

**Teachers' Perception Regarding Students' Reading Competency
Gap in Bangla Subject: A Study of Selected
Government Primary Schools**

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Masters of Education in Educational Leadership & School Improvement

BRAC Institute of Educational Development

BRAC University

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A thesis submitted to the BRAC Institute of Educational Development in partial
Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education in Educational Leadership & School Improvement

BRAC Institute of Educational Development

BRAC University

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

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

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Approval

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Ethics Statement

The research was conducted by protecting the integrity of the research through the following measures. To protect the privacy of the interviewees, informed consent was designed to address the ethical concern. The consent form is designed with a description of important issues such as the purpose of the study, description of no risk, statement for confidentiality, with the right for withdrawal from the interview at any point, no personal gain but volunteering this research (Johnson & Christensen, n.d.). Confidentiality is also given high importance by incorporating a plan for securing data in mobile devices as well as hard copies. The data was placed accurately in the transcript and secured to respect individual beliefs and perceptions.

Abstract

The importance of the reading ability of students is widely acknowledged as a baseline for academic success. The less understood reason is why there is a reading competency gap among our students who are studying in grades 3 and 4. This study adds to the literature by investigating the perception of Government Primary School teachers of Chandgaon Education Thana, Chattogram about the reasons for the reading competency gap and how to address this issue.

This study dug out that primary school teachers lack sincerity towards students and they perceive the student-teacher ratio as the biggest obstacle for them to achieve the reading competency of students. This study found strong links between the student-teacher ratio and classroom practices that they cannot reach students individually within the given contact hour. Additionally, extra administrative work and fewer feedback opportunities made their work more vulnerable. Not following the curriculum step by step was another reason for this gap which teachers perceive as the outcome of a huge number of students.

The implication is to reduce the student-teacher ratio along with providing enough facilities to the teachers so that they can remain motivated and sincere towards their students.

Keywords: Reading competency gap; Teachers' perception; comprehend; classroom practices

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my teachers and family members for their significant support and encouragement.

Acknowledgment

I wholeheartedly thank my supervisor Dr. A.K.M. Badrul Alam for his continuous guidance and motivation to keep looking forward. I would like to give my gratitude to my family members for their continuous motivation and belief in me achieving the long-term goal of my life.

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List of Acronyms

ATEO	Assistant Thana Education Officer
GPS	Government Primary School
HT	Head Teacher
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NSA	National Students Assessment
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
URC	Upazilla Resource Centre
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Chapter 1

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

The foundation of achieving reading competency for academic success is universally recognized. Unfortunately, the reading competency gap is emerging among our students which are increasing dramatically (Blickenstaff et. al., 2013). By definition, the competency gap is the cavity of academic knowledge that persists among the students (Pill & Harding, 2013, pp. 381-402) and the reading competency gap is the aperture in the reading skills of students. The gap has become so acute that the gap is emerging in the whole education system as an open secret (Salahuddin, et. al., 2020, pp 69-82). As a result, it has become the main obstacle to ensure quality education for all. So this study aims to understand the perception of teachers regarding the reading competency gap of Government Primary School students. This study tried to dig out how the teachers perceive the reasons for this vital issue and how to address it. This study talked about the issues such as student-teacher ratio, caregivers' support, auto-promotion, etc. as the core obstacles for the reading competency gap. A qualitative study was carried out by interviewing government primary school teachers along with Head teachers and URC instructors to understand the reasons behind this issue and how to address it.

This study explored the reasons for the reading competency gap and teachers shared various reasons which are yet to be solved. All the issues are directed towards the reading competency gap of the students, and teachers could explore it through the interview process. Actually, this issue is like a cavity in our education system which is persisting abruptly among our students.

Thus, this issue needs to be addressed by all educators because as a nation we cannot move forward keeping our young seeds in the dark.

1.2 Research Topic

Perceptions of GPS Teachers' on Reading Competency Gap

Research Title

Teachers' Perception regarding Students' Reading Competency Gap in Bangla subject: A study of selected Government Primary Schools.

The importance of reading competency has been acknowledged and recognized by many educators. However, numerous studies are still discussing the plagues of the reading competency gap that are emerging among the students. This study explored the perceptions of GPS teachers about the reading competency gap that is persisting among the government primary school students of Bangladesh. As this issue is universally acknowledged, we cannot achieve the SDG-4 of ensuring quality education for all without achieving it.

1.3 Problem Statement

Reading Competency Gap is a burning issue in Government Primary Schools of Bangladesh. Students studying in Grade 4 and 5 cannot even read their names in Bangla. 27% of grade 3 students cannot read which turns into a 20% dropout rate (USAID, 2020). According to the Bangladesh National Literacy Assessment survey report (2011), 38% of students are not able to read the Bangla language. Sometimes, students read the given topic but cannot identify the word they are reading as they have memorized it before. Besides, local language conflicts with the Bangla language that we use in our school context which creates confusion among the students.

Moreover, the use of supplementary reading materials in the classroom is very low and students do not have enough opportunity and interest to explore different books. In addition, the lack of different classroom strategies is another problem for creating this reading competency gap.

So, we cannot oversee this issue as it is so crucial and not acceptable as a nation where we are trying to ensure quality education for all. That is why this issue needs to be dug out more. However, perceptions of GPS teachers are very crucial to know as they are the leaders who can solve this issue from the core.

1.4 Research Questions

- How do the teachers perceive the reading competency gap of students?
- What are the relevant factors of the reading competency gap and how?
- How is the reading competency gap addressed in teaching-learning practices?
- What are the challenges the teachers face for it and how to overcome them?

The researcher wants to explore how the teachers perceive the causes of this gap and how to address the gap. These questions helped to explore the gap from the perception of teachers as they are observing the issue from the field directly.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to dig out the reasons behind the reading competency gap and how to address the issue eventually. This study seeks the perceptions of Government Primary School Teachers about the reading gap that is persisting among the students and how to address this issue at length. Moreover, this study explored the idea of first-generation learners' education, caregivers' support, teaching-learning practices, assessment system, rote memorization through

the eyes of the government primary school teachers. As teachers deal with students directly, they know the actual reasons for this issue very clearly. In addition, to mitigate this issue, how to develop our education system through training and revision, explored as well.

At the end of this study, the probable causes might be the lack of education of the first generation learners, lack of care of the caregivers, lack of sincerity of teachers, auto-promotion, student-teacher ratio, etc. In a nutshell, this study explored the problems of the reading competency gap and the possible ways to improve the gap.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study will help the readers to have the essence of the perceptions of teachers about our students' reading reality. It may support the teachers to explore the inherent reasons for the competency gap that they may hardly think of and having the reflection of teachers to address the issue. The result of this study may be used by the policymakers who can incorporate an effective plan for eliminating this gap in the curriculum by understanding the perception of teachers on this current vulnerable situation. So this study is very crucial as we cannot move forward to keeping our students' reading competency skills behind. Moreover, the findings may set the milestone for further interventions to develop the reading competency of students and reinforce the authority to support teachers for planning more strategically in their lesson plan through training. Furthermore, this study will help the trainers to incorporate the feedback that we will receive through this study in the training and monitoring process. Most importantly, through this study, head teachers, URC instructors, and ATEO will be able to understand how they should support the teachers to achieve the reading competency of our students through their responsibilities respectively.

There is no such study that discusses teachers' perception of probable causes and solutions of the reading competency gap in the Bangladesh context. So this study may influence policy for making effective decisions regarding this gap to eradicate it and create a positive impact in our education system on a broader scale.

1.7 Operational Definition of Key Terms

Reading Competency: It is the ability to recognize and analyze the written text along with understanding the cognitive concepts behind the text.

Reading Competency Gap: The reading competency gap refers to the hole that is created in our students' reading skill achievement due to several reasons.

Teachers' Perception: Teachers' perception means the viewpoint of teachers' on a particular topic. As teachers work directly with the students and they know the reality, they can share their perspectives about this vital issue very easily.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Usually, in the literature review, we gather different information from different sources. This literature review talked about the reading competency, reading competency gap, reasons for reading competency gap, etc. The key topics such as teachers' perception, effects of reading competency gap, addressing this issue have been discussed in the later parts.

2.1 Reading Competency

Reading competency is the ability to understand a subject in terms of written text. In other words, reading competency helps to recognize words quickly along with analyzing the word. It will also help to understand the cognitive meaning of the word. To achieve the reading competency of students, sometimes policymakers need to reform the policy in this 21st century. No child Left Behind (NCLB) act (2002) promoted a change among the schools for being accountable for achieving reading skills.

Reading is a very intricate process that requires many skills in an organized manner. In a broader sense, achieving the reading competency of students requires three sets of skills such as *prerequisite reading skills, model-building skills, and applied comprehension skills.*

Prerequisite reading skills help students to read the familiar words properly and decode the unfamiliar words. It is the ability to read the text more accurately at grade-level appropriateness. Moreover, this skill is more appropriate for the readers who struggle with reading as there are so many unfamiliar words. In addition, it also requires the ability to read with fluency with appropriate intonation and expression. It only refers to decode and recognize the written text

literally. In a nutshell, prerequisite reading skill is the baseline of the comprehension stage of the readers and it requires enough skill in this otherwise the reader will suffer in the next stage (O'Reilly & Sheehan, 2009).

Model building skill helps to develop the meaning of decoded text through reading. It is a set of all skills that construct the meaning from the text. This skill not only engages the ability to comprehend the literal meaning but also tries to dig out the unstated meaning of the text. The presumed and literal meanings help to develop a mental model of the entire meaning of the texts. A mental model is a combination of literal and inferential meaning which gives a structural shape that consists of organization and summarization of the entire text (O'Reilly & Sheehan, 2009).

Applied Comprehension Skill helps to use the information for different purposes. This skill not only covers the literal and inferential meaning of the texts but also goes beyond these to reach different goals. Applied comprehension is the ability to integrate and blend the meaning of information from different sites. Additionally, it helps to generate accumulated explanations and reasoning along with adding new information with applicable cognitivism. Furthermore, this skill helps to evaluate the text through critical thinking and analytical ability of reading comprehension (O'Reilly & Sheehan, 2009).

According to the study, there is a positive relationship between reading strategy and reading comprehension (McNamara, et. al. 2007, pp 465-496). To achieve reading competency, reading strategies help construct the obstacles through effortful and conscious actions to build the understanding from the scratch towards the in-depth. Moreover, reading is also connected with

the purpose of the reader which helps to set the goal along with reading multiple texts together (O'Reilly & Sheehan, 2009).

2.2 Reading Competency Gap

One of the most significant skills in measuring quality in the education system is reading. Unfortunately, most of the students in Bangladesh are not able to acquire this skill (USAID, 2020) and it turns out into a huge reading competency gap. The question of why the reading competency gap exists in the education system is a vital issue (Zuze & Reddy, 2014, pp 100-107). This topic is so dominating in the existing education system which results in high dropouts and lacks a knowledge-based economy (USAID, 2020). According to Gewertz (2011), students who are not good readers, are more likely to drop out depending on their socio-economic condition (pp. 1-2). Most importantly, American educators effectively worked to minimize the gap in reading literacy (Giles & Tunks, 2014). There is no universal way to make students able to read, that is the answer after having so much controversy (Straus, 2013) but the perceived causes and probable solutions to mitigate are needed to be explored. So this paper will mitigate the literature gap that has been persisting in the context of Bangladesh.

However, many interventions are utilized by the Bangladesh Government for the students' reading skills; unfortunately, those interventions are not properly used by the educators. As a result, the reading competency gap is increasing which needs to be addressed by educators.

2.3 Reasons for Reading Competency Gap

Multiple significant factors are associated with the reading competency gap in several studies (OECD, 1995, 2000, 2001; Linnakyla, et al, 2004, pp 231-249). The reasons are the parents'

education, motivation, self-esteem, and language background (Lehmann, 1996, pp 101-114; OECD, 2001, 2002). In addition, teachers' qualification is also linked with the reading competency gap (Lundberg & Linnakyla, 1993; OECD, 2001, 2002). According to Borman & Kimball, strong or weak teachers can affect the entire grade achievement level (pp. 3-20). Moreover, teachers who do not have enough knowledge of how students learn, cannot make solid instructions for students. In countries like Finland and Sweden, the reading competency gap is mostly associated with the lack of books at home and the expectation of further education (Linnakyla et al., 2004, pp 231-249). In Bangladesh, the context is different. There are many reasons behind this gap such as auto-promotion of students, teachers' pedagogical approach, classroom reading culture, student-teacher relationship, student-teacher ratio, educational qualifications of first-generation learners, availability of supplementary resource materials, teachers' motivation, etc.

However, some studies stated that students who are from underprivileged backgrounds are disproportionately taught by less qualified teachers (Borman & Kimball, 2005, pp 3-20). If we consider the context of Bangladesh, there are similar kinds of causes behind this gap. Moreover, teachers' motivation is also crucial in this point as caregivers who belong to underserved societies hardly raise their voices for quality. Additionally, most of the underprivileged students study in Government primary schools which are completely free for the students. As a result, teachers do not feel accountable for their actions as there is hardly any monitoring option. If students are in Grade 4 or 5, they are expected to read and write but this gap is enhancing day by day and the reasons are yet to be explored in the Bangladeshi context which is persisting within the teachers.

2.4 Reading Competency Achievement Gap

The reading competency achievement gap of students is the differences in students' academic performances depending on several reasons. In the African American context, the reasons for the achievement gap are gender, poverty, and cultural background (Teale, et.al, 2007, pp 344-348). Moreover, there is a finding that reading competency affects students' early literacy achievement (Spellings, 2007; Teale, et. al, 2007, pp 344-348). Additionally, Wilkinson (1998) investigated the factors which are associated with reading achievement gaps that are related to gender gaps. But there is no such study in the Bangladeshi context which can explore if there is any relation between the reading competency gap and the achievement gap (pp 144-167). However, the achievement of students is sometimes related to students' attributes and self-efficacy (Kim & Lorschbach, 2005, pp 157-175). Moreover, the teachers need to focus more on students' self-efficacy as this will lead to students' literacy development (Corkett, et. al. 2011, pp 65-98). So it is hypothetical that there is a relationship between students' reading competency gap and the achievement gap. In the African-American context, the students whose first language is not English struggle a lot and who are living in poverty suffer most in the achievement gap (Snow & Biancarosa, 2003). So ultimately, the competency gap, especially the reading competency gap, enhances the achievement gap of students according to many researchers.

2.5 Effects of Reading Competency Gap

Students' competency level is related to their academic, social, and beyond school life. The students who are struggling with reading skills are growing over time in Australia (Margaret, 2019, pp 1-25). According to OECD and Statistics Canada (2000), there is a positive relationship between students' competency achievement level and employment opportunity. So we can

understand that students' reading competency gap affects their achievement gap as a result it impacts their employability. Even according to UK researchers, a higher literacy achievement level is related to the higher potential of students (McIntosh & Vignoles, 2001). In short, the reading competency gap is needed to be explored in Bangladesh as the context is different from other countries.

2.6 Addressing the issue

It is very necessary to address the issue along with discussing the causes behind this. As teachers are the leaders for their students, they can rationale out the best way to address this issue. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can help students to lead them to achieve reading competency skills. Moreover, regular reading practice can enhance the transactional relationship between readers and texts. Any reading does not have any meaning if the reader does not interpret. Additionally, socio-cognitive and socio-cultural factors are also very crucial for reading literacy. Furthermore, the student-teacher ratio has to be under a manageable level and the use of supplementary reading material needs to be increased. Reducing Corporal Punishment and the teacher-student relationship may be the solution that will be addressed by the teachers.

2.7 Teachers' Perceptions

As teachers are one of the core parts of the entire learning process, teachers' perception of the reading competency gap is very crucial. Teachers' assumption towards students' learning process has a critical impact on the pedagogical approach (Giles & Tunks, 2014). Teachers are the best persons to share their perceived causes and probable solutions to this issue. In Bangladesh, there is no study on teachers' perception of the reading competency gap where knowing this perception will help to know the harsh reality of our students. Teachers have the best ability to

engage students to achieve reading skills and the gap that creates because of multiple reasons of teaching-learning method; teachers are the best person to perceive the reasons for it. Besides, teachers will be able to address the issue according to their perceptions.

2.8 Classroom Practices in Reading

Effective classroom practices are sometimes related to a teacher's qualification but effective classroom practices are more related to students' achievement outcomes. Though there is very little research that explores the relationship of different variables with teachers' classroom practices (Connor, et. al., 2005, pp 343-375). Teachers' years of experience are sometimes related to student outcomes as it helps teachers to achieve sharp skills in classroom practices (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000. pp. 129-146; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2001).

Teachers' classroom practices differ from teacher to teacher depending on their teaching style and instructional practices (NICHD-ECCRN, 2002a, pp. 199-206, b, pp 367-387; Pianta, et. al., 2002, pp 225-238). Studies have demonstrated that teachers' skill of managing and handling their students predict students' achievements (Connor, et. al., 2005, pp 343-375). In other words, teachers who are more involved in the academic part of the students, students are more likely to be skillful in reading (Connor, Morrison & Katch, 2004 pp 305-336; Connor, Morrison, & Petrella, 2004, pp 682-698; Taylor, et. al., 2000, pp 121-165). There are many aspects of teaching that influence our students' reading literacy such as, classroom environment, classroom management, and responsiveness towards the students (Morrison et al., 2005).

The early reading skills of our students are the most prominent predictor of entire student achievement (Rayner, et. al., 2001, pp 31-74). Additionally, the reading success of students depends on their ability to decode and relate letters and words that they are reading (Dickinson,

et. al., 2003, pp 465-481). Students' early reading skills development is closely related to their language skills especially vocabulary (NICHD-ECCRN, 2005, pp 428-442; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001, pp 11-29).

2.9 Assessment in Reading

Most of the educators who are experts in literacy consider fluency as the most important element of reading (Rasinski, Blachowicz, & Lems, 2006; Samuels & Farstrup, 2006). However, the instruction of fluency in the classrooms is often diverted with the trend of assessments. Still, there is a lack of concentration while assessing the fluency of reading of our students. The performance of students in reading has a significant influence on how the reading competencies are being assessed and instructed. Most importantly, assessment of reading competencies is mostly on oral assessment which mostly prioritized prosody. As a result, students mostly emphasize reading as fast as possible rather than pronounce the word with more accuracy (Kuhn, et. al, 2010, pp 232-253).

Actually, designing assessments to identify students' development in reading is quite challenging (McKenna & Stahl, 2003). Most interestingly, the reason for this difficulty is the greater importance of those areas of reading which are easy to measure ((Duffy, 2007, pp 7-13). For instance, we can easily ask our students to reiterate as many words as possible from the reading comprehension or text to assess them which fails to evaluate the exact process of reading (Pressley et al., 2006; Samuels, 2007, pp 563-566). So it is important to emphasize more on understanding or comprehending the meaning than just reciting the words.

In developed countries, the performance of students in reading is assessed through the PISA exam. Similarly, in Bangladesh, it has been evaluated through National Students Assessment

(NSA). Actually, there is no such method to assess four skills of language and it is recommended by the researchers to introduce a new assessment policy to measure the language skills properly. Moreover, linguistic educators emphasized more on formative assessment of reading in every language classroom (Salauddin, 2020, pp 69-82).

2.10 Conceptual Framework

Different researchers considered the reading competency gap from different dimensions. Studies have mentioned that the success of students depends on the capacity of the teachers to teach effectively (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004). Besides, research demonstrated that there are many reasons even outside of the classroom which affect student outcomes (Connor, et. al., 2005, pp 343-375).

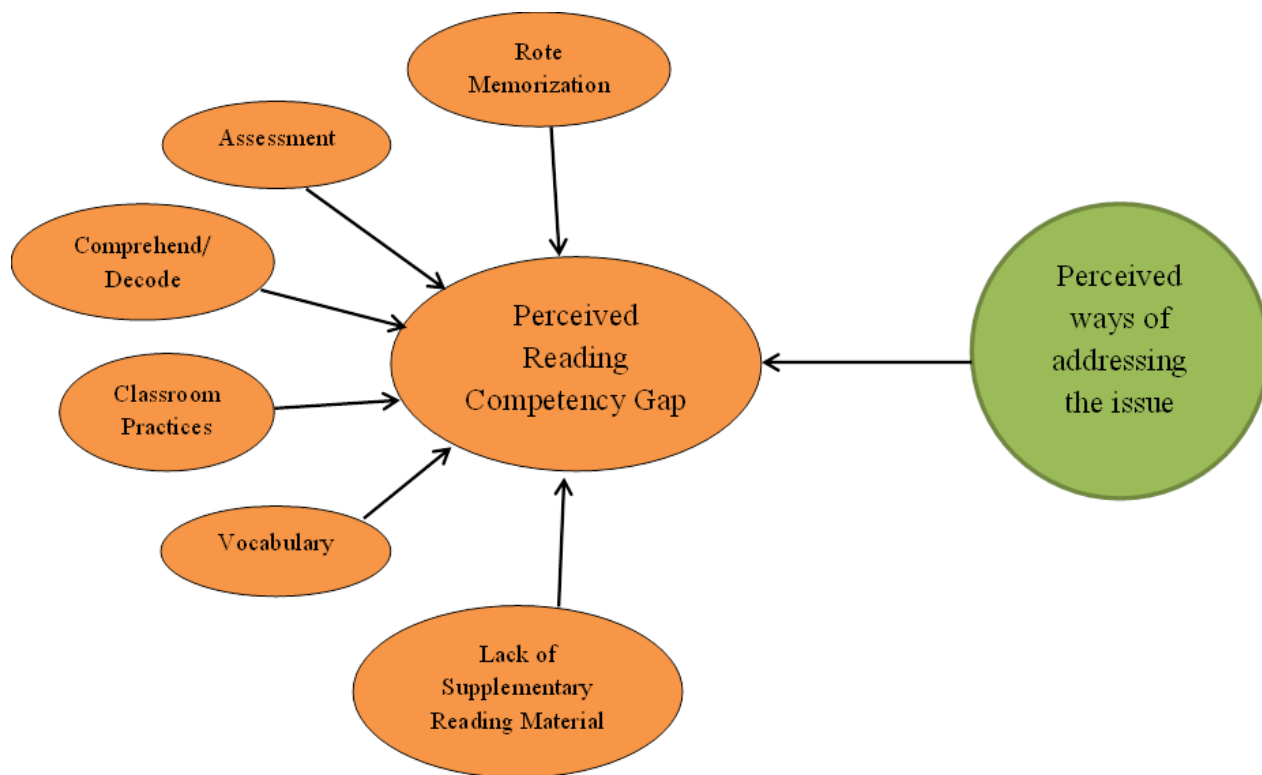


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework supported the researcher to drive the entire study. In this framework, probable variables have been identified and used for the mapping. First, the researcher will explore the reasons behind the reading competency gap and it will derive the study towards how to address the gap which will address the reading competency gap.

In figure 1, the reading competency gap is the key element of this study where the researcher wants to figure out the reasons for this issue according to the perception of the teachers. Though there are other stakeholders as well such as Head Teacher, URC Instructor, etc to reflect on this crucial issue. To understand the perception of teachers, there are some key elements that were tried to be explored by the researcher like assessment, rote memorization, classroom practices, vocabulary, decoding, lack of supplementary reading materials, etc that are influencing the factors of the reading competency gap.

Furthermore, another most important key element of the reading competency gap is the ways to address the issue. This study assumed that the teachers addressed the issue and suggested probable ways to solve the problem. In a nutshell, the probable reasons for the reading competency gap were explored along with exploring the probable ways to address the issue.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Research Site

This study was conducted in two Government Primary Schools of Chandgaon Education Thana, Chattogram, Bangladesh. Two schools have been selected depending on the criteria and the Researcher's convenience so it is a purposeful sampling that will support understanding the best (Creswell, 2012, pp 205). The reason for selecting Government Primary Schools is because the reading competency gap is very acute in these schools. National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE) executed a survey on grade 4 students of Government Primary Schools regarding their reading ability and found out that most of the students cannot read at the expected level (Salahudding, et. al., 2020, pp 69-82). Moreover, both the schools are from the same cluster of Chandgaon Education Thana, Chattogram.

3.2 Research Participants

The selection method of 7 participants was purposive. 2 Government Primary School Teachers from each school have been selected having -

- 2+ years' experience
- Teaches Bangla Subject
- Takes class of Grade 4 and 5
- An equal number of the male and female teacher

The other group was the two Head Teachers of those two schools and the URC Instructor of Chandgaon Education Thana. The consent of the participants had been taken before every interview and they had shared their consent which has been recorded during the interview. The consent process helped to understand the participants that the interview is confidential, recorded, voluntary, and participants can hold the right to withdraw it anytime.

3.3 Field Plan

The field plan had been prepared before collecting data from the participants through in-depth interviews. The data were collected following the field plan and worked accordingly.

Date	Activities	Comments
07.02.2021	Data collection start	
09.02.2021-23.02.2021	Interviews have been taken	
04.03.2021	Data Collection will end	

3.4 Research Approach

As this topic requires the perceptions of teachers, the perceptions will be interpreted and constructed differently by different teachers. However, Participant numbers and the closed-ended questions may limit the perceptions of teachers. Additionally, there is no single truth of the reading competency gap that is universal rather the perceptions vary from context to context. It requires in-depth insights into this issue and needs to generate new value for it. So the research

approach is the Qualitative (narrative) approach and the paradigm is Interpretivism or Constructivism.

This study used a phone interview method as a part of the qualitative approach. In qualitative research, researchers often look for evidence from different data points. So that they can avoid biases and rely on the collected data (Bowen, 2009, pp 27-40). That is why the researcher has collected data from Head teachers and URC to check the credibility of the data collected from the teachers.

3.5 Research Method

I have used the Interview method to collect the data from my participants. As I tried to explore the perceptions of teachers and the sample size is limited, it helped me to have individualized perceptions of teachers through interviews. Moreover, the questions are semi-structured and open-ended so it helped to dig deeper into the issue for in-depth information. Furthermore, there are scopes to dig more to know further and change the order accordingly. Most importantly, as having the reading competency gap among the students is a sensitive issue for the teachers, it helped them to have personalized time for sharing their opinions and experiences. Lastly, interviews helped to articulate how participants perceive the issue and relate their experiences in the narrative approach (Creswell, 2002, pp 502). In a nutshell, the interview was the best method for this study to have an in-depth and individualized perception of the teachers which is not biased and vague.

I had to execute the interviews through phone calls because of this COVID 19 pandemic. As my research site was Chattogram, it was difficult for me to go to Chattogram and take the interview in person. The interview questions have been attached as Appendix 2, 3, and 4. Appendix 2 is for

the government primary school teachers, Appendix 3 is for the Head teachers and Appendix 4 is for the URC instructor. The questions are all in Bangla for the participants' convenience and recorded with the help of a Laptop. Permission of recording the interview has been taken before the interview. The recording has been transcribed in a word document and all the files have been protected through a password-protected folder. A schedule has been set for each and every interview call beforehand discussed with the participants. The schedule has been prepared to keep in mind the call drop, network issue, or any emergencies.

3.6 Role as a Researcher

In qualitative research, we try to gather an in-depth understanding of the context or behaviors or the reasons which shape this context or behaviors. In qualitative research, the researcher is expected to give the details as it does not generalize the data. The researcher needs to be reflective towards the position, assumptions, choice of methods, and application. The researcher has to avoid biases and subjectivity. As the report is self-directed, the researcher has to consider self as research (Norris, W, 1997, p. 174). However, ethical considerations such as seeking consent, incorrect reporting, maintaining confidentiality, and respect were considered as well. Ethical issues such as confidentiality, anonymity, and usage of data were cleared with the participants and after giving informed consent prior to data collection (Creswell, 2012, pp 205).

3.7 Data Analysis Process

Data was collected through Interviews. The interviews were taken through phone calls as the schools were closed which means the researcher called the interviewee directly. Permission for taking the interview had been taken from the school Head Teacher. The duration of each interview was around 30 minutes. Interviews were recorded with the prior consent of

participants. Collected data were analyzed through common themes, patterns, and connections. Besides, it helped to articulate the outcomes and evaluate the effective impact of the Interview Data.

3.8 Trustworthiness and Rigor

Data were ensured as credible, trustable, dependable, and neutral by the researcher. Deep and insightful data had been analyzed through the data analysis process.

3.9 Ethical Issues and Concerns

To protect the confidentiality and privacy of the participants, a consent letter has been designed which includes a description of having no risk, the purpose of the study, confidentiality, right of withdrawal from the interview at any point, and voluntary reason. The data had been transcript accurately and secured with a password to respect confidentiality and individual perception.

3.10 Limitation of the Study

There are few limitations in this study. First of all, the researcher only used an interview method for data collection. It was difficult to execute focus group discussion or observation in this pandemic. Secondly, all the factors of the conceptual framework could not be equally explored due to the interest of interviewees and the size of this study. The other limitation was the coverage of the research site as the study collected data from only two schools of Chattogram city. Moreover, the data has been collected through phone interviews so it was another limitation.

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

During the interviews, the researcher tried to assess the research questions well. The interview questions were based on teachers preparedness, perceptions of teachers about reading competency and its gap, perceptions about the curriculum, textbook and other materials, reading competency practices in the classroom, assessing the reading competency of the students, support from HT, ATEO, and URC, major challenges of reading competency gap and how to minimize the gap. In this stage, another important element identified from the interview data is teachers' sincerity towards their students which was not included in the conceptual framework before. It was supposed to be under the theme of teachers' preparedness where the URC instructor and Head Teacher mentioned it. Other parts of the interview were about the reading competency gap and current practices of our classrooms. However, teachers stated the reading competency gap as a major obstacle to achieving quality education. They also acknowledged that this gap is submerging many other related issues such as affecting other subjects like math, social science, science, knowledge gap, etc. Some major challenges and recommendations were also identified through the interview on the reading competency gap. Moreover, the study also identified a few areas of improvement for our teaching-learning process which will help to build the reading skills of our students.

The phone interview took place after announcing the lockdown by the Government of Bangladesh due to COVID 19. As a result, schools are yet to reopen and teachers are out of their

workstations. The teacher is working from home and trying to support their students through phone calls and zoom meetings. This was one of the major challenges that the researcher has faced to take the consent of the teachers and timing availability for the interview. There was another challenge to make teachers understand the difference between the reading competency and the reading competency gap. The situations have been tackled by explaining and providing more information and definition on these two topics.

4.1 Perceptions about Reading Competency and its Gap

While talking about the perceptions of reading competency and its gap, all the respondents agreed that there is a huge reading competency gap and the reason for this gap is not teaching our students step by step language.

One of the Head Teachers (Interview #2, 03.03.2021) mentioned that “Teachers create the gap among our students when they are not able to teach students step by step like the letter, sound, etc.”

Besides, the URC instructor (Interview #1, 01.03.2021) stated that “Reading competency is the reading ability of reading, maintaining punctuation, sound and grab out the inherent meaning of it. Not recognizing the letter and not knowing the sound of it are the biggest issues for this reading gap.” So basically, reading competency helps to read with proper sound, pronunciation, and accuracy by understanding the meaning and the reading competency gap is not being able to read properly.

However, one of the assistant teachers (Interview #4, – 27.02.2021) pointed out that “Reading competency starts from the mother of the child and then goes to school. We, teachers, try to be very friendly with our students. As a result, they do not feel pressure to study hard.” Besides

this, another assistant teacher pointed out the reading competency gap as the outcome of the poor socio-economic background of the students. She (Interview #6, 29.02.2021) stated that “Most of our students belong to poor socio-economic backgrounds. So the scope of learning they get from the school only. Moreover, there are 100+ students in each classroom so it is difficult to cover all the students by the teachers.” So, teachers perceive the reading competency gap as the result of our economic and administrative issues.

4.2. How supportive the curriculum, textbooks, and other related

A different dimension was discovered when trying to explore the perceptions of the teachers about the curriculum and textbooks. One of the assistant teachers identified that our NCTB curriculum is very much upgraded and standard. He (Interview #4, – 27.02.2021) mentioned that “Our curriculum and textbooks are much enriched but we should not bind ourselves within these. Rather we should explore different activities by ourselves for different chapters other than our curriculum.”

However, one of the head teachers (Interview #2, 03.03.2021) pointed out that “This is not my concern to think about these, hence, I never think of it. I always think about the implementation process whether I am utilizing the given instructions properly or not.” So, the head teacher is not thinking about the quality of the curriculum and textbooks as she thinks that it is not her responsibility. Besides, another Head Teacher (Interview #3, 28.02.2021) who belongs to the same community but is known as a less renowned school has mentioned that “All are perfectly fine.”

On the other hand, our URC instructor (Interview #1, 01.03.2021) also agreed that “Our curriculum and textbooks are so perfect for our teachers and so accurate to students’ age-wise.”

However, one of the assistant teachers (Interview #7, 29.02.2021) who has experienced about 18 years in primary education has shared that “Actually, I am far from the book and curriculum these days so cannot recall anything. Have to see it again. But there should be some changes to make the text more interesting.” Because of this school closure for this pandemic, she couldn’t recall the curriculum and textbooks at that moment. But she thinks that there should be some improvement which she couldn’t point out immediately.

4.3 Reading competency practices in the classroom

The reading competency practices were very important to explore through an interview to have a clear idea about the perception of their own classrooms. While talking about the classroom practices, one of the assistant teachers (Interview #5, 26.02.2021) mentioned that “I ask my students to practice all the exercises of each chapter, and ask the students to read everything they see on the road. Moreover, I ask them to read from the newspaper regularly.” Besides, another assistant teacher focused on pair work. He (Interview #6, 29.02.2021) stated that “We ask our students to read in pairs, ask them to read poems aloud; sometimes we use the chain rail method for reading in our classroom.” Another assistant teacher (Interview #7, 29.02.2021) also emphasized group work and she mentioned that “We divide the lessons into small parts for reading and if time allows, we make groups and ask the students to lead their team for reading. I circulate to monitor them.”

On the other hand, one of the Head Teachers pointed out setting out targets for each week to have fruitful outcomes. She (Interview #2, 03.03.2021) said that “We teach our students alphabets and how to make words from those alphabets. Along with that, we set a target every week for teaching language which helps to achieve success in language teaching.” However,

another head teacher (Interview #3, 28.02.2021) again emphasized on challenges of maintaining a large classroom, hence she pointed out group tasks as well.

Besides, the URC instructor (Interview #1, 01.03.2021) mentioned several effective methods of achieving reading competency in our classrooms. He said, “We use silent reading, loud reading, chorus reading, etc. ways to achieve reading competency in the classroom.”

4.4 Assessing reading competencies in the lesson delivery

It is very crucial to explore how the teachers assess their students in terms of achieving the reading competencies. The URC instructor (Interview #1, 01.03.2021) focused on understanding and decoding the meaning of the text and mentioned that “For assessment, we have to ask our students to read. To know the comprehension of the text from the student, ask the student to read silently and ask questions according to that.”

Besides, both the head teachers talked about asking the students to read aloud and asking the question on the particular topic. So one of the head teachers (Interview #3, 28.02.2021) pointed out that “We ask our students to read aloud a particular text, asking to share a summary of the topic or asking to solve comprehension for the reading competency achievement.”

However, all the assistant teachers mentioned the same process of assessing the reading competencies of the students. One of the assistant teachers (Interview #4, – 27.02.2021) shared that “We ask the students to read aloud given unknown topics through oral or written mode.” Additionally, another assistant teacher (Interview #7, 29.02.2021) addressed the way of assessing and shared that “Sometimes we do it individually and sometimes in a group.”

4.5 Teachers' Preparedness

This key factor gave the study a new dimension as it tried to explore the teachers' preparedness towards achieving the reading competency of our students. Different teachers perceived this issue differently. One of the assistant teachers pointed his finger towards most of the teachers who cannot think differently or go out from the created shell. He (Interview #4, – 27.02.2021) said that “Teachers try to follow the exercises given in the textbook only. They do not try to explore other than this. Sometimes, we see teachers use the same method the way we have learned previously. We hardly follow the instructions of the curriculum development.” On the other hand, another assistant teacher (Interview #6, 29.02.2021) focused on another point that is, “Teachers are prepared but the problem is we have to create a friendly environment where students do not fear their teacher for study.” He emphasized the importance of having fearful relationships between the teacher and the students. However, the key factor of student-teacher ratio again got the floor and one of the assistant teachers (Interview #7, 29.02.2021) said that “We teachers are prepared but as the teacher-student ratio is really very high, we cannot expect 100% outcomes.”

Besides, one of the Head Teachers also talked about the student-teacher ratio which is creating an obstacle in teachers' preparedness. However, another Head Teacher (Interview #2, 03.03.2021) pointed out another issue and said, “Different teachers use different methods to teach but if they do not follow the guidelines, it will be a disaster for the students. All the teachers are trained by the Government so there should not be any flaw in the preparation.”

However, the URC instructor (Interview #1, 01.03.2021) pointed out a very crucial point about the preparedness of teachers. He said, “Our teachers are well-trained but the problem is they are

not sincere towards the students. There is a lack of care and attention for our students from the teachers' end." So he dug out a very important point which is sustaining among the teachers and him as a URC instructor observed it.

4.6 Supports from Head Teacher

Since the perceptions of teachers are linked with their work progress, support from the Head teacher was a very important key factor for the study. Though, teachers were really uncomfortable while answering this question as they work directly with the Head teacher in the school. As a result, the assistant teacher shared very positive thoughts about the support of their Head teacher. One of the assistant teachers (Interview #6, 29.02.2021) mentioned that "Yes we discuss with our Head Teacher through staff counseling every Thursday and she gives us feedback on our progress and classroom practices."

However, another assistant teacher (Interview #4, – 27.02.2021) pointed out that "To be honest, I asked our head teacher to monitor and visit the classes of all the teachers but she never does that. She has the right to visit and give us feedback but she prefers to stay away from it and never visits or monitors our class." So it can be said that there are some failings in terms of getting support from the Head Teacher.

4.7 Who else provides support

While talking about getting support from different stakeholders such as TEO, ATEO or URC Instructor, most of the teachers tried to skip the questions tactfully. They were not that much comfortable answering this question, hence, they ended up sharing in short that they monitor their classes. One of the head teachers (Interview #2, 03.03.2021) mentioned that "Our URC

instructor provides quality training and tries to monitor it from time to time.” Besides, another Head teacher (Interview #3, 28.02.2021) agreed that “They visit our school every month and give us feedback depending on our class performance. They are very busy but they give us time.”

On the other hand, assistant teachers (Interview #5, 26.02.2021) also shared almost the same perceptions and one of the assistant teachers mentioned that “They visit our classes and if they find any problem, just let us know.” However, another assistant teacher added a new dimension while sharing the almost same perception. He (Interview #4, – 27.02.2021) said, “The URC instructor may visit our class once a year and give us feedback on that particular class and ATEO is more involved with administrative work than providing us support in terms of the reading competency gap.” So by pointing out just a timeline of monitoring the classroom, it is very clear that officers hardly visit the classes of the teachers and as they hardly visit, there is very little chance of supporting teachers in reducing the reading competency gap.

4.8 Major challenges in achieving the reading competencies

This key factor is one of the most relevant factors related to our research questions. Understanding the perceptions of the teachers on the major challenges in achieving the reading competencies will help the study to have thorough ideas and to meet the target that is supposed to be explored. The URC instructor (Interview #1, 01.03.2021) mentioned that “Teachers’ sincerity towards students, poor contact hour, and extra administrative work are the major challenges in achieving the reading competencies of our students.”

Additionally, one of the assistant teachers (Interview #4, – 27.02.2021) added that

First of all, teachers’ sincerity towards students and following the curriculum step by step from grade 1. Besides, giving access to multimedia for every class and asking the students

to read Supplementary Reading Materials. Moreover, involving students in co-curricular activities and last but not the least, student number in the class compared to the teachers.

However, another teacher (Interview #5, 26.02.2021) pointed out different challenges and mentioned, “Actually, our students are from poor socio-economic backgrounds and they hardly have any table to study. Moreover, there are many students in the class and some students remain inattentive. We cannot say anything to them as we have to be friendly with them.” So he pointed out the poor socio-economic background of the students is the major challenge along with the huge number of students in the class. Another assistant teacher (Interview #7, 29.02.2021) along with all these issues she mentioned, “Educational qualification of parents is another major challenge of this gap. Moreover, in Bangla, there is Juktoborno which is very difficult for our students to understand.”

However, one of the head teachers (Interview #3, 28.02.2021) talked about another major issue and said,

Because of external pressure, sometimes those who cannot read in grade 1, we have to give him/her a promotion. Moreover, family support is very less for our students. Our guardians are not conscious of their children. That is why; our students do not get a proper environment in their home to study.

On the other hand, another head teacher (Interview #2, 03.03.2021) tried to focus on teachers’ preparedness and said, “Proper implementation of the guidelines lacks the teaching process. Moreover, lack of teachers’ sincerity and proper target setting is the most vital challenges of achieving the reading competency gap of our students.” So there are so many challenges in the

teaching-learning process but external reasons are so vibrant and dominating that the teacher tried to emphasize mostly that.

4.9 How to improve/minimize the reading competency gap

The most crucial key factor of this study is how to minimize the reading competency gap. It is much related to one of the research questions and vital areas to be explored. The URC Instructor (Interview #1, 01.03.2021) emphasized teachers' ability mostly and shared, "Teachers have to be sincere and they have to learn more. We have to ask our students for more and more practice of reading, and we need to teach them the uses of jutoborno, shoraghat and shorovongi. We have to give priority to punctuation as well."

However, one of the head teachers (Interview #2, 03.03.2021) mentioned that "Teaching alphabets and sound properly along with following the guidelines to implement strictly is very important for achieving the reading competency. Teachers' sincerity and time to time target setting are very crucial along with it." Besides, another Head Teacher (Interview #3, 28.02.2021) focused on more Parents-Teachers Meetings and extra classes along with previously stated solutions.

Now comes the assistant teacher's way of thinking about solving this issue. They have different ways to minimize the issue. One of the assistant teachers (Interview #6, 29.02.2021) pointed out that

The student-teacher ratio needed to be solved as soon as possible. Because of the huge number of students in the class, we have to shout a lot at them and we get stressed very fast. We have to use reading material and have to avoid physical punishment. Have to

create a student-friendly classroom and have to have proper planning before going to the class.

Besides, another assistant teacher just mentioned a process and perceiving as it will solve the issue at large. She (Interview #7, 29.02.2021) said, “We have to identify weak students first and then tag them with stronger students. We have to give them more attention and ask their parents to provide support at home.” On the other hand, another assistant teacher talked about a very interesting solution that may help to minimize the gap. He (Interview #4, – 27.02.2021) mentioned that

Enhancing sincerity towards students, following the curriculum, doing exercises other than books, reducing the student-teacher ratio, and access to multimedia in every class is vital to improve the current situation. Most importantly, as we have science labs for science practices, we should have a language lab for language practices. Additionally, Reading Club should be a part of co-curricular activities which will help students to achieve reading competency grade-wise.

Understanding the teachers’ perception of the reading competency gap was the main motto of this study. Different respondents from different positions and different schools of the same education helped to understand the perceptions of teachers well. Under different themes both the research questions were tried to be explored and the data collected through the interview is enough to have a clear understanding of the reading competency gap.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

The initial part of the interview was to explore the perceived reasons for the reading competency gap of students while considering the research questions of this study. There were few other relevant factors such as support from the Head Teacher/ATEO/URC instructor, major challenges, teachers' preparedness, assessment, classroom practices, etc. These relevant factors were associated with teachers' perceptions. The study examined how these factors were linked with the teachers' perception and playing a vital role in increasing the reading competency gap of students.

Reading Competency Gap

All the teachers were very concerned about the gap of reading competency that is persisting among our students. They were aware that this gap starts from grade 1 and continues towards the upper classes. They consider the socio-economic background of students and the student-teacher ratio are the main factors of the reading competency gap. Similarly, Gewertz (2011) mentioned that students who cannot read properly have an effect of socio-economic background.

Teachers have mentioned that they have around 100+ students in each class and it becomes very difficult for them to teach them properly. Moreover, another teacher mentioned the support from the family our students get. However, both the head teachers talked about the learning gap that starts in grade 1. They have discussed the step-by-step learning process of students that is missing in our primary education system. So it is observed that maximum assistant teachers are

accusing the system the most as the reason for this reading competency gap whereas head teachers are more into the teaching-learning process of our students. Besides, the URC instructor also responded like the head teachers and focused on the step-by-step learning process.

It was assumed that the reading competency gap has causes related to classroom practices but teachers did not agree with this and emphasized more on the administrative and system-related issues.

Classroom Practices

All the teachers have talked about chorus reading, chain rail method, loud reading, pair work, individual work, etc for achieving the reading competency. Additionally, they appoint stronger students for the weaker ones so that they can support better in group tasks. There were studies that indicated that student outcomes and quality classroom practices are related to teachers' years of experience (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000. pp. 129-146; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2001). But in this study, all the respondents have at least 13 years of teaching experience and this factor is not working in this context because if the teachers have this much experience in teaching, their classroom practices, and students' outcome have to be high.

However, another research indicated that teachers' way of handling and managing students is important for students' achievement (Connor, et. al., 2005, pp 343-375). In this study, the URC instructor also mentioned the same and he gave more focus to teachers' sincerity towards the students for achieving the reading competency. Actually, teachers' sincerity is really very important because of how many qualified or experienced teachers there are, it is nothing valuable if the teachers are not sincere towards the students. It is very necessary to have the urge of

teaching students with full integrity and genuineness. Otherwise, qualifications and experience will go in vain.

Besides, teachers can focus more on Shorovongi, Shoraghat, and juktoborno. Additionally, they can focus on punctuation as well.

Assessment

Through the interview data, it has been shown that all the teachers assess their students through individual or group read-aloud processes. They just ask students to read aloud and check whether they can read properly or not. But in research, it was found that students give more emphasis on reading faster than concentrating on the pronunciation of it (Kuhn, et. al, 2010, pp 232-253). Similarly, teachers have mentioned the same issue that students memorize the text and read accordingly but if we ask them to point out where they are reading, they cannot point it out. Moreover, students sometimes face difficulties in reading because of dialect. As most of our students speak in their family using dialect, they mix up their language while reading at school.

In a study, it was found that formative assessment of reading is more effective than summative (Salauddin, 2020, pp 69-82). Unfortunately, our teachers were a little bit apathetic regarding assessment as a result they are very much reluctant to use formative assessment for reading so teachers mostly focus on the traditional method for assessing students in reading. Besides, they focused that our students lack the skill of comprehending the text better than reading it accurately.

Related Materials

All the teachers were very positive about the curriculum, textbooks, and supplementary reading materials. They consider these as well-organized and enriched sources of information that have been prepared after long analysis and research. Additionally, one of the assistant teachers could not even recall the book and curriculum because of this pandemic. Moreover, one of the head teachers thinks that she is not supposed to comment on it, rather she is for the implementation only. So it indicates that the mindset of the teachers is still limited to their direct responsibilities, hence, they do not consider themselves and think out of the box other than their direct responsibilities.

However, one of the assistant teachers added that we should not limit ourselves within the textbooks and curriculum; rather we should explore other than these materials for the betterment of our students. Moreover, one of the assistant teachers pointed out that it would be great if the textbook is a little bit more student-friendly. So all the teachers are okay with the given curriculum and textbooks and do not expect any changes in these except one teacher who is expecting a little bit more colorful and interesting textbooks for our students.

Teachers' Preparedness

The data from the interviews in this theme gave a very interesting observation. Three of the teachers accused the education system of having large classrooms and 100+ students in each class as the main obstacle for the teachers to take quality classes. On the other hand, the URC instructor said that our teachers are trained enough but they lack sincerity towards their students. Besides, another head teacher also agreed with the URC instructor that all the teachers are well

trained from the Governments' end. So we can understand that there is a huge blame game from the two sides in terms of their perception regarding the reading competency gap.

However, one of the teachers mentioned that they mostly follow the traditional method for classroom practices. They prefer to teach students the way they have learned. Moreover, one head teacher and two assistant teachers from the same school accused the student-teacher ratio as the main obstacle for the teachers' preparedness. They think that all the preparation will go in vain if the teachers have 100+ students in the class; they will not be able to execute their plan accordingly.

On the other hand, one of the assistant teachers mentioned that they cannot punish students, which is one of the obstacles to not achieving the reading competency gap. According to that teacher, all the teachers are prepared but students do not fear their teacher is another obstacle. So it is understandable that assistant teachers mostly find issues on the administrative side whereas URC instructor is more into teaching the learning process.

URC instructors also emphasize teachers' learning process about different language strategies such as shorovongi, shoraghat. It is very important to have clear knowledge about these topics for every Bangla teacher. All the teachers should be in the learning process always.

Support from different roles

Three assistant teachers among the four shared that they get support from the Head Teacher through staff counseling and feedback process. Only one of the assistant teachers mentioned that their head teacher does not visit their classes but another teacher from that particular school did not share anything like this.

On the other hand, all the teachers agreed that URC instructors and ATEO visit their classes from time to time but only a single teacher mentioned that they visit only once a year. But one of the head teachers mentioned that it would be great if they would visit classes more frequently after the training for the implementation.

However, teachers also mentioned that the support they get from the URC instructor is really good but that training is not used in the implementation process. So, we can say that it is very important to visit and monitor the classes by different stakeholders for the betterment of the classes and to check the implementation of the training that our teachers receive.

Major challenges/Reasons

This study tried to examine how the teachers perceive the major reasons behind this reading competency gap. All the teachers mentioned about the student-teacher ratio, poor socio-economic background of the students, not following the curriculum guidelines step by step are the main reasons.

In Finland and Sweden, the reading competency gap is poor if students do not have enough books in their homes (Linnakyla et al., 2004, pp 231-249). But from the data, it is assumed that not only in their home but also there are very less options of reading supplementary reading materials in the school. Besides, teachers mentioned that external pressure of giving promotion, educational qualification of parents, awareness of parents, implementation of guidelines, and friendly environment with students is other major issues of this reading competency gap.

However, the URC instructor mentioned two other points as major issues such as the sincerity of the teachers and extra administrative work. Besides, another head teacher mentioned that after training monitoring the implementation phase is another reason for this gap. In research, it was

found that underprivileged students mostly get less qualified teachers (Borman & Kimball, 2005, pp 3-20) though, in our interview data, there was nothing mentioned about the qualification of the teachers. Rather, it has been mentioned several times that our teachers receive enough training from the government.

One of the teachers said that Juktoborno and decoding the text are very crucial barriers for our students. They mostly suffer because of these in reading the Bangla language. So it is assumed that most of the students struggle reading the Bangla language because of these two.

Ways of Improvement

As all the teachers acknowledged that the reading competency gap is a major issue, they have come up with so many ways of improvement. All the teachers have strongly mentioned solving the problem of student-teacher ratio as soon as possible otherwise all the efforts of ensuring quality education for all will go in vain. Besides, teachers' sincerity towards the students is another vital issue that has to be groomed among the teachers. If teachers become sincere towards their students' wellbeing and achievement then creating a friendly environment in the classroom, following the guidelines, setting targets for each week, step by step curriculum follow-up, doing exercises other than the books will be very smooth for the teachers.

However, there was a very creative suggestion given by one of the assistant teachers that are introducing a reading lab and club in every school. According to him, if there is a science lab for science subjects, there should be a language lab for Bangla literacy. It should be a part of the co-curricular activity which students not only consider as one of the subjects but also as a practicing tool.

Moreover, the URC instructor focused more on knowing shorovongi, shoraghat and jutoborno along with punctuation from grade 1. He said that many teachers do not even have enough ideas on these topics; as a result, students lack this knowledge since grade 1. Most importantly, teachers have to be in the learning process always. They have to be up-to-date in terms of knowledge and skills so that they can guide our students better. Additionally, teachers have to focus on each student individually and have to achieve the weekly target so that reading competency is achieved for each class and there is no gap that will sustain in the reading competency achievement.

Both the head teachers mentioned teachers' sincerity along with the URC instructor. Moreover, they mentioned time to time parents-teacher meetings and extra classes for developing reading skills. Another assistant teacher said that we can do group work and assign weaker students with stronger ones. But other teachers mentioned that we have started teaching sound and alphabets well to our students since grade 1 following the curriculum and step-by-step guidelines. If we can start from the stretch, we can definitely bring positive change among our students.

5.2 Conclusion

In this study, teachers' sincerity towards the students has been identified as a significant approach for reducing the reading competency gap. The aim of the study was to identify the probable reasons for the reading competency gap according to the teachers and how to minimize the issue from their perspective. The research questions are related to the teachers' perception about the causes of the reading competency gap and how to address the issue according to them. The interview of the study has been conducted with four assistant teachers, two head teachers, and the URC instructor of that particular education thana of two schools of Chattogram city. This

study identified a few key factors such as student-teacher ratio, socio-economic status of students, parents' education, parents' support, external pressure, sincerity towards students, proper monitoring of the classrooms are being the obstacles of the reading competency gap according to the teachers.

The study explored the factors of this issue and identified a few areas to minimize the issue. The most significant factor that has been identified of the reading competency gap is teachers' sincerity towards their students. Moreover, this study also found that proper monitoring of the classes is also very important for proper implementation of the training. Another factor of this study is to reduce the student-teacher ratio to a standard size so that it helps teachers to take the class effectively. Besides, teachers have to give more focus to teaching alphabets, sounds, and phonics to students since grade 1. Additionally, teachers agreed that our students have issues regarding comprehending the text so they have to focus more on not only reading aloud but also understanding the text. The other significant factor is to provide multimedia facilities for each classroom so that teachers can take interactive classes for reading. Along with that, a reading club or lab can be introduced in each school as a part of co-curricular activities. Lastly, from time to time parents-teachers meetings, extra classes, and proper planning along with target setting for each week will be an added value for reducing the reading competency gap. Although our teachers are well trained and qualified, they need continuous supervision and have to be in the learning process always.

This study helped to develop the researcher's understanding of the perception of Government Primary School teachers regarding the reading competency gap. The researcher tried to develop an understanding of how the teachers perceive this issue, what are the reasons behind it, and how they want to solve the issue. The overall finding would definitely help others to have an idea

about the ongoing gap that is persisting among our students. This study also provides significant factors and recommendations for the practitioners and stakeholders for further improvement to reduce this gap in primary education.

5.3 Recommendation

The findings of this study suggest the following recommendations to address the reading competency gap of our students.

- First of all, the student-teacher ratio has to be at a standard level so that it is very easy to manage the classroom for the teachers besides teaching them. Otherwise, teachers have to invest a lot of time in managing the classroom so that the contact hour becomes very less for the lesson.
- Motivating teachers through providing standard remuneration, facilities, and quality work environment for increasing teachers' sincerity towards the student. Additionally, grooming teachers in such a way that they can feel from the core and work accordingly.
- Following the curriculum and the guidelines strictly for teaching students starting from alphabets, sounds, phonics words, etc. step by step.
- Monitoring the classes with more sincerity and honesty so that teachers can get feedback and work on their progress. Additionally, the implementation of provided training is working or not can be checked.
- Introducing a reading lab or club in each school as a part of co-curricular activities.
- Providing supplementary reading materials to the students other than the textbooks and doing exercises out of the book.
- Providing multimedia access to each subject so that teachers can use it smoothly.

- Focusing more on Juktoborno, shorovongi, shoraghat, punctuation along comprehension of the texts.
- From time to time a target set for each class, parent-teacher meetings and extra classes will be helpful to reduce the gap as a whole.
- Alternative assessment should be taken for reading competency.
- Lastly, reducing the extra administrative work of teachers will definitely help the teachers to contribute better in the class.

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Appendices 1

Interview, Consent Letter

Dear Participant,

Greetings! As a requirement for completion of the Masters in Education (M.Ed) in the BRAC University, I, Nusrat Chowdhury, need your cooperation in conducting research titled “Teachers’ Perception regarding Students’ Reading Competency Gap in Bangla subject: A study of selected Government Primary Schools” for which I would like to take an interview with you to gather data. Participants have to share about their own teaching-learning approaches and the gap in teaching that is persisting in the teaching method. Participation in this research is totally voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw your participation at any point in time.

This interview will be conducted through an online platform named and will be recorded. The identity of the participant will remain confidential with only the interviewer. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research please contact

..... Your time and effort are cordially appreciated.

This form does hereby declare that _____ on the date of _____ agrees to the interview by Nusrat Chowdhury.

Interviewee Name

Interviewers Name

Nusrat Chowdhury

M.Ed Student, BRAC University

Phone: +8801911749084

Email: nsu.nusrat@gmail.com

Appendices 2

Research Tools: Interview Questions

Teachers' Perception regarding Students' Reading Competency Gap in Bangla subject: A study of selected Government Primary Schools.

শিক্ষকের জন্য প্রশ্নমালা

বাংলা বিষয় পড়ানোর অভিজ্ঞতার সময়কাল: বছর/মাস

বাংলা বিষয়ের উপর কী কী প্রশিক্ষণ গ্রহণ করেছেন:

1. বাংলা বিষয়ের শিক্ষক হিসেবে পঠন দক্ষতাকে আপনি কীভাবে সংজ্ঞায়িত করবেন?
2. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা নিশ্চিত করতে হলে সুনির্দিষ্টভাবে পঠন সংক্রান্ত কোন কোন দিকসমূহে শিক্ষার্থীকে দক্ষতা অর্জন করা প্রয়োজন?
3. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনে সহায়তা করার জন্য আপনি কী কী পদ্ধতি ও কৌশল ব্যবহার করে থাকেন?
4. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা মূল্যায়ন করার জন্য আপনি কী কী কৌশল ব্যবহার করে থাকেন? কয়েকটি সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরণ দিন।
5. পঠন দক্ষতায় শিক্ষার্থীর সমস্যা দিকটিকে আপনি কীভাবে ব্যাখ্যা করবেন?
6. আপনার অভিজ্ঞতায় পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনের ক্ষেত্রে পঠন সংক্রান্ত সাধারণত কোন ধরনের সমস্যা শিক্ষার্থীদের বেশি সম্মুখীন হতে হয়?
7. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা সাধারণ কেন হয়ে থাকে? সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরণ দিন।
8. পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা নিরসনে শিক্ষক হিসেবে আপনি কী কী পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ/কী কৌশল ব্যবহার করে থাকেন? কয়েকটি সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরণ দিন।

9. বাংলা বিষয়ের বর্তমান কারিকুলাম/শিক্ষাক্রম শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনের সহায়তা করার জন্য একজন শিক্ষকের জন্য কতটা সহায়ক বলে আপনি মনে করেন?
10. বাংলা বিষয়ের পাঠ্যবইয়ে সংযোজিত বিভিন্ন পাঠ ও পাঠ সহায়ক অনুশীলনী পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনে শিক্ষার্থীদের জন্য কতটা সহায়ক? শিক্ষকের জন্য তা (পাঠ্যবইয়ে সংযোজিত বিভিন্ন পাঠ ও পাঠ সহায়ক অনুশীলনী) কতটুকু সহায়ক? সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরণ দিন।
11. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা বৃদ্ধি সংক্রান্ত দিকসমূহে শিক্ষকদের দক্ষতা উন্নয়নের জন্য বিষয়ভিত্তিক প্রশিক্ষণে কতটা সহায়ক এবং কীভাবে?
12. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা নিরূপণ ও তা নিরসনে প্রধান শিক্ষক আপনাদের কীভাবে সহায়তা করে থাকেন?
13. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা উন্নয়নে থানা শিক্ষা অফিসার/ইউআরসি ইন্সট্রাক্টর আপনাকে কীভাবে সহায়তা করে থাকেন?
14. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা নিরূপণ ও উন্নয়নে আপনার অভিজ্ঞতায় আলোকে পরামর্শ কী?

Appendices 3

Teachers' Perception regarding Students' Reading Competency Gap in Bangla subject: A study of selected Government Primary Schools.

প্রধান শিক্ষকের জন্য প্রশ্নমালা

1. প্রধান শিক্ষক হিসেবে পঠন দক্ষতাকে (ৎবধফরহম ষরঃবৎধপু) আপনি কীভাবে সংজ্ঞায়িত করবেন?
2. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা নিশ্চিত করতে হলে সুনির্দিষ্টভাবে পঠন সংক্রান্ত কোন কোন দিকসমূহে শিক্ষার্থীকে দক্ষতা অর্জন করা প্রয়োজন?
3. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনে সহায়তা করার জন্য আপনি কী কী পদ্ধতি ও কৌশল ব্যবহার করে থাকেন অথবা করা উচিত বলে মনে করেন?
4. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা মূল্যায়ন করার জন্য আপনার বদ্যালয়ে কী কী কৌশল ব্যবহার করে থাকে? কয়েকটি সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরণ দিন।
5. পঠন দক্ষতায় শিক্ষার্থীর সমস্যা (ৎবধফরহম ষরঃবৎধপু মধঢ়) দিকটিকে আপনি কীভাবে ব্যাখ্যা করবেন?
6. আপনার অভিজ্ঞতায় পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনের ক্ষেত্রে পঠন সংক্রান্ত সাধারণত কোন ধরনের সমস্যা শিক্ষার্থীদের বেশি সম্মুখীন হতে হয়?
7. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা সাধারণ কেন হয়ে থাকে? সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরণ দিন।
8. পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা নিরসনে শিক্ষক হিসেবে আপনি কী কী পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ/কী কৌশল ব্যবহার করে থাকেন আপনার বদ্যালয়ে? কয়েকটি সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরণ দিন।
9. বাংলা বিষয়ের বর্তমান কারিকুলাম/শিক্ষাক্রম শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনের সহায়তা করার জন্য একজন শিক্ষকের জন্য কতটা সহায়ক বলে আপনি মনে করেন?
10. বাংলা বিষয়ের পাঠ্যবইয়ে সংযোজিত বিভিন্ন পাঠ ও পাঠ সহায়ক অনুশীলনী পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনে শিক্ষার্থীদের জন্য কতটা সহায়ক? শিক্ষকের জন্য তা (পাঠ্যবইয়ে সংযোজিত বিভিন্ন পাঠ ও পাঠ সহায়ক অনুশীলনী) কতটুকু সহায়ক? সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরণ দিন।

11. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা বৃদ্ধি সংক্রান্ত দিকসমূহে শিক্ষকদের দক্ষতা উন্নয়নের জন্য বিষয়ভিত্তিক প্রশিক্ষণে কতটা সহায়ক এবং কীভাবে?
12. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা নিরূপণ ও তা নিরসনে শিক্ষকগণ আপনাদের কীভাবে সহায়তা করে থাকেন?
13. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা উন্নয়নে থানা শিক্ষা অফিসার/ইউআরসি ইন্সট্রাক্টর আপনাকে কীভাবে সহায়তা করে থাকেন?
14. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা নিরূপণ ও উন্নয়নে আপনার অভিজ্ঞতায় আলোকে পরামর্শ কী?

Appendices 4

Teachers' Perception regarding Students' Reading Competency Gap in Bangla subject: A study of selected Government Primary Schools.

ইউআরসি ইন্সট্রাক্টর-এর জন্য প্রশ্নমালা

1. ইউআরসি ইন্সট্রাক্টর হিসেবে পঠন দক্ষতাকে (৭বধফরহম ষরঃবৎধপু) আপনি কীভাবে সংজ্ঞায়িত করবেন?
2. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা নিশ্চিত করতে হলে সুনির্দিষ্টভাবে পঠন সংক্রান্ত কোন কোন দিকসমূহে শিক্ষার্থীকে দক্ষতা অর্জন করা প্রয়োজন?
3. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনে সহায়তা করার জন্য আপনি কী কী পদ্ধতি ও কৌশল ব্যবহার করা উচিত বলে মনে করেন?
4. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা মূল্যায়ন করার জন্য বিদ্যালয়ে কী কী কৌশল ব্যবহার করে থাকে? কয়েকটি সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরণ দিন।
5. পঠন দক্ষতায় শিক্ষার্থীর সমস্যা (৭বধফরহম ষরঃবৎধপু মধঢ়) দিকটিকে আপনি কীভাবে ব্যাখ্যা করবেন?
6. আপনার অভিজ্ঞতায় পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনের ক্ষেত্রে পঠন সংক্রান্ত সাধারণত কোন ধরনের সমস্যা শিক্ষার্থীদের বেশি সম্মুখীন হতে হয়?
7. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা সাধারণ কেন হয়ে থাকে? সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরণ দিন।
8. পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা নিরসনে ইউআরসি ইন্সট্রাক্টর হিসেবে আপনি কী কী পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ/কী কৌশল ব্যবহার করে থাকেন বিদ্যালয়ে? কয়েকটি সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরণ দিন।
9. বাংলা বিষয়ের বর্তমান কারিকুলাম/শিক্ষাক্রম শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনের সহায়তা করার জন্য একজন শিক্ষকের জন্য কতটা সহায়ক বলে আপনি মনে করেন?
10. বাংলা বিষয়ের পাঠ্যবইয়ে সংযোজিত বিভিন্ন পাঠ ও পাঠ সহায়ক অনুশীলনী পঠন দক্ষতা অর্জনে শিক্ষার্থীদের জন্য কতটা সহায়ক? শিক্ষকের জন্য তা (পাঠ্যবইয়ে সংযোজিত বিভিন্ন পাঠ ও পাঠ সহায়ক অনুশীলনী) কতটুকু সহায়ক? সুনির্দিষ্ট উদাহরণ দিন।

11. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা বৃদ্ধি সংক্রান্ত দিকসমূহে শিক্ষকদের দক্ষতা উন্নয়নের জন্য বিষয়ভিত্তিক প্রশিক্ষণে কতটা সহায়ক এবং কীভাবে?
12. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা নিরূপণ ও তা নিরসনে শিক্ষকগণ কীভাবে সহায়তা করে থাকেন?
13. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা উন্নয়নে থানা শিক্ষা অফিসার কীভাবে সহায়তা করে থাকেন?
14. শিক্ষার্থীদের পঠন দক্ষতা সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা নিরূপণ ও উন্নয়নে আপনার অভিজ্ঞতায় আলোকে পরামর্শ কী?