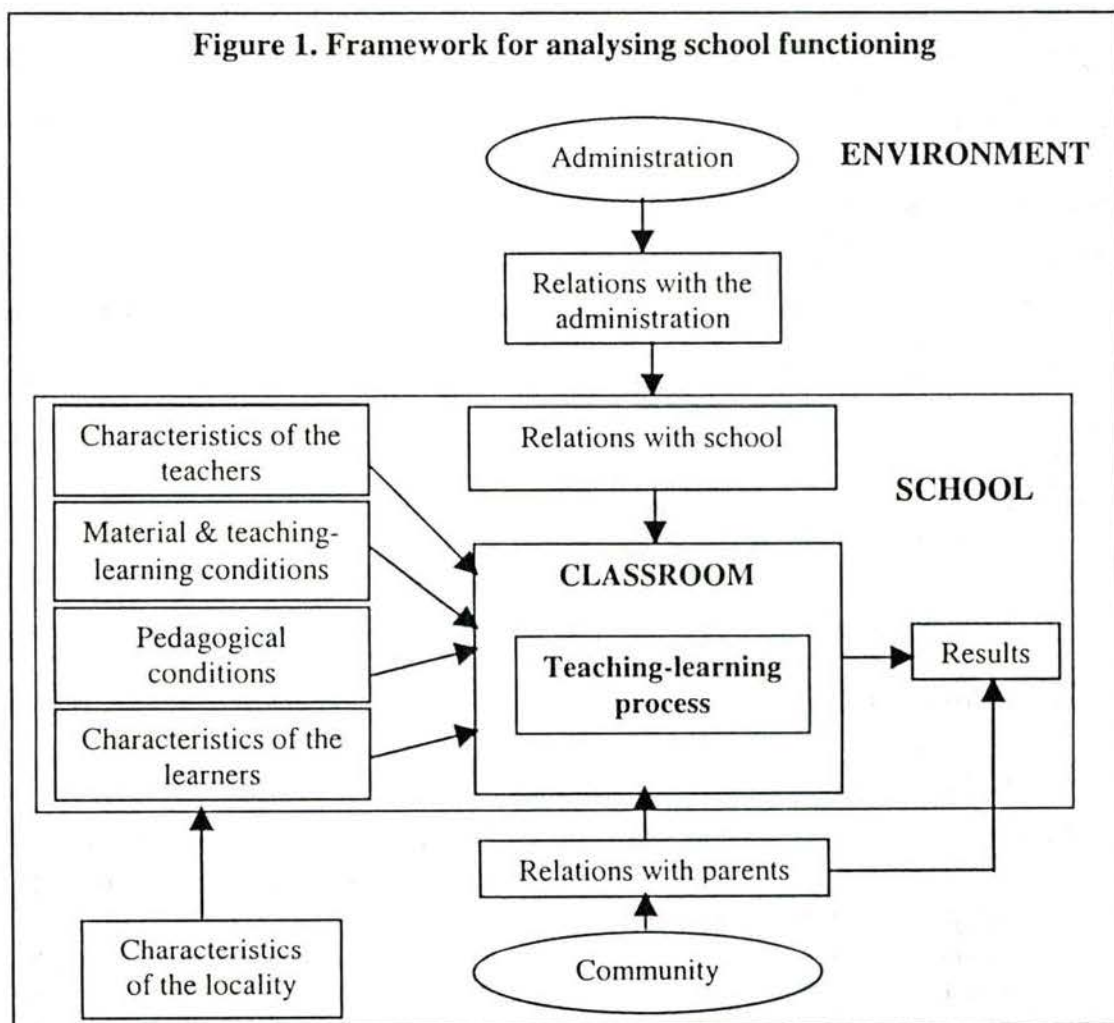
- Collaboration on themes of common interest;
- Exchange of information among member institutions;
- Organisation of a regular ANTRIEP members meeting and policy seminar; and
- Staff exchange programmes.

Origin of the Studies

The study entitled *Case Studies of Successful School Management* was initiated in an annual ANTRIEP meeting held in Kuala Lumpur in July 2002. The participating organisations independently prepared their own research proposal under a broad guideline provided by IIEP, which were then finalised in a workshop held in Dhaka in April 2003. An analytical framework was also prepared in this workshop. On completion of the fieldwork by all the participating organisations another workshop aiming to prepare the reports was held in Kathmandu in December 2003. The draft reports were then presented in a policy seminar held in Manila in July 2004. The reports are now in various stages of finalisation. This study is an excellent example of capacity building through networking. The following nine institutions from seven countries participated in the research.

Bangladesh: National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM), Brac
 India: National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration,
 State Institute of Educational Management and Training (SIEMAT)
 Malaysia: Institute Aminuddin Baki (IAB)
 Nepal: Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development
 Pakistan: Institute for Educational Development, Aga Khan University
 Philippines: Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology, South
 East Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SAMEO-INOTECH)
 Sri Lanka: National Institute of Education (NIE)

Using qualitative research techniques a total of 30 case studies on 30 successful schools (both primary and secondary) were prepared under this research study.



The analytical framework developed in the Dhaka meeting has six broad components. These are school profile, school management structure and organisation, role of head teacher, management of specific processes, relations with the administration, and selected management devices. Each component

includes a set of sub-components. The case studies were broadly based on this framework, however slight modifications were allowed if necessary. Figure 1 presents the analytical framework.

The Bangladesh Studies

Under the above common framework prepared jointly by the member institutions of ANTRIEP, NAEM and Brac conducted two separate studies in Bangladesh. A four-member NAEM research team worked on secondary schools and a two-member Brac team worked on primary schools. A total of eight case studies on eight successful schools were prepared – four by each research team. Of the four case studies prepared by the NAEM research team one was on a government secondary school and three were on three non-government secondary schools. The Brac research team also prepared four case studies – two on two government primary schools and two on two Brac schools. Brac study covered both formal and non-formal schools. The schools are located in both urban and rural areas.

Some Features of the Studies

Educational studies in Bangladesh are mostly quantitative in nature – broadly based on survey methods. However, the cases prepared for this study employed qualitative research techniques, where an ethnographic approach was emphasised. The case studies focused on the factors that made certain schools more successful than others. A number of issues related to school, community, administration, teaching, attitudes and leadership, along with other associated links came out from the research. The in-depth case studies identified key critical factors behind the success of these particular schools. The study has practical implications, as the lessons learned from the successful schools can be applied to other schools that are not doing as well. Policy makers and planners in education can be benefited from these studies. In addition, the research project in Bangladesh is unique because it includes both primary and secondary schools, as well as formal and non-formal schools. No other country was able to cover such a vast area in their study. As a result, the findings from the Bangladesh study create an opportunity to learn from one sub-system to another, nationally as well as regionally.

The Seminar

The national seminar was held at Brac Centre on 19 September 2004 (see Annex 1 for the programme). The Honourable Minister for Education of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dr. M. Osman Farruk, graced the seminar as the Chief Guest and Mr. Ichiro Miyazawa, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Dhaka was the Special Guest. Prof. Md. Khalilur Rahman, Director General of NAEM Chaired the seminar, where the Director Research of Brac, Dr. Imran Matin, offered an official welcome and introductory speech. Professor Roohi Zakia Dewan, Director (Planning and Development) of NAEM and me presented the key findings of the studies. A number of participants took part in the open discussion session, which was moderated by Dr. Manzoor Ahmed, Director of the Brac University Institute

of Education and Development (BU-IED). A total of 92 persons from various institutions under the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, university departments, research institutions, civil society organisations, NGOs, development partners, national dailies and electronic media participated in the seminar. Annex 2 provides the list of participants. A number of national daily covered the seminar news.

The Present Report

This report contains five papers in addition to this part. The first one is based on the introductory speech by Imran Matin. The following two articles are based on the studies done under the ANTRIEP umbrella. Manzoor Ahmed wrote an article based on the comments and discussions made by the participants in the open discussion session. Finally, the Education Minister wrote an article bearing his thoughts on school management, quality of education and research needs in these issues. A photo gallery is added afterwards. The seminar programme and the list of participants are annexed at the end of the report.

About the author

Samir R Nath is a Senior Research Fellow and Coordinator of the Educational Research Unit in Brac. He is one of the principal researchers of the Education Watch. His research interests include primary and basic education, and pupils' learning achievement. He has contributed many journal articles and book chapters at home and abroad.

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SCHOOL MANAGEMENT FOR QUALITY EDUCATION: INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Imran Matin

Our shared commitment to provide quality education for all has brought into focus several challenges we need to address—decentralization of educational governance, introduction of school and learner centred management, and the importance of effective school management in general and the role of the school head in particular. It is widely acknowledged that we need to pay serious attention to improving the school management framework if we are to bring about sustainable improvements to the quality of education. This has implications for in-school management processes, community school linkages, the role of the head teacher, as well as external support and accountability mechanisms. While some measures to improve school management could be initiated through system-wide reforms, others require a focus on local level efforts nearer to the school site.

The research papers that constitute this report have emerged out of Brac and NAEM's collaboration with the Asian Network of Training and Research Institutions in Educational Planning or ANTRIEP for short. This network is an exciting example of practice focussed, South-South partnership among educational research institutions in Asia. ANTRIEP is a network of national institutions in Asia with a vision to create synergy between the participating institutions in order to reinforce their capacities to respond to the growing and increasingly diversified needs for skill development in educational planning and management in the region. It currently brings together 20 Asian institutions with a view to offer innovative answers to the question of how to strengthen national capacities in training and research in educational management.

Against the backdrop of the crucial importance of better understanding of school management practices, the ANTRIEP programme undertook case studies of successful school management in selected countries of Asia. The specific objective of the case studies is to develop a critical understanding of the characteristics of successful school management practices and strategies in different countries and to clarify how such practices and strategies can be adopted in different contexts. The ultimate objective of the research programme is to inform institutions on how to build school leaders' capacities in order to improve school management. It is envisaged that the case studies would subsequently help to design training activities appropriate to different country contexts.

The research findings emerging out of the two case studies are important from three perspectives.

First, they deal with the nitty-gritty details of successful school management. This can help us begin to understand the complexities, contextual realities and the many innovative practices undertaken to deliver quality education despite the constraints. Such focussed examination of successful school management practices is relatively rare in the context of Bangladesh.

Second, the research is quite expansive in its scope covering both formal and non-formal schools at the primary and secondary level, which will allow us to draw implications for a good section of the education sector. Brac's Research and Evaluation Division carried out the case studies dealing with primary level school management; while the case studies on the secondary level school management was carried out by NAEM. This is a good example of research partnership—between a NGO and a government research and training centre. We hope that such partnership will grow stronger in the future, not least because we strongly recognize that while NGOs can develop and demonstrate innovations, when it comes to meeting national needs, it can only complement and support government programmes. This is also true when it comes to influencing policies through research.

Third, the methodology used is qualitative with a focus on in-depth understanding of management practices, most of which take place through day-to-day lived experiences of the schools, and cannot be captured only through quantitative surveys. We strongly feel that if the quality of education and other public goods provision are to be improved in a sustainable way, the research community should pay more attention to qualitative methodologies and mixing methodologies.

This also has implications for the mind set of policy makers, as qualitative research operates under different epistemological principles and can only be useful when the mind set is opened up from looking beyond only numbers and statistical representativeness. As we focus our attention on themes such as quality, rights-based service provision, inclusiveness etc., such a shift in the mindset of researchers, development workers and policy makers is very important.

I want to raise a few questions that we could help us organize our thoughts as we reflect on the case studies. What measures really lead to a significant change in the school management process? How have various measures influenced the role of head teachers? Do the changes have system-wide implications? Are they sustainable in the long run? Which of the changes are school specific innovations? Are there elements emerging from these innovations that could be adopted on a large scale? These questions are of direct relevance for relating the micro case studies to the macro structures and processes, which is what will be needed if we are to take the agenda of improving school management forward.

The 'moment of truth' in education is what children learn. Research and experience both show that learning is not attributable to one particular factor such as textbooks, curriculum or even teachers. It depends on the whole context of

learning, the combination of an ensemble of inputs. The outcome of schooling is contextual. It is more like an orchestra rather than a solo performance.

Improving the overall performance of an orchestra does not depend on improving isolated components, such as a better instrument or a better musician; it mainly depends on how the ensemble performs together and how all the different elements are orchestrated. Just as an orchestra's performance relies largely on the quality of its conductor, so school or student performance depends mainly on the head teacher. Good schools require good teachers and principals, high standards, adequate resources and real accountability. Demands must be followed by assistance so that they can be met, standards must be followed by insistence so that they will be kept. Head teachers must therefore be placed in a more enabling environment, by training, support and supervision.

I hope that these papers will help us get a better understanding of the elements of this enabling environment. I hope we will also not end there. We will also think of actions, however small and local that we need to take together to offer such an environment for all schools of the country.

About the author

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MANAGEMENT IN SUCCESSFUL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Samir R Nath
Mirja M Shahjamal

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the management of successful primary schools in Bangladesh. Two types of primary schools were considered – government and non-formal. Only the Brac schools were taken into consideration as non-formal school. Four case studies on four schools, two from each type, were prepared. The schools were selected purposively from among the successful schools identified by the upazila education officers and the regional managers of Brac education programme. It was evident that the schools had their own way of being successful, where the head teachers in the government schools and the programme organisers (POs) in Brac schools had a significant role. The SMC, the community and parents had active participation in school matters. Head teachers/POs personality, honesty and devotion to education were also important. They knew how to make others active and capable. The annual plan, regularity of staff and SMC meetings, and teachers' accountability to SMC were found as significant features of the government schools. Classroom performance of the teachers was excellent. The government schools received extra favour from the upazilas, besides they had their own income sources; no such favour or extra income was present in Brac schools. The government schools enjoyed certain autonomy in financial matters and temporary staff recruitment. Significant attention to the scholarship examinees improved government schools' reputation, however, deprived the majority of the learners of interaction with the good teachers. Slow and first generation learners could not be well cared due to bigger class size and the short duration of periods. Such difficulty was less in Brac schools due to small class size. Some policy recommendations are made based on the findings.

Key words: School management, primary education, successful school, leadership, head teacher, Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

The main function of schools is to teach. Teachers and pupils jointly participate in teaching learning in a classroom environment. However, teaching learning occurs outside classroom as well. Improving the quality of teaching learning is a major concern in providing education. In this regard, classroom teaching was the key area of investigation for many years. During this period, the provision of education was considered as a unit and system management was the prime concern of educators.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the business community in the west first showed their dissatisfaction with the skills of high school graduates. At the same time, the taxpayers and the policy-makers began to pressure individual schools and school systems to reform their policies and practices (Pipho 1999; Farkas *et al* 1997). This fuelled the ministries to make laws holding schools more accountable to the pupils' learning. This resulted in the privatisation of public schools around the world and increased parental choice in admitting their children in school (Chubb and Moe 1990). Moreover, the concept of community participation has arisen as a major concern and the role and responsibilities of the school heads have been redefined (Adu-Duhau 1990). Because of its role in educating the members of the society, schools are expected to position themselves in the centre of contemporary changes in society, the economy, politics and technology. As a result, a diversified role of the schools has emerged – from awareness growing against teen pregnancy to technological literacy (Ballet *et al* 2000; Barnett undated). The challenge is thus how effective the school heads can successfully respond to this new environment.

Reform that took place in several education systems drew attention towards strategic focusing on school functioning, rather than the overall education system. It is argued that the reform measures, which had little emphasis on school intervention, did not achieve the objectives of enhancing quality education (De-Grauwe and Varghese 2000). The necessity to jump from the classroom teaching level to school organisation level was emphasised by some policy planners in the early 1990s (Cheng 1996). Reform of structural system and management style of schools are considered important in this regard. Decentralisation of educational governance at the local level has become the norm in the quality improvement process. As a result, school-based management, shared decision making, and self-managing schools have become common practices among educators and community members (Caldwell and Spinks 1992, 1998). In some cases, this resulted in increased local control over budgets and staffing decisions, and on the other hand, more centralised accountability measures by the government (Caldwell and Spinks 1998, Barnett undated) – a paradox of simultaneous centralisation and decentralisation.

Primary Education in Bangladesh

Children aged 6-10 years are supposed to enrol in primary education in Bangladesh, and a five-year cycle of primary education is compulsory and free by law (Government of Bangladesh, 1990). A kind of pluralism exists in the system with at least eleven types of primary schools in the country (DPE 2001). These may be formal or non-formal, religion based or secular, and Bangla or English medium. Curriculum of these schools also varies with the type. The provision has expanded much during the last decade; however, the quality did not improve with that of access. The net enrolment rate at primary level is about 80% and nearly three quarters of which complete the full cycle (Chowdhury *et al* 2002). This means that over 40% of the children cross their primary schooling age without getting the full course of primary education. On completion, only a small

proportion (below 2%) can achieve all the attainable competencies and nearly a third remain non-literate or semi-literate (Ahmed *et al* 2003; Nath and Chowdhury 2001). Gender, area and school type-wise variation exists in achievement. Over crowded classrooms, lack of discipline and managerial skills and poor teaching learning process are major factors in such poor performance of the pupils (Nath and Chowdhury 2001).

State owned schools are the major provider of primary education in the country. Of the total children enrolled in all types of primary schools, about two-thirds is covered by the government primary schools (Chowdhury *et al* 2002). The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) implements primary education through a directorate. Division, district and *upazila* (sub-district) level education officials are responsible for field level implementation. The *upazila* education office is the lowest level in this line. Each *upazila* office consists of one officer and 6-8 assistant officers. The number of schools in an *upazila* ranges from 150 to 200. Each assistant *upazila* education officer is responsible to supervise 25-30 schools. The responsibility of an officer is to inspect five schools a month and each assistant ten schools. Each school has a managing committee responsible for day-to-day management. The teachers are fully paid by the government, but the managing committee members are not – they provide voluntary service. The total number of schools of this type is 37,709. These schools follow the curriculum of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) of the government.

The non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been supplementing the primary education initiatives of the government through their non-formal primary schools. Over seven percent of the students at primary level are enrolled in these schools, of which about three quarters are in Brac schools (Chowdhury *et al* 2002). These schools are not similar to that of the formal system in the country, however it follows the formal school curriculum of NCTB. Brac schools are one-teacher schools with a classroom and 33 students. A cohort of 33 students enrol in Brac schools in Class I at the beginning of an academic year and completes the whole curriculum of five academic years within a time span of four calendar years. This means that one teacher teaches all the subjects of five academic years to a cohort of 33 students. Brac's own textbooks are used for Classes I to III, however NCTB prepared textbooks are used for Classes IV and V. The teachers are mostly female with at least ten years of schooling, generally taken from the same village. They are provided a foundation training of two weeks and refresher courses once a month. A cadre of programme organisers (PO), each having responsibility of 12 to 14 schools, directly supervises the school activities. There are also area, region and head quarter level officials for implementation of the programme. A parents committee oversees the school activities. Children aged 8-10 years, affiliated with non-educated and economically poorer families are the targets of the Brac schools. A total of 34,000 schools are currently in operation covering 1.1 million children.

Studies on quality of education show that schools vary substantially in the achievement of the students (Nath and Chowdhury 2001, PSPMP 2000). A question may arise why some schools are doing better and others are not, even

when all are under the same umbrella of a certain management. Multiple regression analyses predicting competencies achievement identified a number of factors, which lack how management functions in students learning achievement. Moreover, a school's success is not only the achievement of its learners, the process of such success is also important. Internal and external support system in managing the schools, role and functions of the management bodies, role of the school heads, their accountability and role of the school evaluation system in school improvement are missing in the above mentioned studies.

Education Watch studies show that students of Brac schools come from poorer families than those of other primary schools in the country. Brac school students do not require help from the private tutor as much as the formal school students. However, the students of Brac schools acquired more competencies than those of other schools. On the other hand, government primary schools are the prime means of providing primary education in the country. Success and failure of these schools impacts much on the overall situation of primary education in the country. Thus, research on both types of schools is important in the context of Education for All.

The main objective of this paper is to explore how the primary schools in Bangladesh are being successful. Successfulness of schools was explored in terms of academic and administrative management, school head's management quality, teaching learning environment, community participation, system management, and academic and other performance of the students.

RESEARCH METHOD

Of the eleven types of primary schools, only two were considered for this study – government and Brac non-formal primary schools. However, the concept of school is not the same in both systems. Schools are well defined in the government system, which is traditional and has similarity to other countries. In addition to curriculum and teaching learning provision, a government school comprise of a head teacher, a number of assistant teachers, at least five groups of learners with some infrastructure facilities within a demarked area. On the other hand, in the Brac system, a small group of learners and a teacher with some infrastructure facilities is called a school. The provision of a programme organiser (PO) who is responsible for 12-14 learner groups is an added element here. In order to maintain similarity to some extent, PO-centric education provision of a number of learner groups with similar number of teacher set in the same number of campuses is considered a school. This was necessary because the study was designed broadly based on the concept of school widely used in the formal sector around the world.

To select successful Brac schools we discussed the issue in a monthly meeting of the regional managers. Along with the earlier mentioned criteria of successful schools they applied their own judgement and finally prepared a short list of six schools, three of which had female POs. Two schools were selected from this list – a female PO-centric school in Narail sadar *upazila* under Narail district and a male

PO-centric school in Paba *upazila* under Rajshahi district. Similarly, two successful government schools were selected from two different areas – Narail sadar *upazila* under Narail district and Godagari *upazila* in Rajshahi district. The respective *upazila* education officers (UEO) and their assistants jointly identified 4-5 successful schools in their *upazilas* considering the issues mentioned above. Two of those were selected subjectively – one from each *upazila*. It should be mentioned that the intention was not to select the best schools but the successful schools. For confidentiality, instead of real names, the schools would be called according to the names of the *upazilas*.

Table 1. Techniques used and sources of information				
Techniques	Narail GPS	Godagari GPS	Narail Brac	Paba Brac
In-depth interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head teacher • Teachers • SMC chair • Parents • AUEO • UEO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head teacher • Teachers • Volunteer teachers • SMC chair • SMC members • PTA chair • Students • Parents • AUEO • UEO • Divisional AD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Organiser • Teachers • Team-In-Charge • Regional Manager • Students • Parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Organiser • Teachers • Team-In-Charge • Quality Assurance Specialist • Regional Manager • Students • Parents
Focus group discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMC members 	–	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents committee members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents committee members
Non-participant observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom • Teachers room • Staff meeting • SMC meeting • Mothers rally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom • Teachers room 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom • Refresher training • Parents meeting • POs monthly meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom • Refresher training
Participant observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom 	–	–
Documents review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance register • Students result sheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance register • Students result sheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance register • Students evaluation report • Resource register 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance register • Resource register

Qualitative research techniques were used in this study. The techniques included in-depth interview, focus group discussion, participant and non-participant observations, and review of documents. Table 1 shows the sources and techniques used for collecting information.

Two field researchers, one male and one female, were appointed and trained adequately for three weeks to do the fieldwork. They gained both theoretical and practical knowledge through the training. The field researchers spent ten weeks in the school areas and collected necessary data. Data were collected in six major areas under a broad analytical framework, which was jointly developed by the ANTRIEP member institutions (see Figure 1 in page 2). The areas are school profile, school management structure and organisation, role of the head teacher, management of specific process, relations with the administration, and selected management devices. Each area was divided into a number of sub-areas. For validity purpose, crosschecking of information and triangulation was done. The field researchers firstly took notes in rough copies and then transformed these notes into fresh copies. They prepared the first Bangla version of the cases. The research team visited the schools several times and also collected some data on subsequent visits. Three review meetings were held during the fieldwork where the key researchers and the field researchers participated. Besides, the researchers had continuous telephonic communication with the field researchers. The fieldwork was done from the fourth week of August to the first week of November 2003. After preparing the cases the schools were revisited with the drafts for verification in April 2004.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The Government Schools

School Profile: The government schools were established in two different periods – the Narail school in 1947 and the Godagari school in 1905. The Narail school is three kilometres and Godagari school is 25 kilometres away from the respective *upazila* towns. The respective district education office and the *upazila* resource centre are adjacent to the Narail school, however far away from the Godagari school. Both the schools were established under a community initiative, however, they were nationalised in 1973.

Each school has its own catchment area determined by the respective *upazila* education office. The catchment area of Godagari school is bigger than that of the Narail school. The catchment area of Narail school is comprised of four villages and it is eight *paras* for Godagari school. The number of eligible children for primary education (6-10 years) is 518 in the catchment area of Godagari school and 311 in that of Narail school. The majority of the residents in both the areas are poor – the main source of income of the population is agriculture. There are also a few rich people in both the areas.

Both the schools were established in their own lands donated by the community. Each has a pond in the school compound. The Narail school has a fruit garden and a playground too. Each school has 2-3 structures with a sufficient number of classrooms and a teachers' common room. The schools are comprised of tube-wells, toilets and electricity facilities. Both the schools are single shift school –

daily school hour is from 9.30 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. with half an hour lunch break at noon. Both are open for five and a half days in a week.

A relatively favourable teaching learning condition is present in the Narail school. The Narail school has 431 students with ten teachers and the Godagari school has 320 students with six teachers. Thus, the number of students per teacher is higher in the Godagari school than the Narail school (53:1 vs. 43:1). The proportion of girls is 49.9% in Narail and 46.3% in Godagari school. The Narail school has nine learner groups and Godagari has six. Students from outside the catchment areas are also enrolled in both the schools. All the eligible students in the catchment area of the Narail school are enrolled in this school, which is not the case for Godagari. Mostly all the students in the Godagari school are Muslims, but there are 44% non-Muslim students in the Narail school. The majority of the parents in both the schools have no schooling. Attendance rate of the students is higher in Godagari than Narail (81% vs. 75%), however both are much higher than the national average. On the other hand, the promotion rate of the students is 88% in Narail and 70% in Godagari School. Five to six percent of the students drop out every year. The Godagari school has 29 students from an ethnic minority group. Two disabled students read in the Narail school.

Grade	Narail school		Godagari school	
	Number of sections	Number of learners	Number of sections	Number of learners
Pre-primary	1	60	-	-
I	2	89	1	88
II	1	62	1	55
III	1	59	1	43
IV	2	94	2	73
V	2	67	1	61
Total	9	431	6	320

Including the head teachers, the Narail school has ten and the Godagari school has six full time permanent teachers. One of the teachers in Godagari school is on deputation. The number of female teachers is seven in Narail and only one in Godagari. In addition, the Godagari school has recruited 12 volunteer teachers and the Narail school has appointed a cleaner cum bearer.

General educational qualifications of the permanent teachers vary from secondary school completion to Masters degree. However, all of them have completed a Certificate-in-Education (C-in-Ed) course – the minimum requirement for primary teaching. Seven teachers of the Narail school and two in the Godagari school

received subject based training in English and mathematics. Three teachers of the Narail school have special training on scouting and another is trained in library operation. The teachers also received a number of other trainings and they are involved in other activities beyond the curriculum. Average duration of service in present school is eight years (with a range from six months to 15 years) for the teachers in Narail school, while all the teachers in Godagari school joined the school during the preceding year. Residences of about half of the teachers in both the schools are outside the school catchment areas. Most of the volunteer teachers of Godagari school are below 25 years of age. All of them completed at least higher secondary education (HSC) and only one is female. None of them have received any training in teaching. All are permanent residents of the school catchment area.

The Narail school has a library with 25,500 books. The Godagari school has no library, however, have some unused books. Both the schools are actively involved in Cubing (junior scouting). However, the Cub team is much stronger in Narail. On the other hand, Godagari has a strong cultural troop.

School Management Structure and Organisation: According to the government rule, day-to-day management of the schools is the responsibility of the head teachers. The heads along with their staff (i.e., the teachers) are collectively responsible for both pedagogical and administrative management of the schools.

School Managing Committees (SMC) are active in both the schools. SMCs are comprised of people with various backgrounds; they are educators, social workers and businesspersons. For strategic reason, two local leaders of the two large political parties are SMC members in Godagari school. Although not all, the chair and 5-6 members are active in the committees. The SMC chairs in both the schools have long involvement with the committees. The Godagari school SMC chair has been involved with the committee for the last eight years. On the other hand, an uncle of the present SMC chair held the post for the last two terms in Narail, while the present chair was a member. However, both the chairs are undoubtedly active and sincere in school matters and they have special feelings for the schools. They also use their personal influence for the benefit of the schools. The residences of both the SMC chairs are close to the school compound.

The committees meet regularly once a month and the attendance rate is higher in Narail than Godagari. Due to the inactivity of some SMC members, 5-6 community people were involved with the activities of the managing committee in Godagari. The Rajshahi divisional assistant director of primary education is very active in the management of the school. A few years ago, with the intention to build a good school in the *upazila*, he started community mobilisation in the school catchment area. He succeeded because he was born and brought up in the community and is a former student of the school. The *upazila* education office is also linked with the process. No such involvement is present in Narail school. In the meetings, the SMC members discuss various issues beyond learners' absenteeism. Head teachers detailed reporting in the meetings clearly shows their

accountability to SMC. Such reports include students' absenteeism and performance in examinations, financial condition of the school, overall teaching learning situation, and general development of the school. The members actively participate in discussions. Box 1 provides a case of a SMC meeting in Narail school.

Box 1. A SMC meeting in Narail government school

Eight members are present in the meeting – only four came on time. The meeting started about 30 minutes later. The vice chair has presided over the meeting. The chair is absent because of his involvement with the election of the local chamber of commerce, where he has been elected as chair of the forum. The agenda for the meeting included pupils' attendance, their performance in the second semester exam, financial condition, and the overall environment of the school. The head teacher made a presentation on the former two issues and the others took part in the discussion. The members asked questions to the head teacher in order to identify the reasons behind failure of some students in the examination and the absenteeism of some other students. They also shared their experiences and observations during occasional school visits. The meeting has decided on the following actions:

- A meeting will be held with the parents of failed students after the *Puja* vacation;
- Pupils' home visits by the teachers and the SMC members will be increased;
- School visits by the SMC members will be increased; and
- Tk. 400 will be provided collectively to the school funds to pay the electricity bill on time.

The members also saw the need for a boundary wall surrounding the school area, but could not find a solution. However, they agreed to request the people living nearby the school to cooperate with them in protecting the playground from cattle.

It was observed that the SMC members are very serious in discussion and finding possible solutions. They were found to be caring and responsive to the school's demands and needs. The members also criticised the drawbacks. The head teacher is accountable to the SMC.

There is no formal relationship between the schools and the communities or the parents. There is a provision of parent teacher association (PTA), however it is not active in any school. In Godagari, only the chair of the PTA is active with the managing team. On the other hand, there is no such committee in Narail school. However, three mothers' rallies were arranged during the preceding year in Narail to motivate the mothers on education. There is no official or unofficial link between the school and the local government authority (here the Union *Parishad*). However, one Union *Parishad* member is a member of the SMC of the Godagari school.

The communities have significant material or financial contribution for specific school activities in both schools. The activities include annual sports, fencing school boundaries and general development of the school. On request from the schools the community came forward to donate money to the Narail school and some construction materials to the Godagari school. The school management committees and the head teachers play very active role in making such events a success.

There is no provision of regular income to the government primary schools in Bangladesh. The only source of income for the schools is the subscription received from the education department of the government. But it is unlikely that both the study schools have their own sources of income. The Narail school has three sources of regular income viz., leasing out of some land of the school, fish culture in the pond and selling fruits from the school garden. On the other hand, the Godagari school has started a stationary shop and plans to start a fish culture and establish a poultry farm. The management of the Godagari school is exploring other sources of income as well. In addition, both the schools collect donations from the community. Two SMC members are keeping the financial accounts in the two schools.

Head Teacher's Roles and Responsibilities: Both the head teachers are male and over 50 years of age. They have extensive experience in teaching and as head teacher (30 and 35 years respectively). One of them completed higher secondary education and the other has received a BA degree. Both have done C-in-Ed course and a good number of short training courses including educational administration and management. Some of this training is not directly linked with education. The head teacher of the Narail school has been in this school for the last eight years and the head of the Godagari school joined during the fieldwork of this study. Godagari school's head teacher lives in the school compound, whereas the other lives outside the school catchment area. Both are strongly involved with the teachers association.

Before joining the present schools both the head teachers knew that they were going to take on responsibility for improving the schools. Moreover, they were already famous for their work. The head teacher of the Narail school was granted a best teacher award twice before joining to this school. The head teacher of the Godagari school had previously built a school from one of very poor condition to a good one. Such reputation helped them in rapport building with the parents and the communities in their present schools.

Before 1995, the Narail school was not as good as it was found to be during fieldwork. The journey in improvements started in 1995 after the hiring of the present head teacher. Upon joining, the head teacher took massive initiative to make it a good school. First he met all the household heads in the catchment area, the local elite and the business community. He had a number of motivational meetings with the teachers and he also discussed his wishes with the *upazila* education officials. He was able to convince everyone that it was possible to

develop the school if collective measures were taken. The community responded positively and the stakeholders worked together under the leadership of the head teacher.

On the other hand, upon joining the head teacher of the Godagari school received a community that was already motivated towards school development. The divisional Assistant Director made the following comment about the change of the head teacher: "The earlier head teacher was also good, but was incapable of taking decisions independently, which is not the case for this head teacher. This head teacher has implemented a larger share of my vision during these months."

Both the head teachers are very good at teaching, and this is easier for them to demonstrate good teaching practices to other teachers. They are friendly, responsive, honest and liked by the stakeholders i.e., students, parents and teachers. The heads see the value in hearing from others, especially the staff and the community. They regularly observe the classes of other teachers and provide feedback. They distribute classes effectively considering capacity, expertise and the willingness of the teachers. Due to their reputation and work in the schools they are well accepted by the community and the parents. The heads are very happy with their teaching career. Some comments about the head teacher of Narail school are provided in Box 2.

Box 2. Some comments about the head teacher of Narail government school

It reduced my workload a lot since we have got him as head teacher, he is very sincere, a good man and honest. – The SMC Chair

Our head teacher is cream. – A member of SMC

As the head teacher is excellent, the school is doing very well. – Respective AUEO

Because of this particular head teacher our school is the best one in the district. He made it the best from its mediocre position. – Teachers in FGD

I was in a nearby school, however took a transfer to this school particularly to learn from this head teacher. – One Assistant Teacher

The head teachers also take classes, however, the number of classes conducted by the heads is not equal. The head of the Narail school has to take 3-4 classes a day and the head of the Godagari school has to take 7-8 classes daily. The Narail head teacher has to spend 30% of his official time at teaching, but for the Godagari head it is nearly 100%. Office hours also differ: the head teacher of the Narail school is suppose to complete his work during official school hours, but the head of Godagari keeps very long working hours because of an inadequate number of permanent teacher and the start of coaching classes beyond school hours. Box 3 provides the opinions of Godagari school head teacher about his school.

Box 3. Opinion of the head teacher of Godagari government school about the factors responsible for school improvement

- *The students are fond of education. The parents are motivated too. Morning and evening classes would have not been started without their cooperation.*
- *The school has a long history of about a century. Once it was the only school in the community. People want to reanimate their heritage. Their consciousness is the biggest hope.*
- *All the teachers are very much sincere in their duty to school improvement. With some exceptions all of them teach well.*
- *More importantly, the higher education authorities (both upazila and district levels) want to make it a quality school. The school is in their good book.*

A very good relationship between the head and other teachers is found in both the schools. Weekly staff meetings (held on every Thursday, after official school hour) play a very important role in teacher management in Narail school. No such meeting is present in Godagari, but the head has informal discussions with his staff continuously. The head teacher of Narail school opined that “School is a special community, it’s a team – teamwork is important for its improvement. I praise the teachers for their good works and try to provide remedies for their mistakes.” Both the heads have informal communication with the higher officials such as UEOs and the AUEOs. The divisional AD, who has used his power and authority for the benefit of the school, is an added advantage in Godagari.

Management of Specific Processes: Both the schools follow the national curriculum and no book published outside the NCTB is used as text material. There is a library in the Narail school, which the teachers and the learners use regularly. There is no such arrangement in Godagari school.

Most of the teachers in both the schools are very good at teaching. It is known that the good teachers in the *upazilas* were primarily brought here in these schools with an intention to make the schools good. This means that it is not the schools themselves that have improved the calibre of the teachers. At the same time the current environment of these schools is so teaching learning friendly that there is the potential for any staff members to become a good teacher. This environment has been developed due to the strong leadership of the head teachers and other favourable conditions. The teachers, in general, try to take care of the learners in the classrooms. The presentation of lessons, example setting, the use of aids and involving the learners in the process are of good quality in Narail school, although simply present in Godagari. The classes are enjoyable to the students. The teachers are also careful about the weaker students and the girls. Neither schools uses lesson plans. One important difference between the schools is homework: no homework is given in Narail, but it is in Godagari. Both the teachers and the students are

disciplined in Narail school, which is not the case for the students of Godagari. However, the situation is improving. Surprisingly, none was found thinking in this line, moreover they (students, parents, SMC members, upazila officials and the community in general) all are happy to see the arrangements.

The teachers of both the schools try hard to ensure that all students are learning, but it is difficult for two reasons. Firstly, due to big class sizes the teachers are unable to cover all the material with every student within a period of 40-45 minutes. Secondly, in order to do the syllabus justice, home teaching is required, but a good number of students are unable to do this because of non-literate parents and their inability to keep a private tutor. In order to overcome this, the Godagari school management team arranged special tutoring in the mornings and evenings, where the students of each grade are divided into 2-3 subgroups and a teacher is responsible for teaching a small group of learners for 3-4 hours. The volunteer teachers, the head teacher and a former head teacher of the Godagari school take on these classes. The head teacher and other responsible persons monitor the activities, and continuously provide feedback to the volunteer teachers. Although there is no such initiative in Narail, two teachers voluntarily teach two groups of students at their home after school hours. It can be noted that because of a larger student teacher ratio the difficulty of this is greater in Godagari than it is in Narail. Actually, considering the number of students and the duration of periods, both the schools need a higher number of regular staff.

In order to smooth over the process of teaching learning, the role of volunteer teachers in Godagari is significant. They were not paid for their contribution initially, however, a token remuneration has been provided since January 2004. Each of these volunteer teachers is responsible for teaching a small group of learners similar to that of the non-formal schools of Brac. Each volunteer teacher has 20-25 learners to teach. The role of these teachers is to help the students learn lessons that could not be taught during official school hours and the students also do their homework during these classes. In Narail, two members of the SMC occasionally take classes in absence of regular teachers, a task that the volunteer teachers in Godagari are able to tackle.

It was interesting to observe that both the schools have special arrangements for teaching the students who has been selected to appear in scholarship examinations at the end of grade V. This is because students' performance in these examinations is one of the two achievement indicators for school evaluations by the AUEOs, the other indicator being promotion rates in grades III to V. Scholarship examinees are identified from the learners of grade V through a rigorous assessment at the beginning of the academic year and separated from other students for special coaching. The best teachers in each school are involved in teaching these learners. In the Godagari school, along with general classes there are two separate coaching classes arranged for the scholarship examinees, one in the morning and the other in the evening. On the other hand, the Narail school scholarship examinees are separated at the beginning of the academic year and daylong coaching classes are arranged throughout the whole year. The head teacher and two other top teachers

are assigned to these learners in Narail and a former head teacher has been assigned to the task in Godagari. Such arrangements help a few students do better in scholarship examinations and contribute to increasing the schools reputation, while at the same time other students are deprived of quality education.

Some parents are active in keeping in touch with the schools. They often come to school and meet the head teachers or the respective class teachers. The teachers welcome the parents, and in general the parents discuss examination results, and the strengths and weaknesses of their children. Parents have found that this type of one-to-one correspondence is fruitful for their understanding about their children's progress. Such meetings are limited to the few parents who are willing to meet; a large portion of the parents has not made these attempts to meet the teachers. The schools have no plan to make it compulsory for all parents.

Relations with Higher Authorities: For government schools, higher authorities refer to the *upazila*, district and central level administration. The schools are directly supervised by the *upazila* education offices and both the schools are in good standing with the respective *upazila* education offices. The UEOs and the AUEOs provide more visits to these schools than others. It is frustrating to observe that the visits of the AUEOs are mostly administrative, not pedagogical, and that the visiting authorities do not really interact with the teachers or the students. The SMC and the head teacher communicate with the *upazila* office regarding school matters regularly. Both the schools have also received favour from the UEO in various occasions, especially in resource allocation. The head teachers and the school managing committees have both formal and informal links with the authority. The reason behind this strong relationship could be the limited number of good schools in the *upazilas*, and the resulting prestige these schools carry. Such a relationship probably helps the reputed head teachers of the study schools be autonomous to some extent. Recruiting a bearer cum cleaner in Narail, recruiting volunteer teachers in Godagari and initiating financial activities in both the schools are some of the examples where the schools took decisions independently. Nonetheless, the respective *upazila* education authorities know all about these activities.

The district education office is located on a piece of land owned by the Narail school and the *upazila* resource centre (URC) is on the top floor of the school building. This was possible because of a desire by the chair of the SMC and his colleagues, as well as presence of community support. The community wanted, lobbied for and succeed in bringing the district education office and URC closer to them. These facilities have an indirect affect on the school – the teachers always keep them alert to keep everything all right. On the other hand, implementation of the divisional assistant director's (AD) vision to build at least one high quality school in each *upazila* started with the Godagari school. Such an external wish helped to attach the respective UEO and the AUEO with this school. They provide additional visits to this school and allocate greater resources (both human and

financial). The AD is on the frontline of community mobilisation, and his continuous monitoring is an additional support to the school's improvement.

Students' Performance: There is no provision of standardised achievement testing at the primary level, so it is not possible to compare the learning achievements of the students of these schools with those of others. The performance of the students is good in both school finals and primary scholarship examinations. In the school final examinations, the average pass rate is about 88% in Narail and 70% in Godagari. The Narail school has a glorious performance in the scholarship examinations – 2-3 students get scholarships each year. During the last five years, all examinees passed the scholarship examinations with high scores. Out of 13 examinees, six students received scholarships last year, of whom three were in the talent pool. On the other hand, the scholarship scores of the pupils of Godagari school are not high like those of Narail. The students of Godagari have been known to receive scholarships, but not on a regular basis.

The schools are also reputed in their cultural performances and sports. Both schools received recognition in the district level cultural competition for several years. The Cub team of Narail is reputed in the district for its good performance.

The Brac Schools

School Profile: Both the Brac schools are located outside the *upazila* towns. The Narail team office¹ is three kilometres away from the *upazila* town while the Paba team office is about 15 kilometres away from the *upazila* town. This being said the distance between the team and the respective regional office is less in Paba than in Narail and road communication from team office to regional office is also better in Paba. There are five PO centric schools in Paba and only two in Narail containing 85 and 25 learning centres respectively.

This study has concentrated on the schools under the supervision of two programme organisers from above two teams located in rural villages. There are 13 learning centres spread across seven villages in Narail and 12 learning centres in nine villages in Paba. Average distance of the learning centres from the respective team offices is not equal – 11 kilometres in Narail and nine kilometres in Paba. The majority of the villagers are poor with a livelihood based on agriculture, although a few rich people also live in the villages. The learning centres are situated in the part of the villages where non-schooled children are greater in number.

Of the 13 learner groups in Narail, two are in grade V, seven in grade IV and four in grade I. In Paba, of the 12 learner groups, two are in grade V, six in grade IV, three in grade III and one in grade I. There is no learner group of grades II and III in Narail and none of grade III in Paba (Table 3). The number of students in the

¹ Cluster of schools headed by a Team-in-Charge. Each team has a number of POs.

learning centres of Narail is 416 and 386 in Paba. The proportion of girls is higher in Narail than in Paba (65% vs. 59%). About 34% of the students of Narail are non-Muslims, a figure of only one percent in Paba. The average age of the students is similar to that of the formal schools in the areas. The majority of the parents have no schooling and are illiterate. In terms of economic status, the families can be categorized as lower than the average; however, a few are from the better off families. No mentionable difference can be noticed between the schools.

Table 3. Number of centres and learners by grade in Brac schools, 2003

Grade	Narail school		Paba school	
	Number of centres	Number of learners	Number of centres	Number of learners
I	4	132	1	33
II	-	-	3	99
III	-	-	-	-
IV	7	226	6	190
V	2	58	2	64
Total	13	416	12	386

The number of teachers is equal to the number of learner groups in both the schools – 13 in Narail and 12 in Paba. Thus, the teacher student ratio is essentially equal in both the schools – around 32 students per teacher. The attendance rate of the students is much higher in both the schools than the national average at primary level (95-97%) and dropout rates are negligible. There is no provision for repetition in the Brac school system. Due to the absence of any national examinations it is not possible to compare the performance of the learners of these schools with those of other schools in the community.

All the teachers are female; the Narail PO is also female, while the Paba PO is male. Only the POs are full time professional staff and the teachers are paraprofessional. The teachers of the Paba school are comparatively younger than those of the Narail school (26 years vs. 30.5 years). Four teachers in the Narail school and none in Paba are non-Muslim. On average, the teachers have 10.4 years of schooling. Two teachers of the Paba school and four of Narail are unmarried. On average, the Narail school teachers have six years of teaching experience; this is five years for Paba school. All the teachers have received basic training at the beginning of their job and some have received subject-based training as well. Ten teachers in Narail and eight in Paba live in the villages where their learning centres are situated, other teachers live in the neighbouring villages.

The age of both the programme organisers is similar – about 32 years. They are married. One joined Brac in 1995 and the other in 1996. The Narail PO is a BA

graduate while the Paba PO completed higher secondary schooling (HSC). Both have received basic teacher training as well as some other training on management and supervision, monitoring and evaluation, community mobilisation, and survey methods. Both are equipped with subject based training. The Narail PO is a master trainer for mathematics and Bangla and she is expecting to become a core trainer for Bangla in the near future. On the other hand, the Paba PO is neither a master trainer nor a core trainer. None of them live in the villages where the learning centres are located. The average distance between the PO's residence and the learning centres is 11 kilometres in Narail and nine kilometres in Paba. Both the POs use bicycles to travel to the learning centres.

Each of the learning centres is a single roomed made of tin, bamboo, mud or thrash. The houses are rented and established among other habitants. There is no playground in front of any of the centres. Two thirds of the schoolrooms are very good with enough windows to allow for natural light and air. Curious people sometimes pry into the classrooms through the windows, which is bothersome for the teachers and the students. The schools do not have their own toilet and drinking water facilities, however through an agreement with the community the teachers and the students can use neighbours facilities. Such arrangements have been made for each of the centres.

The learning centres of both the schools are homogeneous with respect to their material condition – there is no bench, chair or table in the classrooms, mats covered the floors and the students take their seats on the mat in a U-shape. A tool, trunk, blackboard, some pictures, and a map of Bangladesh are common items in each learning centre. Some of the classrooms are decorated with the artwork of the students and teachers. Despite minimal materials the schoolrooms are well decorated. With the exception of the artwork and some hand made teaching aids, all the materials are supplied by Brac central office.

The centre start time varies from one to another. Most of the centres start between 8 a.m. and 9.30 a.m. A small number of the centres under both the schools start in the afternoon. Irrespective of the school, the duration of class time is three and a half hours for the first two grades and four hours for grades III to V.

School Management Structure and Organization: Unlike the formal schools, there is no school managing committee for Brac non-formal primary schools; however, a seven-member parents committee exists for each of the learning centres. Only the parents of the learners of a particular centre are eligible to become members of the committee for that centre. This means that there are 12 such committees for the Paba school and 13 for Narail. In other words, 84 parents are involved with the committees of Paba and 91 parents with those of Narail. Most of them are the mothers of the learners.

There is no regular formal meeting of these committees. However, each member visits the respective centre once a week. This task is not difficult seeing as they

live within short distance from the centres. These parents are either illiterates or have little education, thus, it is not possible for them to observe the pedagogical aspects of the centres. Instead, they have three things to monitor – that the teacher starts the centre on time, that the teacher teaches and the students follow the instructions in a disciplined manner, and that the centre does not close before the right time. The parents ask the teacher to explain any deviation that they observe, and the parents’ observations are discussed in the monthly parents teacher meeting.

It is the responsibility of the parents committees to organise the parents’ teacher meeting once a month separately for each centre. All the parents of the learners are invited to attend the meeting. The POs keep them present in all these meetings. Although all the parents are invited to attend, the attendance registers show that the average attendance varies from 25 to 30. Through observations of these meetings it was understood that these are arranged to keep the parents in touch with the centres. The issues discussed are common for all the centres; these include learners’ attendance, learning environment in the centre including teaching, and learning environment at home. One interesting observation is that one or two social and public health issues are discussed in each meeting. Generally the POs are the main discussants, however the teacher and some parents also take part in discussion.

Role of Programme Organiser: According to the system, the POs do not stay at the premises of the learning centres all the time. Each teacher and her learner group is the strength of the centre, and thus the teachers play a key role in the day-to-day functioning of the learning centres. The POs visit each learning centre at least once a week.

The programme organiser of the Narail school was brought to the team because of her good work in other teams. The respective team-in-charge and the regional manager stated that the quality of education of the centres in Narail had been deteriorating day by day and the regional manager was searching for a good PO. Thus, the current PO was transferred to Narail over a year ago. On the other hand, no such story was found about the PO in Paba, who has been working with the team for last seven years.

The main responsibility of the POs is to ensure smooth operation of the schools. In order to do so, both perform the following activities.

- Prepare their teachers through a monthly refresher course;
- Oversee the classroom activities and provide feedback to the teachers;
- Prepare school evaluation reports fortnightly and send them to higher authorities;
- Visit the homes of the students;
- Participate in the monthly parents teacher meeting; and
- Participate in weekly staff meetings in the team office.

The monthly refresher training plays a very important role in the preparation of the teachers in both the schools. Both the POs are skilled in conducting this training.

They have good knowledge of textbook contents and appropriate ways to teach them. Moreover, the ability of the Narail PO in identifying some of the mistakes and gaps in the textbooks is impressive. The teachers have many things to learn from the POs, who as good teachers and have a strong command over the training classes and the teachers. They are able to prepare teaching aids and lesson plans. The POs often help the teachers in preparing lesson plans.

Both the POs regularly visit the learning centres and observe classroom activities, in general, through non-participant observation. Sometimes they take classes to help the teachers. They never show their anger to the teachers, even if they find teachers doing something wrong in the classrooms. The Narail PO spent a lot of her time to observing classroom activities during her initial at the school. She spent hours and hours assessing the existing capacity of the teachers, which helped her understanding the potential strengths and weaknesses of the teachers. The PO provided her feedback accordingly. This also helped her in fixing strategies for monthly refreshers training. Otherwise, the Paba PO has been working with this team for the last seven years and did the same type of observation at the beginning of his work with the team. The POs argued that the teachers' wages are too low, which makes it hard for them to motivate the teachers to work hard. In order to provide motivation, the POs give the teachers oral praise for their work. A good relationship between the teachers and the POs, as well as mutual respect, is another important factor.

Although the teachers are mainly responsible for home visit of the students, both the POs also participate in this activity. Their home visits motivate the parents significantly in sending their children to school. This helps the POs to get involved with the community, and both POs are very much liked by the students, parents and the community at large. They recognise all the students and their parents and know the names of many students. They never forget the parents teacher meetings and through these they are able to communicate Brac policies to the parents and also get feedback from them. By improving the relationship through home visits and parents meetings, the POs are able to resolve social problems related to the schools much easier.

The learning centres are far away from the offices of the POs, thus, they are to travel a long distance daily. Difficulty arises especially during the summer and rainy seasons. They sometimes express their dissatisfaction with slow promotion in their profession. On the other hand, both of them are committed to their job and are very much aware that they are working to create education facilities for a poor community where most of the pupils are first generation learners. They also know that it would not be possible to teach these poor learners without continuous hard work by both the teachers and them. The respective team-in-charges and the regional managers also recognise the excellent contribution of the POs. According to them the POs are sincere, hard working, committed and punctual.

Apart from discussing the issues of attendance and performance of the learners in the parents meeting, the POs also discuss issues related to life in the community,

including cleanliness, general health care and hygiene, nutrition, environment, early marriage, dowry, rights, etc. As the PO in Narail is a female, the adolescent girls in the community (former students of Brac schools or any other girl) often visit her to talk about things like puberty and early marriage. She is accepted by them and the community people call her *Didi* (sister). The Paba PO is also referred to *Bhai* (brother).

Management of Specific Processes: The national curriculum prepared by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is followed in both the schools. Brac prepared textbooks are used for the first three grades and NCTB prepared textbooks are used for remaining two. In addition, a number of supplementary reading materials made by Brac are given to the learners of each grade.

The teachers and the students are, in general, sincere in attending their classes on time. Although a few teachers and some students come to the centres 5-6 minutes later than the actual start time. Usually the centres start with physical exercise and recitation of the national anthem. The classrooms are neat and clean. The pupils living closer to the centres come earlier than others and assume the responsibility of cleaning the classrooms and surrounding areas everyday.

The teachers start each period by assessing what was taught in the previous day. A lecture method is primarily used to teach the students, however, group work, peer work, question answer, demonstration, etc. are often used as needed. Most of the teachers are good in teaching and were prepared through continuous training by the POs. The teachers prepare lesson plans everyday and use teaching aids. Classroom teaching is mostly pupil centric and the teachers are able to reach each of the learners. This is primarily because of small class size and secondly due to the system itself. The teachers are very careful in ensuring participation of all the students in every event in the class activities. If the teachers are not able to teach everyone equally, they often stay in the centre for some additional time to provide extra care to the weaker students. The teachers are expected to do so especially for the pupils of grades IV and V. Homework is given regularly, especially for mathematics and handwriting. Considering parents educational status there is no new work is provided for home learning. Pupils are only asked to redo work at home that they have already done in the classroom.

In order to repeat the lessons that are taught in the usual class time and do the homework, the pupils are accustomed to getting together for peer group learning after school hours. A small group of five to six learners living closer to each other get together at a convenient place. The respective teacher often visits them and provides help as needed. Weaker students can learn from the good students in these sessions. These sessions are popularly known as a study circle.

There is no provision of mid-term or final examinations in any of these schools. The teachers continuously assess the students while they teach. Moreover, the POs do some random assessment in order to understand the overall quality of teaching and learning.

Box 4. A science class in a Brac school

In a science class of grade V the teacher is teaching about plants. She has started the class by asking the students some general questions relevant to the topic. The students replied spontaneously – the boys are more responsive than the girls. However, the teacher noticed this and invited some girls to respond to her questions. She also showed various types of real plants to the students, although none of these plants were new to them. Then the teacher asked the students to open their textbook and read out the chapter one by one. She often stopped the students to discuss the issue. In this case, she also tried to involve the students of both sexes equally. After that activity was complete, the teacher divided the learners into five groups and asked them to read from the textbook. At this stage the field researcher asked the teacher about the grouping system. The teacher said, “I am trying to distribute both strong and weaker students in each group and also to ensure a proportionate share of boys and girls in the groups.” It was observed that the strong students did help the slower learners. The teacher moved from one group to another and helped them to understand the topic. The students identified some difficult words and the teacher helped them understand the words. Later the teacher asked questions to the students to assess whether or not they understood and have learned about the plant. Some students could not reply correctly. The teacher helped them to understand by discussing the topic again. The teacher advised the learners to read this chapter again at home and told them she would ask these questions again the next day. The field researcher observed that majority of the students have learned the lesson. The period lasted one hour and five minutes.

Day to day management of the learning centres falls upon the teachers, while the POs have a supervisory role. However, the teachers and the PO are collectively responsible for school management. As already mentioned, the monthly refresher training, weekly centre visits by the POs, and the provision of feedback to the teachers is the main factors in good quality of the schools.

The teachers report to the POs and the POs to the team-in-charges. There is no regular teacher meeting. However, all teachers dealing with the learners of a certain grade meet together once a month for refresher training. Thus, the teachers under various POs can meet during monthly training. The refresher training courses are very important in the Brac school system. The teachers prepare for the following month through these trainings. Strengths and weaknesses gathered through the POs month long observation of the classroom teaching is discussed in the refresher training and used for further development of the teachers.

Community participation is a necessary part of Brac school operation. It is difficult to run Brac schools without continuous support from the communities. The parents and others in the communities actively participate in school activities. The learning centres are situated in rented houses – without support from the communities it was not possible for Brac to rent these houses. In some cases, by request from Brac

the people have built new houses and rented them to Brac in order to establish learning centres. The parents committees carefully oversee the activities of the teachers, especially their timely presence in the centres and the use of time effectively. The learning centres receive toilet and drinking water facilities from nearby houses. The POs and teachers have a good relationship with the parents. The teachers are recruited from the villages, so the community knows them beforehand. The POs also know many of the students and parents personally. The parents sometimes visit the centres to talk with the teachers or the POs. An example of one such visit is given in Box 5.

Box 5. A mother's visit to a Brac school

A mother came to visit a centre, where her daughter is a student. On seeing the mother, the teacher greeted her first. Their conversation was as follows:

Teacher: "Hi aunt! As-salamu-alikum. How are you doing?"

Mother: (with joy) "Wa-likum-assalam, I am fine. What about you? My daughter did not attend the afternoon group learning yesterday. Because she had to help me with household work."

Teacher: "That's all right! I would take care of her."

Mother: "Thank you very much for your kindness."

Teacher: "But remember, don't allow her to miss it again. Please, be careful about not disturbing her schooling. Your daughter has a good brain. She will do better in future."

Mother: "Your good wish will help her a lot."

The mother and the teacher talked about various social issues for about two to three minutes and as the mother left the school she said "good bye" to the teacher. The teacher requested the mother to come again.

Relations with Administration: Except for a few management decisions at the grassroots level major decisions regarding management, administration, pedagogy and finance of the schools come from a higher level. Thus, there is little or no autonomy regarding these issues at the PO or the centre level. The POs and the teachers can only take measures regarding class time, class routine, etc. Neither the POs nor the teachers are autonomous in financial matters. The POs can sanction leave of the teachers and both the POs are independent in taking decision about the supervision time of the centres, monthly refresher training, parents meeting, etc.

The weekly staff meeting is an activity at the team level in which all the POs under a team participate. The objective of this meeting is to review the activities of the week and plan for the week ahead. It is not a problem for the POs to discuss any issue with the respective team-in-charge, as they all share the same office. The POs

prepare bi-weekly status report on their schools for their team-in-charges. This report is also send to the respective regional managers.

At the regional level, the regional managers (RMs) are responsible for the administrative duties and the quality assurance specialists are responsible for the pedagogical aspects. Both of them visit the schools. The monthly meeting of the RMs is held in Dhaka where they review the existing activities and plan for the future at the national level. The regional managers enjoy some autonomy regarding decisions at the team and school levels. They can appoint teachers and transfer POs within the region. The team-in-charges enjoy autonomy regarding team activities. Unlike to the government schools, none of the team-in-charges, regional managers or the quality assurance specialists pays special attention to the study schools.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident from the above findings that the schools, whether government or Brac operated, have their own method of being successful. The start-up of the two government schools differ from one another – one has the active leadership of a new head teacher and the other is under the initiative of a divisional assistant director of the primary education department. However, they have two common features – firstly, both the schools started with community mobilisation, and secondly, two experienced head teachers were involved in the initiatives from the beginning. On the other hand, the Brac schools are operated through a structured system where rigorous monitoring of the central management exists. Both Brac schools simultaneously prepared the teachers and engaged the parents in school activities.

The role of the head teachers is very important in the improvement of government schools. On the other hand, it is the teachers and the programme organisers who jointly play key roles in Brac school development. However, in both the systems, the parents and the community participated actively in the improvement process of the schools. It was possible for the particular head teachers and the programme organisers to play such a role because of their personality, honesty and devotion to education. They are good teachers and care for the education of others. They know how to make others active and capable. Although, at the beginning, good teachers were brought to the government schools, during the last few years a culture of creating good teachers has begun in one school and a positive sign of such an atmosphere can also be seen in the other school. Otherwise, in both the Brac schools, the programme organisers had to spend month after month preparing the teachers. There is no provision for transferring the teachers from one school to another in Brac system. One government school head teacher's over night staying in the school premises is a significant event in the school development process.

Classroom performance of the teachers is excellent in all four successful schools under study. Teaching is mostly pupil centric and the teachers use teaching aids as and when necessary. The teachers take care of the pupils as much as possible in the

classroom and they are also aware that a good proportion of their pupils are first generation learners who need special care and attention. However, because of a higher student teacher ratio, it is more difficult to do this in the government schools than it is in the Brac schools. The schools have initiated teaching beyond official school hours, which is helpful for the slow learners and those having no one to oversee their education at home. In Brac schools, the students meet in study circle in the afternoon or the evening, and morning and evening classes have been arranged in one of the government schools. The provision of volunteer teachers in one government school and SMC members taking classes in another can be considered as good practice.

The Brac schools are under close monitoring of the parents committee – the members do it in turn. The monthly parents' meeting ensures their participation and keeps them up to date on school activities. On the other hand, the managing committees are very active in the operation of the government schools. The committees meet regularly and actively participate in school activities. Unlike the Brac schools, the local elite is involved in the managing committees of the government schools and they often provide financial support to various activities of the schools. These schools also seek monetary support from other solvent persons in the community. An additional initiative of the government schools is income generation. Otherwise, it is totally prohibited in Brac schools to take financial support from the parents or the community, and do income generation. Thus, none of the study schools received any financial support other than from Brac central office. The schools have a good relationship with the higher authorities. Through this connection the government schools receive more visits from the education officials and financial benefit. However, none of these occurs in the Brac schools.

The successful government schools provide attention to two other things; preparation of the scholarship examinees and participation in cub and other cultural activities at the *upazila* level. Success in these areas brings a good name and fame for the schools. As these are very competitive, only a small number of the students are provided long term coaching by the best teachers of the schools. Thus, other students may be deprived at this. Here the question of equity comes to play. It should be a serious concern of the schools to provide quality education to all the students.

It is difficult to develop policy recommendations from only four cases. However, it is apparent that these successful schools are much more responsive than others in providing quality education to the learners and general improvements to the schools. In order to accomplish this they have taken certain initiatives, which are distinct in nature and can also be tried in other schools. At the same time it should be recognised that each school has its own distinct features and thus has its own method of success. The followings are some policy suggestions for the schools in general:

1. *Only those good in teaching should be appointed as head teachers or programme organisers. Strong managerial and administrative capacity of them is essential.* Characteristics of a good school head include a capacity to teach in the classrooms and a very good understanding of the curriculum and textbooks. The heads/POs of the study schools played a key role in all school activities. It may not be possible for a head to set an example for other teachers without having such qualities and it may be necessary for the junior teachers to see someone in front of them doing things correctly. A good head teacher can play this role through his/her presence in the school.

It is the head teacher or the programme organiser who leads the smooth operation of a school. This capacity can be built primarily through specific training on school management, educational administration, etc. More can be learned through practical experience. At present there is no recognised position of assistant head teacher in any government primary school. *It is important to create assistant head teacher posts in the government schools.* The head teacher's personal characteristics are also important for strong management of schools.

2. *Observation of classroom teaching and feedback to the respective teachers should be a regular task of the head teachers and the POs.* This has several implications. Firstly, it is helpful for the head teacher/PO to be updated on the performances of the teachers and take initiative to correct mistakes. Secondly, regular monitoring by the head teacher ensures school discipline. The head teacher can provide feedback informally to the teachers individually. Brac schools have a similar system in place, which provides significant improvements to the schools, even though daily observation is not possible.
3. *Each school should prepare an annual plan at the beginning of the academic year; a regular staff meeting should be arranged at the school level.* Brac schools are lacking in both these areas. The teachers need to formally exchange their views on the activities of the previous week and take decision accordingly, and planning for the next week can be accomplished in this meeting. Issues affecting the students, the teachers or the school in general can be considered for discussion in weekly meetings.
4. *Steps should be taken to reduce the teacher student ratio in government schools – this would help in taking care of slow and first generation learners.* It was observed that the teachers do not get much time to prepare for a class, since, in most cases they are taking on 6-8 classes daily. Large class size is another problem in teaching the learners equally. If the number of teachers can be increased the class size would automatically be reduced. This may create opportunity for the teachers to take care of every learner. In order to make up with the scarcity of teachers, volunteer teachers can be considered for the time being. Financial requirements of this may be a barrier for the schools, a place where the community could intervene.

5. *Schools should take an initiative to ensure community participation in school activities and accountability to the communities.* Community participation can help in many ways by ensuring access of all children to school, providing material and financial support, requiring responsibility at the household level to name a few. Schools accountability to the community can help keep school on the right track in achieving this.
6. *Each school should have its own source of regular income with a transparent accounting system.* Both the government schools studied have some source of regular income, which helps them in their development activities. Payment of volunteer teachers, expenses for co-curricular activities and incentives to the students and teachers can be accomplished easily if there is some source of regular income for the schools. However, in order to maintain transparency, a small sub-committee of SMC members, teachers and parents is needed to oversee the fund. Better school community relationship can be helpful in this regard. If community participation can be ensured in school activities, solving financial problems is easier to accomplish.
7. *Increased monitoring and supervision of Upazila Education Office should be ensured. AUEOs capacity in pedagogical supervision needs to be increased.* Although the *upazila* education officials do not provide any pedagogical supervision, their regular presence is important for better operation of the schools. The AUEOs visited these successful schools more than was expected, and it was also observed that the *upazila* offices provided more support to these schools, most likely at the expense of other schools, which should not occur. *The government should allocate more resources to the upazilas and these should then be allocated to the schools as per their need and performance.*

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CASE STUDIES OF 'SUCCESSFUL' SCHOOL MANAGEMENT: WHAT CAN BE LEARNED?

Manzoor Ahmed

The open discussion following the presentation of the case studies of successful examples of primary and secondary level school management offered an opportunity to explore various issues related to the studies and their findings. The participants in the discussion commented on the appropriateness and value of the methodology used, gave their views on the substance of the findings, some focused on what they thought were important items missed out in the studies, and others wondered about the sustainability and replicability of the success stories. Some commentators challenged the premise of success underlying the studies and expected specific indicators of success and their assessment in the studies.

How should 'successful' school management be defined?

As noted in the presentations, the cases of formal primary schools, non-formal primary education centres, and secondary schools, were identified by respective authorities as examples of "good" schools. Apparently public reputation of the schools and information about the schools with the concerned authorities, which reflected their notions of standards influenced the selection of the schools. Objective and clearly defined criteria, which could be assessed and related to management process and functions were not applied explicitly in selecting the institutions. As Professor Kazi Saleh Ahmed put it, "the researchers mentioned a number of criteria for selection of the schools; they recognized that all schools could not fulfil all the criteria to be successful. But it was not explained which selected school satisfied which criteria.... Then the question comes, to what degree each criterion has been satisfied by each of the schools... For instance, on a scale of 0-100, what could be the minimum acceptable level for being a successful school."

In one government primary school the gross enrolment ratio was 140 percent, while the other school covered only 60 percent of the children in the catchment area. The question then, according to Professor Saleh Ahmed, how could the second school be considered as successful?

Professor Md. Shafiul Alam, former Director, Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) also asked – what do we understand by success? Success means, in his view, obtaining defined outputs which should be related to producing "quality learners" from schools. He observed, "It would have

been better if these criteria were spelled out in the study. In the case of the secondary school, a large number of students remained absent on the day of home task submission, which is not an indication of success. We need to know the criteria of awarding [by the government] 'A' grade to schools as a recognition of their success."

Is case study a useful tool?

The value of case studies in offering lessons that may be relevant more broadly was a concern. The Minister of Education Dr. M. Osman Farruk asked if case studies on two, three or four schools were sufficient to provide a general picture of a system consisting of 78,000 primary schools and 27,000 secondary schools. He also thought that the benefits would have been greater if a comparative picture could be presented between successful and not so successful schools. He was also concerned about the small number of cases failing to capture the diversity of the social, cultural, and economic contexts in which schools functioned. He would rather prefer "a large study" to find out the factors contributing to successful school management. Dr. Farruk, however, agreed that in exploring issues of quality in education, research based on case study method was needed "to understand quality constraints and how these might be addressed." This indeed is the purpose of the case study approach, rather than deriving conclusions about a large system from looking at a small sample. Both of these approaches have their own contribution to make and have to be seen as mutually complementary.

Relevance of the findings

Despite some questions about the research approach, many commentators found the substantive findings relevant for gaining an understanding of the school management issues and ways of enhancing the effectiveness of management in primary and secondary schools. As Abdur Rashid, the District Primary Education Officer of Rajshahi put it, "We made these schools successful, but were not aware of the details of the process of development. The researchers documented the process. ... credit first goes to the community. The people came to us and we provided them support and suggestions. [New resources were mobilized]. The schools could establish various income-generating projects such as fisheries, cattle rearing, poultry firm, etc. Without financial solvency it is not possible to have a good school."

One important message was that, even within the constraints of what was regarded to be an overly centralised management system, schools could take initiatives for effective management. In fact, Professor Md. Shafiul Alam observed, "...the government has prescribed rules and regulations about how schools should run; the presentations suggest to me that schools can succeed if they follow the rules and regulations. I also agree that SMCs should be given more freedom with some financial autonomy. I have seen in the Philippines and in other countries that the general public can participate in school activities if they want to. They donate

computer and many other useful things to the schools. We should find ways of encouraging these types of activities.”

The rules about catchment area determination did not facilitate planning enrolment, because some schools enrolled more students than actual number of school-aged children in the catchment area, according to Professor Shafiul Alam. He agreed with the conclusion that harmony, as in a musical concert, is needed among all the elements of management of a school to produce the outcome in terms of good performance of the school.

M. Habibur Rahman, Director of Education, Save the Children, USA congratulated the research teams from Brac and NAEM for conducting pragmatic and informative studies. This kind of research, in his view, was very much required in order to bring systematic changes in the education system. In addition to this, he suggested that longitudinal studies using anthropological approaches should be undertaken.

The findings of the studies showed, according to M. Habibur Rahman, significant roles of the head teachers and the school managing committees, who needed greater autonomy. They also needed help to prepare these key actors to perform their job better. He found confirmation in the study of the fact that the upazila level officials, instead of providing supervision to schools, were mostly engaged in exercising administrative control.

What was missing?

Professor Siddiqur Rahman of the Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka found missing in the studies how and to what extent the school heads were supportive to the assistant teachers in enhancing classroom teaching. He also thought that a number of interventions in both primary and secondary schools introduced by the government during last two decades and their consequences were not considered in the studies adequately.

Financial management is a key element of secondary school management, especially for the non-government schools. Over 97 percent of the secondary schools fell in this category. The study, according to Professor Siddiqur Rahman, should have given greater attention to financial management of secondary schools.

Mr. Nil Ratan Halder of the Post-Primary and Continuing Education project in Brac wanted more attention to increasing teacher-student contact hour as a key measure to improve performance of schools and students. Another issue that must be a management concern, according to Mr. Halder, and merited attention was students' learning assessment including promotion policy, and failure in specific subjects (e.g., English and mathematics). He would have liked to know how these issues were handled in successful schools. He further commented, “The presenters of the secondary school studies mentioned that class work and homework were provided regularly. My question is, how do the teachers manage it in a class of 50-

110 students? How is group work possible there? Answer to these questions might help the unsuccessful schools.”

Mr. Abdul Motaleb was of the view that both the studies could have highlighted academic supervision more prominently. The presentations of the reports indicated to him that academic supervision and community participation were two cornerstones of success of the school. In general, according to Mr. Motaleb, both were very much present in the Brac primary schools, and absent in the government system. The government school supervisors did not play their role as facilitators and in many cases were not capable of doing this. He also emphasised the importance of financial management and accountability in schools. One useful measure he suggested was to develop and try out in some schools methods and instruments for this purpose and then implement these more widely.

Is success sustainable and replicable?

Professor A.K. Mirja Shahidul Islam, Former Director, Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), raised the question of replicability and sustainability of success. As he put it, “During my service with the Directorate of Primary Education I saw many schools became good with some interventions like community participation and support from the upazila education office. The students of these schools showed better performance in the scholarship examinations. However, the success could not be sustained after some years. It is not easy to make a school successful; and it is even more difficult to hold on to success. It requires intensive labour of many parties – in and out of school. Sometimes, the assistant teachers do not cooperate with the head teachers in new initiatives and there is also political interference. There are instances of support of the upazila education officials discontinuing some initiatives with the change of regime and personnel at the central level. My request is to protect schools from outside political interference.”

Mirja Shahidul Islam was also concerned about effective dissemination of success stories. He observed, “This can be done in many ways – publication of case study reports, regional and national seminars, discussion meetings, study tour to these schools, etc. It has two benefits – the people who made these schools successful would be inspired to see that they are given importance; and secondly, the other schools would get a chance to learn from the experiences of the successful schools.”

Mr. Ichiro Miyazawa, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Dhaka office cautioned about using the word ‘management’, without being specific. He suggested that there were four relevant aspects of management: (a) management of human resource in a school, (b) management of monitoring and information system including information about students in and out of school, dropout, attendance and student performance, (c) financial management, and (d) management of external relations – involving school managing committee, community, parents, NGOs, CBOs and donors in relation to school activities. All these four components needed attention for successful school management.

In conclusion

The case study method, despite its limitations as for any other methodology, is a very much acceptable and widely used research technique. It has a respectable pedigree, especially, in the study of management techniques and philosophy. In a case study research, each case is an independent example, in which the complex interplay of multiple factors in contributing to intended outcomes can be examined. The challenge is to extract broader operational and policy conclusions for a system from the case study findings. What conclusion can we draw from the findings of the present case studies? The researchers presented some recommendations. The participants of the open discussion session shed light on the validity of these suggestions as well as the methodology. They also commented on what could have been given greater attention and what may have escaped attention altogether.

Many of the comments in the open discussion were about the role of leadership in school management. Its importance cannot be overestimated. However, a clear message from the studies and the discussion is that we should not search for a single hero; rather we should emphasize and try to establish a culture of collective responsibility in school management. Decentralisation with a special focus on school level responsibility with accountability is another key component effective school management. There is a need to establish a permanent arrangement for management development – in which academic supervision, financial management, and other elements identified as critical in specific circumstances can be given due prominence. Schools should be able to experiment with some of their ideas, engage in action research and take decisions based on their findings. A research, development and learning process should be encouraged in each school to help it move towards greater autonomy with accountability for itself, establishment of performance standards for itself and their application in the school.

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COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH NEEDS FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

M. Osman Farruk

I do not wish to give a lecture here in this seminar; rather I would prefer to take part in the discussions – that some of you have already started on the issue of school management. First of all, I acknowledge the use of case study research in improving the quality of our education. Quality, the most important aspect of education – is not only a matter of concern for our country, but also for the other parts of the world. Some days ago, I had an opportunity to participate at a conference organised by UNESCO, where quality of education came out as an important part of the conference discussions. After the Jomtien and Dakar summit, the number of educational institutions and number of students have increased manifold, but aspects of quality were not emphasized. Now a time has come when you cannot discuss education without discussing the quality issues. From this point of view research is badly needed to understand quality constraints and how these may be addressed.

The moderator of the discussion session has mentioned that the organisers of this seminar were inspired by the presence of the Minister i.e., me. Actually, you have created a good opportunity for me to participate at such a scholastic forum. As a Minister, I have to pass busy times mostly with lots of files and people trying to lobby. I hardly get the time needed to think creatively. As a participant of this seminar, I have a chance to do this. So, thanks to all of you for inviting me.

The two researchers from Brac and NAEM presented the studies. Both were well presented. When I was working at the World Bank, we used to tell the reviewers of case studies to be ruthless. People who were not sympathetic to the researchers were invited as reviewers. Here, in this seminar, I would like to take the opportunity to speak impartially and ruthlessly. Firstly, I want to talk about sample size of the studies. There are 78,000 primary and 27,000 secondary schools in Bangladesh. Case studies on two, three or four schools are not sufficient to provide us with any meaningful picture of the prevailing scenario. The researchers followed purposive sampling procedure. Purposive sampling is often used for this kind of study. However, this could have been done differently. Due to the sampling technique adopted here, i.e., selecting only successful schools, the value of the case studies has become limited. We could have benefited more if samples were drawn to provide a comparative picture for the successful and the not so successful schools.

Secondly, geographical bias is very strong in the study on primary schools. You have selected two schools from one area, but there is a big difference with respect to social, cultural, economic and other aspects among different areas of the country. Some measures were taken to reduce geographical bias in the study on secondary schools, but the number of school is not adequate to give a bigger picture. I think the case studies would have provided us a better picture if adequate number of schools were studied, applying appropriate sampling techniques, paying attention to schools of different quality and geographical spread.

Recommendations have been made based on the findings of the case studies on some successful schools. This provides us a profile of good schools only. However, cause and effect relationship has not been established. In the open discussion, some of you have mentioned a number of causes for schools being successful – there are other causes too. I think if the number of schools studied was larger and the study was conceptualised differently, we could reach more useful perspectives. If I were the researcher I would have followed a different approach. Instead of analysing the management of only a few good schools, I would have also studied a number of unsuccessful schools to identify the factors that make school management unsuccessful.

There are some findings in the papers – pointing to the all-too-obvious characteristics of successful schools. If you had studied the good schools along with some bad schools, then we could see why some schools are good and others are not. It would have allowed us to see whether the bad schools are bad due to absence of the characteristics of the good schools that you have mentioned or due to other reasons too. You can see hundreds of schools, especially state owned, which do not have even a head teacher, but the performance of the schools are good. There are many non-government schools in the country, which are facing lots of problems, but showing better results in the examinations than the state owned schools. Thus, the obvious factors identified are not always the factors for making a good school. We could have kept the study focussed on factors that make a school good – is it management, any other factor, or an interaction of many factors?

I think quality of education is an interaction of many factors like students, teachers, management, parents, local elite, etc. It is possible to identify the contribution of these factors, isolating the contribution of infrastructure facilities and teaching aids. There are some teachers who are more motivated than others. The question is why? We do not know the reasons behind this. This can happen because of a good head teacher or for his/her own background or for his/her training or for other reasons. Similarly, we do not know why teaching learning environment in some schools is good. What makes a school bad also needs analysis. If we could explore the answers to these questions the studies might be more useful for policy making. We could make a comparison of good and bad schools. Another way of seeking cause and effect relationship is research with control and experimental groups. This was not done.

Case study method is very helpful to explore certain circumstances. So, the studies are appropriate from that point of view. But all of us already know the findings of the studies – the factors contributing good schools. Without conducting a research, closing my eyes, I can say that good head teachers, congenial teaching learning environment, motivated teachers, are all key elements of good schools. What factors are absent from a bad school is more important, than finding out the success factors of a good school. There are hundreds of schools having head teachers and plenty of assistant teachers with teaching materials and other facilities, but the quality is still very poor. There may be local political interference.

Political interventions or enabling overall environment are increasingly becoming an important factor for schools being good or bad. If you prepare twenty more case studies on twenty good schools, you might have the same results, because, these are the necessary condition for good schools. If the bad schools were studied with the same parameters, we would have been able to understand what makes the schools bad. Lack of good leadership, lack of teachers, inappropriate curriculum, and poor infrastructure – anything could be the reason for making a school bad.

It is important to expand the scope of the present studies. The question of how do we replicate the conducting factors to other schools is not addressed. Replication of the recommendations to other schools might be an important policy decision, which needs more discussions. However, before scaling up, there is a need to see whether the absence of these criteria alone make schools perform poorly. This is important because, there are plenty of schools, especially in government sector, having lots of teachers and other facilities, but their output is not satisfactory.

We often say that quality of education is an outcome of combination of a number of interacting factors. It is not only a good head teacher or the other teachers or the textbooks only. Good supervision is also a critical factor for quality education. Some of the discussants have discussed the issue already. We do not have any supervision of schools in the real sense, but it is present in Brac schools. It is important to find out the effect of supervision by the programme organisers in Brac schools.

If you look at the system carefully, you will find that the government does not significantly control the management of the private schools. The school managing committees and the governing bodies of the colleges are autonomous, and the government does not want to interfere in their work. For secondary education, the policy making process is centralized but the management system is decentralized. This is also true for primary education to some extent. But we do not have much control over the SMC. We do not interfere in appointing teachers for the non-government secondary schools. The members of the managing committees are elected and they can take part in decision-making process. The government's circulars and orders are just to provide them with some guidelines. Without such guidelines the system would have no basis run. On the other hand, the government controls the subventions. There are some schools with no student successes in the

public examinations. The government has decided to discontinue their subvention. I think all of you would support it.

Similar studies on quality issues have been carried out in other Asian countries as well. If you organize a seminar to present the experiences from other countries too, that would be interesting and useful. This would create an opportunity to compare the school management systems in the region. There might be some commonalities and differences as well. I am wondering about what sort of state control over the management of schools do exist in other countries in the region? A comparison will let us know about this.

Finally, social science researchers are in a difficult situation, because the audiences often say that the findings are already known to them. This might happen for the present studies also, but this is not a problem at all – we can expand our findings in a more useful way. We can do so through broadening the methodology of the study – taking control group and experimental group or doing well designed comparative studies.

About the author

M Osman Farruk studied Economics at the University of Dhaka and did his PhD at the Cornell University, USA. He is a member of the Parliament (*Jatiya Sangsad*) and the Minister for Education in Bangladesh. He has contributed a number of journal articles and book chapters on economic issues. He taught at the Bangladesh Agricultural University prior to his joining the World Bank in 1974. He held senior positions at the World Bank (1974-2001) headquarters in Washington D.C. prior to his return to Bangladesh in April 2001.

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PHOTO GALLERY

Dr. M Osman Farruk, Hon'ble Minister for Education is addressing as the Chief Guest where Dr. Imran Matin, Professor Khalilur Rahman and Dr. Manzoor Ahmed are seen



A section of the audience



Prof. Md. Khalilur Rahman, Director General of NAEM is addressing as the Chair



Dr. Imran Matin, Director Research of Brac is giving the welcome address

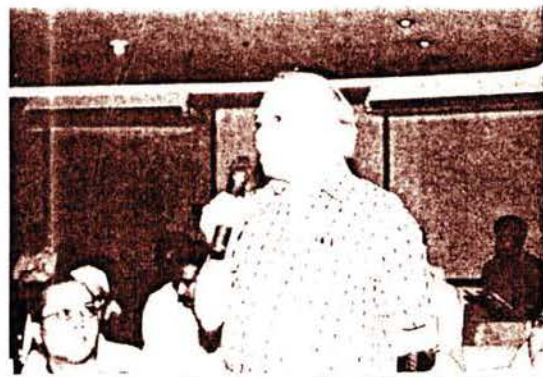


Mr. Ichiro Miyazawa, Programme Specialist of JNESCO Dhaka is delivering speech as the Special Guest

*Dr. Manzoor
Ahmed, Director
BU-IED is
moderating the
open discussion
session*



Professor Siddiqur Rahman



Professor Kazi Saleh Ahmed



Professor Md. Shafiul Alam



Professor Abdul Muktedir



Mr. Abdur Rashid



Mr. M Habibur Rahman



Professor AK Mirja Shahidul Islam



Mr. Nil Ratan Haldar



Professor Roohi Zakia Dewan, Director (Planning and Development) of NAEM and Mr. Samir R Nath, Senior Research Fellow of Brac are presenting research findings

Annex 1. The Seminar Programme

Seminar on
School Management: Learning from Successful Schools in Bangladesh
Brac Centre, 19 September 2004

The Programme

- 2.30 p.m. Registration
- 3.00 p.m. Welcome and introductory remarks
Dr. Imran Matin
Director Research, Brac
- 3.10 p.m. Presentation on primary schools
Mr. Samir R Nath
Senior Research Fellow, Brac
- 3.40 p.m. Presentation on secondary schools
Ms. Roohi Zakia Dewan
Director (Planning and Development), NAEM
- 4.10 p.m. Open discussion
Moderator: **Dr. Manzoor Ahmed**
Director, BU-IED
- 4.50 p.m. Address by the Special Guest
Mr. Ichiro Miyazawa
Programme Specialist, UNESCO Bangladesh
- 5.00 p.m. Address by the Chief Guest
Dr. M. Osman Farruk
Hon'ble Minister for Education
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
- 5.15 p.m. Address by the Chair
Prof. Md. Khalilur Rahman
Director General, NAEM
- 5.25 p.m. Refreshment

Annex 2. List of Participants in the Seminar

Mr. Md. Gaffar Ahmed
District Primary Education Officer
Hobigonj

Dr. Manzoor Ahmed
Director
Brac University Institute of
Education and Development

Ms. Nashida Ahmed
MDS
Brac Education Programme

Prof. Kazi Saleh Ahmed
Former Vice Chancellor
Jahangir Nagar University

Mr. Shoaib Ahmed
SDM
Brac Research and Evaluation
Division

Dr. Siraj Uddin Ahmed
Director
Directorate of Secondary and Higher
Education

Mr. Zahedur Ahmed

Mr. Bulbul Ahmed
Staff Reporter, The New Age

Ms. Zakia Akhter
MDS
NAEM, Dhaka

Mr. Muhammad Elias Ali
Director, BANBEIS

Dr. Md. Sultan Ali
Training Specialist, NAEM, Dhaka

Prof. Md. Shafiul Alam
Former Director, BANBEIS

Dr. Mahmudul Alam
Senior Education Economist
The World Bank

Mr. Syedul Alam
Staff Reporter, The Sangram

Mr. Minhaz Uddin Anwar
Communication Coordinator, Brac

Ms. Mir Jahanara Arzoo
Training Specialist
NAEM, Dhaka

Ms. Ashrafunnessa
Assistant Director
NAEM, Dhaka

Mr. Azad
Bangladesh Television

Mr. M.A. Bari
Vice Chairman, SMC
Uttara High School, Dhaka

Ms. Bilkis Begum
Head Teacher
Motijheel Government Boys High
School, Dhaka

Ms. Mahafuza Begum
Training Specialist, NAEM, Dhaka

Mr. Manzurul Ahsan Bulbul
News Editor, ATN Bangla

Mr. Abdul-Muyeed Chowdhury
Executive Director, Brac

Dr. AMR Chowdhury Deputy Executive Director, Brac	Mr. Md. Moazzem Hossain Headmaster, Uttara High School
Mr. Mulatiur Chowdhury Habiganj	Mr. Md. Altaf Hossain Senior Research Associate, BU-IED
Mr. Faruque Dewan Public Relations Officer Ministry of Education	Ms. Ruxana Hossain Material Development Specialist PACE programme, Brac
Ms. Roohi Zakia Dewan Director (Planning & Development) NAEM, Dhaka	Mr. Md. Abul Hossain Headmaster, Nayarhat Gana Biddyapith, Dhaka
Dr. M Osman Farruk Minister Ministry of Education	Mr. AK Mirja Shahidul Islam Former Director Directorate of Primary Education
Mr. Ferog Office Assistant Brac Research and Evaluation Division	Mr. Md. Mahbubul Kabir Junior Research Assistant, Brac
Ms. Jaya Sen Gupta Programme Manager PACE programme, Brac	Mr. Enamul Kabir
Professor M Nazmul Haq Institute of Education and Research University of Dhaka	Ms. Raihana Karim Research Assiatant, Brac
Mr. Nil Ratan Halder Senior Regional Manager PACE programme, Brac	Mr. Md. Abul Kalam Research Associate, BU-IED
Mr. Rafique Hassan Deputy Director (Research) Dhaka Ahsania Mission	Mr. Md. Abu Hena Mustafa Kamal Head Teacher Palpar Government Primary School Godagari, Rajshahi
Mr. Rubayet Hasan Media Correspondence, The Janakantha	Mr. Khandakar Rezaul Karim Head Teacher Narail South East Model Government Primary School, Narail
Mr. Mustak Hossain Staff Reporter, The Daily Star	Mr. Safi R. Khan Country Representative, Ashoka
	Ms. Marufa Aziz Khan Research Associate, Brac

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Mr. Masud A. Khan
CEU, Dhaka Lions Club

Ms. Deborah Llewellyn
Consultant

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Reporter, The Jugantar

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Director
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Mr. Md. Sahiduzzaman Masud
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Government Primary School

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Senior Research Fellow, Brac

Mr. Rafiq
Bangladesh Television

Prof. Md. Khalilur Rahman
Director General, NAEM

Mr. Md. Ataur Rahman
Upazila Education Officer
Godagari, Rajshahi

Ms. Shameena Binte Rahman
Staff Reporter, Prothom Alo

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Deputy Director, NAEM, Dhaka

Professor Siddiquir Rahman
Institute of Education and Research
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Mr. Shahanur Rahman
The Daily Star

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Director, Education
Save The Children

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Lecturer
James P Grant School of Public
Health, Brac University

Mr. ABM Abdur Rashid
District Primary Education Officer
Rajshahi

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Research and Evaluation Division
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Quality with Equity :
The Primary Education Agenda



Campaign for Popular Education Bangladesh