A STUDY ON `STORYTELLING: AN EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO PROMOTE CREATIVITY IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION'

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ABSTRACT

Storytelling is a widely used approach to disseminate thoughts in the society from the primitive age and children are highly fascinated by the story. In the pre-primary curriculum of Bangladesh storytelling has given much emphasis as a source of joyful learning with imagination and creativity. This qualitative study explored the effectiveness of storytelling as a pedagogical approach. In addition, it investigated to identify the creative elements in the storytelling process. The data were collected from five pre-primary classrooms observation, each of which contained approximately 30 children and a teacher, five pre-primary teachers interview and a story-crafting session with a pre-primary class that involved 10 children, 5 boys and 5 girls. The research materials used in this study consist of observation notes, teachers interview transcripts, children's anticipatory stories collected by the story-crafting method (story-crafting originated in Finland), drawings and children's descriptive notes about their drawings. Triangulation across observations, interviews, and children's artefacts enhanced the trustworthiness of interpretations. The story-crafting method used in this study based on a fragment of a fictional story. The study corroborated that storytelling has a significant role in children's imagination and creative thinking. It seems that storytelling grasps children's attention and inspires imagination. The study showed that storytelling could be an effective pedagogical approach for early years settings, but the teachers need training on storytelling skills.

Keywords: storytelling, children's creativity, story-crafting, effective pedagogical approach, pre-primary education

I. INTRODUCTION

The story is everywhere. Every step has a story behind. This research project also has many stories and the researcher is going to tell those series of stories through this research report. The introduction chapter is the first story of that series; tale of a novice researcher. This chapter describes the background of the research project with rationale, aim, objectives and research questions.

Bangladesh has initiated early years education as a formal education system named Pre-primary Education (PPE) in recent years. National Education Policy 2010 promised that in every pre-primary class colour and coloured pencils, pictures, and various models would be made available for every child and teaching would be done through songs, rhymes, stories, and so on. All teachers are expected to be welcoming and caring for children and their safety will get high importance (Ministry of Education, 2010). To standardize pre-primary education, National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) developed and approved a national pre-primary curriculum in 2011. Bangladesh has institutionalised pre-primary education in 2010 by an interim package program under the second Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-II) within the existing government school structures (Akhter, 2012). The Pre-primary Curriculum 2011 is a competency-based national curriculum which was subsequently developed based on a set of standards. This comprehensive curriculum is activity based, developmentally appropriate and addressed all necessary domains such as physical, cognitive, emotional, language, and social needs (Nath, et al. 2014).

The pre-primary curriculum of Bangladesh is constructed based on different child development theories and learning theories. The most dominant theories are – Skinner's Behaviourist theory, Piaget's Cognitive-developmental theory, Vygotsky's Socio-cultural theory and Anderson's Schema theory (National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 2011). Behaviourist theory considers learning as a direct consequence of conditioning and reinforcement. Learning occurs when the individual can relate the behaviour to their experiences. According to Vygotsky's Socio-cultural theory, knowledge and thought are constructed through social interactions. One learns from 'Most Knowledgeable Others (MKOs)' and the process of learning through social interaction as being in the 'Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)' and teaching is considered as 'scaffolding' to support children's learning process. On the other hand, Schema theory describes how knowledge is acquired, processed and organized. Schema theory states that all knowledge is organized and stored into units or schemata then conceptualise system for understanding knowledge (Bates, 2016). The pre-primary curriculum 2011 has

mentioned 8 learning areas for pre-primary children. The pre-primary curriculum matrix has stated 'creativity and aesthetic' as the fifth learning area and several activities are there to develop children's creativity and aesthetic, storytelling is one of those activities to promote children's creativity (NCTB, 2011).

Storytelling is a widely used approach in the pre-primary education of Bangladesh. The weekly class routine allocated considerable space for storytelling in pre-primary classes. The pre-primary curriculum suggested many stories in different forms for pre-primary children. There is a set of storybooks containing 10 stories and another 13 stories are included in the pre-primary teacher's guide for children in pre-primary level (NCTB, 2013). There is also some locally available traditional story collection used for keeping up the supplies for limitless demand for stories to the children. But the interrogation is still valid to understand the effectiveness of storytelling as a pedagogical approach to promote the creativity of young children in the pre-primary setting.

II. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study was to explore the effectiveness of storytelling as a pedagogical approach to promote creativity in the context of the pre-primary education of Bangladesh. The expected outcome of this study was to present an overview of the empirical evidence on the pedagogical approaches to foster creativity in pre-primary education. The study intended to enrich the knowledge of the current situation of the storytelling practice in the pre-primary education and provided an empirical ground for further research. It was also expected that the findings of this study would help the practitioner to improve their practice. The study was designed based on three objectives as follows.

1. To systematically explore storytelling as a pedagogical approach in the pre-primary education by conducting an extensive and critical review of the literature.

2. To investigate the current practices of storytelling approach in the pre-primary education of Bangladesh through observation, teacher's interview and story-crafting.

3. To identify the most effective elements in storytelling approach which promote the creativity of young children through observation, teacher's interview and story-crafting.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Considering the above-mentioned aim and objectives this study was designed, and the research process was guided by the following research questions.

1. What are the current practices of storytelling in thepre-primary education of Bangladesh?

2. What are the most effective elements which promote creativity in the storytelling practices?

3. How do children's anticipatory stories and drawings reflect their creativity?

The first objective was attained through extensive literature review. The 2nd and 3rd objectives were achieved through observation, teacher's interview and a case study using story-crafting. Story-crafting method has created some evidence of children's creative reflections in the form of anticipatory stories and drawings.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the research literature pertinent to the present study. Through a critical review of the allied research articles, it tries to establish a clear background of the current study and demonstrates the connection with the research problem. Policy direction for pre-primary education in Bangladesh, pedagogical aspects of early year's education, the importance of storytelling, children's creativity, promoting creativity in early years through storytelling and some other relevant discussion take place with the empirical evidence to compare with the present study. This part of writing also creates a viewpoint to explore the research topic.

Due to the paucity of literature, it was necessary to explore wide and international sources to underpin the key points in this chapter. The pre-primary education in Bangladesh is a recent initiative with the formal education system and it is passing the formation stage. Research on pre-primary education in Bangladesh is not grounded in the pedagogical approaches as pre-primary education initiative is a recent intervention (Aboud & Hossain, 2011). This study has searched the literature on storytelling and children's creativity. The search was extended to a range of allied content (i.e. storytelling pedagogy, promoting creativity, story-crafting, effective pedagogical approach, early years learning, early childhood, pre-primary education) in many ways and in various sources of research literature including library database and online research journals. There is a little research-based evidence on the effectiveness of storytelling approach to foster creativity in young learners in the context of Bangladesh. Education Watch 2013 also asserted that studies on the pre-primary education of Bangladesh are limited in number (Nath, et al. 2014). So, the allied international research literature was reviewed to get the empirical background.

'Creativity and aesthetic' is considered as a major learning area for Pre-primary Education of Bangladesh. It is one of the eight learning areas stated in pre-primary curriculum and depending on this learning area several attainable competencies determined. Expression of creativity and aesthetic through storytelling is one of those attainable competencies (NCTB, 2011). The pre-primary teacher's guide has detail instruction on storytelling and it stated three specific learning outcomes for the storytelling. Those are – children can retell the stories with their own words, they can complete an incomplete story and they can continue a story in a group with their individual contribution (NCTB, 2013). The pre-primary curriculum matrix has stated as follows.

Table1: The pre-primary curriculum matrix

Learning Area	Attainable Competencies	Learning Outcome
Learning Area 5: Creativity and aesthetic	Attainable Competencies 5.2: Children can express creativity and aesthetic through rhyme, song, dance, story and playacting,	Learning Outcome 5.2.1: Children can create and tell continuous story in group, Learning Outcome 5.2.2: Children can demonstrate rhyme and story with playacting.

(National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 2013:36)

V. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in a semi-urban area of Khulna district in the southern part of Bangladesh. As the researcher is working in a sub-district unit of Directorate of Primary Education Bangladesh, the research site was selected purposely from other areas to minimize the conflict of role duality. The purposeful sampling strategy was employed for selecting this study sample. Qualitative research prefers purposeful sampling. Five government pre-primary classes were observed, five pre-primary teachers were interviewed, and a story-crafting was conducted in one of those five pre-primary classes. Ten pre-primary children were taken part in the story-crafting session and ten older children from class five were volunteered as story-crafter. The story-crafting was conducted in a pre-primary classroom with a small group consisting ten children aged 5-6 years and their one class-teacher. The study was conducted in two phases in May 2017. In phase one, 5 pre-primary classes were selected purposely to get an overview of the present situation of the study site. 5 pre-primary teachers from those 5 observed pre-primary classrooms were interviewed subsequently after observation. All the teachers were female. All teachers have 15 days training on pre-primary teaching-learning in the Upazila Resource Centre (URC) and all of them have more than 3 years teaching experience as a pre-primary teacher. For the second phase of the study, one pre-primary class was selected purposely among those five schools for the case study using the story-crafting method. The researcher himself was directly conducted all those observations and interviews and make field notes. A volunteer was involved in taking photos, audio and video recordings during those sessions. That recorded evidencewas only used to supplement the interview transcripts and observation notes. All the field notes were re-written and verified as soon as the sessions were ended to maximize the reliability of data. The data-gathering process and primary analysis were going on at the same time to keep the investigation in the right direction according to the objectives of the study.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study employed three research tools for collecting data; observation, interview and story-crafting. Interview and story-crafting were conducted in Bangla, the first language of the participants. The audio-recorded interviews were first transcribed verbatim in Bangla, and then the relevant themes translated into English. The anticipatory stories were also translated into English. Children were asked to describe their drawings and they have explained their drawings in their own words, some relevant explanatory notes were tagged with their drawings. Pseudonyms were used for the participating children (such as Shan, Puza, Riaz, Arina…) and letter codes were used for schools and the teachers (such as A, B,..).

Analysing and presenting qualitative data is one of the most challenging tasks of the qualitative research. The research data were collected in four different forms; those are descriptive field notes during the observation; interview transcripts of the semi-structured interview with pre-primary teachers; children's anticipatory stories by story-crafting; and children's drawings. This study employed two qualitative data analysis techniques for the two different sets of data. For observation notes and interview transcripts thematic analysis (Creswell, 2012) was carried out on the basis of the research questions by using different themes derived from the collected data in relation to each research question. The analysis was constructed over the circumstance that the material was first broken down into parts and then collected and re-conceptualized as a logical whole in a new way (Krippendorff, 2004). A preset framework of Content analysis was employed for the anticipatory stories and drawings to determine the reflections of children's creativity. The framework for content analysis was specially

customized by the research for this study on the basis of Aerila & Ronkko's (2013) content analysis framework to trace the reflection of creativity in the children's works. Aerila& Ronkko used a framework of compulsory, optional and free elements for analysing children's anticipatory stories and drawings to evaluate the creative learning process. Table 2 illustrates the process of data analysis.

Table 2: Data analysis Matrix

Research question	Methods of data-gathering	Data used for analysis	Techniques of analysis
Question 1. What are the current practices of storytelling in the pre-primary education of Bangladesh?	-Sessions observation -Semi-structured interview with teachers -Document review	-Observation notes -Interview transcripts -document review notes	Thematic analysis
Question 2. What are the most effective elements which promote creativity in the storytelling practices?	-Sessions observation -Semi-structured interview with teachers -Story-crafting	-Observation notes (during different stages of story-crafting) -Interview transcripts -anticipatory stories and drawings	Thematic analysis and content analysis
Q3. How do children's anticipatory stories and drawings reflect their creativity?	-story-crafting -children's self-explanation about their drawings	- anticipatory stories and drawings -children's self-explanatory notes about their drawings	Contents analysis

In this study, the framework was assigned to identify the compulsory, optional and free elements in the children's anticipatory stories and drawings. According to the content analysis framework (presented in methodology part) and to answer the third question of the study the properties of anticipatory stories and drawings were analysed into three categories compulsory, optional and free elements. The compulsory elements are those elements taken from the fragmented fictional story directly in the anticipatory stories by the children. The optional elements are also taken from the fragmented fictional story but those are not directly replicated. Children may obtain optional elements with the hints from the compulsory elements from the fragmented fictional story and they use it creatively. The free elements emerge independently and spontaneously within the anticipatory stories as the internal representation of their instinctive imagination and creative thinking. The use of optional and free elements represents children's creativity. (Aerila & Ronkko, 2013)

The observation notes and interview transcripts were analysed in order to extract the meaning from the data and it was rearranged by different themes under each research question. Those observation notes and interview transcripts gave a clear evidence of the existing practice of storytelling and its effectiveness that presented here with the following themes under the research questions. At the second phase of data-gathering, ten children participated in story-crafting, all of them able to tell their own anticipatory stories with the elements of the fictional fragmented story. All those stories contained complete and meaningful sentences. The shortest story has 10 sentences and the longest story has 22 sentences with different ideas and creative thoughts that give evidence of their creative reflections. Children were asked to illustrate their stories with drawings. All of them drew a picture to represent their story and they explained their drawings in their own words.

The Current Practice of Storytelling (research question 1)

The first question in this study sought to determine the present status of the storytelling practice in the pre-primary classes. The observation notes and interview notes were analysed to draw the current state of storytelling practice in thepre-primary education of Bangladesh. The following themes were derived from the collected data that represent the current practice of storytelling.

Table3: Themes for question one (Observation and Interviews)

Research question 1:	What are the current practices of storytelling in the pre-primary education of Bangladesh?
Themes:	• Dependency on reading aloud • Teacher's perception • Passive role of children • Absence of playacting • Disparity between policy and practice

Dependency on reading aloud: Observation revealed the fact that the storytelling in the pre-primary classroom entirely depended on reading aloud from the supplied storybooks. Teacher's interview data also supported the

fact. All the 5 storytelling sessions were noted as story reading instead of storytelling. Teachers are not conscious of the differences between story reading and storytelling. During the interview, teachers were asked about this observation. Teacher E stated,

> "I found no other ways to tell the stories; we have our stories in the teacher's guide and in the set of storybooks. I read aloud these stories during story time."

Teacher B also commented,

> "As we have some selected stories for the pre-primary class we have to read aloud these to our children because they cannot read."

It seems very natural to the teachers to read aloud from the story books instead of telling the stories from their memories with some other essential ingredients for making a story lively and interactive.

Contrary to expectations, the result of this study indicates that the storytelling in pre-primary of Bangladesh not been practised in its entirety. Though the storytelling as a pedagogical approach was clearly demonstrated in the pre-primary teacher's guide (DPE2013). This study suggests that teachers are not fully aware of the importance of storytelling for the development of children's creativity. Reading stories to three to five-year-old is important as with all age groups but it is a more passive experience then storytelling. Over-dependence on reading does not encourage a full development of creativity and communication skills (Hamilton & Weiss, 2005).

Teachers' perception about storytelling: Observation pointed that teachers' understanding of the importance of storytelling and story reading was not clear. They may not concern about the interactive nature of storytelling. The selected stories were provided as a sample but treated by the teachers as a textbook for the story to follow accordingly. When referred to the pre-primary curriculum guide on storytelling, some teachers responded by saying;

Teacher B

> "I do not read the curriculum. But have seen the instructions in the teachers' guide and got training. Sometimes, I try to tell the story according to the instructions."

Teacher C stated that

> "I like to tell the story in my own word and try to involve children in the story by asking them various questions. I encourage the children to tell their own stories."

Though the interactive nature of storytelling was not found in the practice, teachers opined that they are trying.

It was found that teachers of preschools in Bangladesh still believe in textbook-based techniques and rote-learning methods where children are perceived only as recipients. Teacher's beliefs and perceptions of quality teaching approaches can work as an effective resource in preschools. Moreover, their ideas and views about curriculum, content and pedagogy have an impact on their classroom teaching practices in preschools as their beliefs influence their attitudes, thoughts, judgements and behaviour towards children in their classrooms (Banu, 2014). One unanticipated finding was that the teachers were not aware of the storytelling as a pedagogical approach. They considered storytelling as a supplementary leisure activity. Three of the five pre-primary teachers considered that reading aloud is enough to serve the purposes of storytelling. Teacher's perception about using storytelling in the classroom is important. It helps them to use the story purposefully.

Passive role of children: During story time children were observed to be silent and passive. When teacher paused reading and asked the question a chorus of different answers were shouted out from the children but there was a little chance for the children's voice to be heard. Sometimes children showed boredom to listening to the same stories again and again.

Teacher C mentioned that

> "We have only 23 stories for pre-primary class, so sometimes I come back to old one. Presenting new stories for children is not so easy task."

All the storytelling sessions were found mostly teacher-centred.

Teachers B stated that

> "We are used to tellingthe story in this way."

Though there are specific instructions in the teacher's guide.

Children learn the social aspects of language through observation and participation in storytelling (Craig et al., 2001). However, a teacher-centred storytelling practice was found in the observed classrooms, children have got little chance to participate in the storytelling. Involving the audiences in the stories is a very effective skill for storytelling. The literature review revealed that active participation of the children in the storytelling is essential for active learning. It is important to bring stories alive with the expression of feelings, characters that speak in their own voices, interesting settings, definite problems to solve and of course resolutions. Put lots of variety of pace, volume and movement in telling, quiet moments after energetic sections can be the most effective parts of a story (Hamilton & Weiss, 2005).

Absence of playacting: Storytelling followed by playacting as directed in the pre-primary curriculum were not apparent during the observation. When asked about this, teachers reported that they do not have enough time and scope for playacting. Besides, there were some disagreements on this issue.
Teacher C explained

"In the pre-primary class we spend most of the time with rhyme, song, free play, guided play, parents do not like this much fun in the class. How could we manage to playact?"

Teacher E opined

"It requires more time for the preparation of a playacting in the pre-primary class. Besides, we do not have enough materials and space for arranging such playacting with the children."

Actually, parent's perception about pre-primary education is different; they expect more teaching-learning activities rather than play or other child-centred activities in the classroom.

The study noted that pre-primary teachers were not practised playacting or dramatisation in their storytelling sessions because of the time limit and parents' disagreement. One interesting finding through an informal discussion with the parents is that they (the parents of pre-primary children) prefer the teacher directed teaching-learning activities than the storytelling and other play-based learning activities. During this study, the researcher had the chance to get some parents opinion by an informal discussion. As those parents were not concern about curriculum and pedagogical approach of pre-primary classroom their expectation was misleading.

Disparity between policy and practice: The pre-primary teachers' guide describes storytelling techniques for the pre-primary teachers and that is the policy recommendations for storytelling practice in pre-primary. There are 3 learning outcomes and 10 rules in the teacher's guide. It recommends that storytelling should be performed properly with playacting by using picture/puppet/doll/mask. Children should be able to retell the stories with their own words. At the end of each story, a playacting may be arranged with the children to ensure their active participation (NCTB, 2013). During the observations, in one out five classrooms were only found to partially reflect the directions regarding storytelling, despite the 15 days of basic training on the pre-primary teaching. Teachers also gave a similar opinion with mentioning some limitations such as time, lack of skills and cultural constraints.
Teacher A said

"I have the training on pre-primary teaching, but I have to teach in other classes as well. So, I did not get time to prepare for the pre-primary class accordingly."

Teacher E agreed that

"Children can retell the stories in their own words and it is important to hear them. Children are able to tell the stories with their own words, but it is difficult to manage to hear from children in an overpopulated classroom."

It seems that teachers are willing to conduct the storytelling sessions according to the guideline, but they failed to do that, because of some limitations. Though storytelling is suggested as a pedagogical approach for pre-primary education, yet teachers and parents consider storytelling as a leisure activity. A previous study by Chowdhury & Corine (2012) revealed that the value of play and storytelling as learning is determined by the socio-cultural, historical, educational, economic and political factors of the given society. Parents considered play and storytelling as leisure while teachers acknowledged it as accelerating young children's learning and aiding their preparation for school.

Elements to promote creativity in storytelling process (research question 2)
The second question of this research was nominated to identify the elements in storytelling approach for fostering the creativity of children in early years. Observation and interview data indicated some particular elements of storytelling to promote creativity in regard the second research question. Following themes derived from the data are presenting those elements.

Table4: Themes for question two (Observation and Interviews)

Research question 2:	What are the most effective elements which promote creativity in the storytelling practices?
Themes:	• Imaginary characters • The plot of the story • Dialogues • Charismatic presentation • Fun and excitement

Imaginary characters: Children's stories full of imaginary characters. Those imaginary characters stimulate children's imagination and creative thinking. Data suggested that there was a consensus that when they tell stories the children attempt to relate it to imaginary creatures.
Teacher E mentioned

"Children love stories with imaginary creatures. They also try to create their own stories with those imaginary creatures and make a connection with their real-life experiences."

Observation noted that children become more curious about the imaginary character of a story and they expanded their imagination with that character.

Teacher D shared

"Sometimes children surprisingly asked for an explanation, how do the animals speak with human voices?"

The plot of the story: Stories always developed with an interesting plot with a beginning, middle and an ending. Children were found seriously engaged with the plot of the story and they try to remake the plot according to their own interest. It was observed that during storytelling, children discuss with peers and they express their thoughtfulness.

Teacher E stated that

"Children are very interested in the plot of a story. When a story goes forward, I paused intentionally to feel children's eagerness for the next sequences of the story. Sometimes, they become impatience and start asking."

The anticipatory stories gave evidence of children's self-directed plot with a distinct variation and it represented their possibility thinking, the driving force for creativity. But the present practice of storytelling does not allow children to retell the stories with their own voice. Teachers also agreed with this observation.

Teacher C mentioned that

"Sometimes, children want to tell their stories in the class and I allow them. They are quite capable to retell the stories in their own words and their senses of story making are amazing! They can go along with their imagination."

Dialogues: Children love the dialogues in human voice by the other animals. All teachers agreed that dialogues are the most influential elements in the story. Children try to imitate the dialogues of different characters and it creates opportunities for them to practice various verbal expressions.

Teacher E opined that

"I found them (children) practising the dialogues of the characters of the stories with peer during playtime and they are really good at imitating the imaginary characters of the stories"

Observation also ascertained this practice among the children. Children sometimes practice the dialogues among themselves during the storytelling session and afterwards. Children used the dialogic pattern to tell their anticipatory stories (such as Shan's anticipatory story, see appendix…). A previous study by Opel et al. (2006) on a dialogic reading program found that dialogues help children to quickly improve their vocabulary with the help of challenging stories.

Charismatic presentation: Stories describes the event in an attractive manner and it consists of various language patterns. That could be a great source of language learning. By taking part in the storytelling children encouraged to describe their feelings in their own words. Thus, creativity enhanced.

Teacher E stated that

"Though we cannot manage to add puppet/dolls/role play with the storytelling process, yet they (children) enjoy the inherent captivating nature of the storytelling"

Hamilton & Weiss (2005) claimed that storytelling encourages children to create their own images, feelings and responses to go along with the stories and this multi-faceted creativity carries over to all forms of creativity. They opined that a mix of told, read, watched, acted, played, painted etc stories on a regular basis is the way to go.

Fun and excitement: Stories are the huge sources of fun and excitement for the children. Children love to learn with fun and excitement. Stories grab their attention and make them involved with the tale which is important for learning and creative thinking. Especially, when children got a chance to take part in the story with their own contribution they feel the exhilaration of the story. It also helps them to reduce fear feelings for school and learning.

Teacher E mentioned that

"Stories are always a good source of entertainment and anticipation for the children. Storytelling creates a chance to have fun with the children in the class and through this practice children become intimate with each other and with the teacher."

One of the five observed storytelling session was found adhering to the rules stated in the teacher's guide. The study purposely selected the most efficient pre-primary class among the five for the second phase of data collection. The story-crafting method was employed for getting children's reflections.

Results from story-crafting

At the second phase of data collection, the study employed the story-crafting method. Story-crafting produced the anticipatory stories and drawings by the participating children. Those anticipatory stories and drawings are the representation of children's creative reflections.

The story-crafting process

The story-crafting process was initiated by a fragment of fictional text. That was -

> A Fox once saw a Crow fly off with a piece of meat in its beak and settle on a branch of a tree.
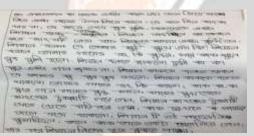>
> "That's for me, as I am a Fox," said Mr Fox, and he walked up to the foot of the tree.
>
> "Good day, Mr Crow," he cried. "How well you are looking today: how glossy your feathers; how bright your eye. I feel sure your voice must surpass that of other birds, just as your figure does; let me hear but one song from you that I may greet you as the Queen of Birds."

After presenting the fragment of the story the children were asked to complete the story. They told their anticipatory stories to an older peer who transcribed it verbatim. Then children draw pictures to illustrate their stories.

Shan, one of the ten participating children of the studied pre-primary class, told his anticipatory story with an interesting ending. He ended with revenge by the crow. He took characters and the plot from the original story and used them creatively in his story.

Figure1: Shan's anticipatory story

One morning, a crow brings a piece of meat from a meat shop. She sits on a branch of a tree. She thinks, she did not eat meat for many days and now what a pretty piece of meat she is going to eat!

A fox was going to the tree and saw the piece of meat on crow's mouth. The fox became greedy and think how he can get the meat. A plan came to his head.

Fox said, "Dear brother crow, how beautiful you are! Your colour is so nice! Your voice is also very sweet. Long days I do not hear your sweet song. Would you please sing a song for me?"

The crow became happy to hear the sweet words of the fox. She did not understand the plan of the fox. She thought that the fox really appraised her beauty.

Crow said, "Oh! Dear friend, you want to hear my song! Ka…. Ka… ka… "
Suddenly the meat dropped down from her mouth and the fox picked up the meat and run away.

The crow understood her mistake. But she did not get back the meat. The crow started shouting and crying for her meat.

One day, the crow was on the branch of a tree and she saw the fox sleeping under the tree. She thinks that it is the right time to take revenge and she throws a stone at the fox. (Translated from Bangla)

Table5: The compulsory, optional and free elements in Shan's story

	Story process	Shan's story
Compulsory	Telling the anticipatory story to an older story-crafter	Did
	Deciding the dialogues	Did
	Selecting characters	Did
	Completing the story with an ending	Did
	Drawing a picture of the story	Did
Optional	Drawing the original story or anticipatory story	Anticipatory story
	Making choice of the character	Same as original
	Creating a sequence	Generating new
	Repeating the details from the original	Elaboration with little repeating
Free	Elements imported to the anticipatory story that not exists in the original story	Taking revenge on the fox

Figure2: Shan's drawing

Table6: the compulsory, optional and free elements in Shan's drawing

	Drawing process	Shan's drawing
Compulsory	drawing the scene from the anticipatory story or original story	Did
	Drawing the characters	Did
Optional	Drawing the original story or anticipatory story	Anticipatory story
	Making choice of the characters	Insert new character
	Drawing the details from the original or anticipatory	Anticipatory scenario
Free	Elements imported into the drawing that not exist in the original story	A boy, sun, sky, house

Reflection of children's creativity: (research question 3)
With respect to the third research question, it was found that children's anticipatory stories and drawings represent their creative thinking in a significant way. This study collected evidence of children's reflections of creative thinking on a fragmented fictional story by using the story-crafting method. It was analysed with a pre-set framework of compulsory, optional and free elements to identify the creative reflections, as it has explained in the methodology chapter.

Compulsory elements: The elements that directly taken from the fragment of the fictional story used in the story-crafting session. Most of the children used the compulsory elements 'the crow, the fox and the piece of meat' in their anticipatory stories. One child replaced the fox with a dog. All stories started with same elements from the original fragmented story but ended with a variety of elements and plots with their own prediction.

Optional elements: The elements that derived from the fragment of a fictional story with a little customization or elaboration. All the ten anticipatory stories imported optional elements such as a dog, a man and some other relevant to the surrounding environment. Through using those optional elements effectively in their anticipatory

stories and drawings, children showed their innate imaginative ability to make consequences of presenting their creativity. Besides, all the anticipatory stories were ended with a reasonable conclusion of the stories.

Free elements: The free elements are totally creative part of the anticipatory stories. Those come from children's own imagination and tailored to the plot of their stories. Numerous free elements such as adog, man, a boy, cat, house, trees etc were found in the children's anticipatory stories and drawings. The self-directed ending of their anticipatory stories was the remarkable creative reflection of children. Every story has its end with a different prediction than the fragmented story was told to them. As Shan's anticipatory story ended with taking revenge by the crow.

Children's Self-reflections: Children's self-explanation about their drawings were noted down and these evidenced their thoughtfulness. As Shan described his drawing with the following words.

"I draw a crow sitting on the tree. The tree is near my home and I am looking for the crow. The sun rises, and the fox runs away."

Through this self-reflection about his drawing, Shan added a new dimension to his anticipatory story. He imagined that he was there during the event took place. Similarly, every participating child explained their drawing and told the story behind each drawing to unfold the inner views. That self-explanation of the drawings also articulated their creative thinking.

Overall discussion of findings

In the pre-primary classroom of Bangladesh storytelling is considered as an effective way for teaching moral and ethical issues of the society to the young children. There are many such traditional stories existing in the local community and those are frequently told children for their moral development. Children enjoyed those stories with a sincere attention and they try to re-create for their mates. This is a common scenario of a rural community and pre-school environment for the young children of Bangladesh. Enjoying stories and re-creating stories for re-telling is very natural for children. It is a traditional way of life for the children especially in the rural community in Bangladesh. So, there is an inherent culture of practising creative storytelling in children and it is entirely depended on the power of imagination and creativity. Besides, storytelling itself also an expressive art. Through telling the anticipatory stories children showed their creativity in many ways, such as various verbal expressions, dialogues, creating new plots and characters for the story and presenting a meaningful story with a beginning, middle and ending. Keep aligning with this inherent culture of storytelling the pre-primary curriculum of Bangladesh has given clear emphasis on the storytelling as a pedagogical approach for the pre-primary classroom.

Story reading and storytelling for young children are very different in nature. Observation evidenced that there is a misconception among the pre-primary teachers about story reading and storytelling. Most of the teachers of the observed classes were reading stories from the prescribed storybooks with showing the illustration from the storybooks. Sometimes they asked questions during story session and tried to use their gesture and voice modulation to make the session interesting to the children. Reading stories from the book in the classroom make a barrier for interaction and break spontaneity. Story reading has very limited opportunity to become participatory and active. Sometimes teachers retell the same stories several times to the same group of children and that creates boredom. It seems that teachers have little understanding of the differences between story reading and storytelling. Even teachers were not aware of the importance of storytelling process. The current study clearly showed that storytelling was not practising properly in the pre-primary classroom. Mostly, story reading was taken place instead of storytelling and teachers were dependent on the storybooks. On the other hand, the storytelling was found mostly limited to the allocated time of the class routine. Teachers may not conscious enough to use the storytelling as a pedagogical approach to other learning areas. The study revealed that the ultimate objectives of storytelling as a pedagogical approach for pre-primary children are still far behind to achieve. Though storytelling was found as an effective pedagogical approach to promote creativity in young children it requires teacher's professional knowledge and skill to use this approach effectively.

Findings

The aim of the study was to justify the effectiveness of storytelling as a pedagogical approach for promoting the creativity of the pre-primary children in the context of Bangladesh. This study employed three qualitative research tools to collect data in favour of the research questions of the study. Observation and interview is two widely used instruments for qualitative study and the story-crafting method is also an effective instrument for researching with children. These diverse methods of data collection provided scope for data triangulation that was the strength of this qualitative study. The reflexivity of the researcher also considered carefully to minimize any kind of bias in data collection and data analysis.

The storytelling practices in the pre-primary education of Bangladesh

Data show that the storytelling practice entirely depends on storybooks and reading aloud. The observation and interview were supplemented to each other to draw the answer to this question. Five major themes were come out from the data to represent the current practice of storytelling in the pre-primary education of Bangladesh, such as dependency on reading aloud; teacher's misperception of storytelling approach; the passive role of

children; absence of playacting; and the disparity between policy and practice. Furthermore, the storytelling was found mostly limited to the allocated time of the class routine. Teachers did not appear to be aware that storytelling could be used as a pedagogical approach and support other areas of learning. As Daniel (2012) argued that the story also provides a place in which the underlying patterns of mathematical and scientific processes and possibility thinking can be explored.

The most effective elements in the storytelling to promote creativity

This study revealed that storytelling is an effective pedagogical approach for pre-primary education in many ways. Storytelling has many elements to promote creativity in young children through creating space for imagination and joyful learning. The observation, interview data and children's anticipatory stories were used to support the answer to this question. Observation pointed that children were significantly influenced by the story to extend their imagination and possibility thinking. Children's anticipatory stories had a meaningful ending. The data uncovered that the imaginary characters; the plot of the story; dialogues; charismatic presentation; fun and excitement were the most effective elements to foster children's imagination and creative thinking. Storytelling itself is a creative art and it has many elements to foster creativity. Phillips (2000) also affirmed that storytelling has a very significant power to intensify creative potential in young children.

Creativity in the children's anticipatory stories and drawings

This study used the story-crafting method to collect children's anticipatory stories and drawings. The anticipatory stories and drawings were derived from the fragmented fictional story that was used to initiate the story-crafting process. A pre-set framework was employed for analysing children's anticipatory stories and drawings to trace the creative reflections. The data exposed those children's anticipatory stories and drawings both were full of several optional and free elements. According to the pre-set framework of analysis, those optional and free elements were considered as the reflections of children's creativity in the anticipatory stories and drawings. Besides, storytelling itself also an expressive and creative art. Through telling the anticipatory stories children showed their creativity in many ways, such as various verbal expressions, dialogues, creating new plots and characters for the story and presenting a meaningful story with a beginning, middle and ending.

Implications for the practitioners and policymakers

Through exploring the effectiveness of storytelling as a pedagogical approach this study has contributed to the existing knowledge of storytelling practice and it will help the practitioners of Bangladesh to improve their practice by giving some empirical evidence on this issue. This study has created an empirical ground of storytelling practice in the context of pre-primary education of Bangladesh. It revealed the situation of storytelling practice in the pre-primary setting that will help the policymakers to rethink the approach to improve children's literacy skills and creativity. It will help the practitioners to improve their practice of storytelling and to take initiatives for professional development. Especially, the findings will help the pre-primary teachers to enrich their professional skills for storytelling. This study will help to reshape the professional ability of the researcher to support the pre-primary education with detail cognition on children's creativity and the storytelling. The pre-primary education initiatives will be benefited with the new notion towards storytelling practice in pre-primary classes.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study revealed some critical issues regarding the storytelling practice in the pre-primary education of Bangladesh. The following recommendations are made as a result of the findings from this study. That could be addressed from different levels of implementation of the pre-primary education, such as; central level, sub-district level and school level.

Dependency on reading: The storytelling in the pre-primary classroom entirely depended on reading aloud from the supplied storybooks. This dependency on reading aloud needs to minimize at the minimum level. Teachers should know the techniques and prepared themselves for storytelling accordingly. Head teacher's academic supervision and support may help to improve this practice at the school level. On the other hand, necessary assistance and supervision need to be extended at the sub-district. The respective cluster officer needs to be conscious about this. From the central level, this issue could be included in the policy directions to give a proper guidance for the storytelling practice.

Teachers' perception about storytelling: Observation indicated that teachers' understanding of the importance of storytelling and story reading was not clear, with little regard to the interactive nature of storytelling. It is necessary to develop teacher's professional knowledge and perception on the storytelling practice with in-service training.

Passive role of children: During story time children were observed to be silent and passive. Sometimes children showed boredom to listening to the same stories again and again. The pre-primary curriculum emphasized on activity-based learning and active learning opportunities for children. The storytelling practice is needed to be more child-led and interactive. This could be achieved through teacher's professional development and training.

Absence of playacting: Storytelling followed by playacting as directed in the pre-primary curriculum were not apparent during the observation. It could be an effective way to engage children in the storytelling process to create an activity-based learning with due care to foster creativity. The storytelling practice with role play might be practised in the pre-primary setting.

Disparity between policy and practice: The pre-primary teacher's guide describes storytelling techniques for the pre-primary teachers and that is the policy recommendations for storytelling practice in pre-primary. But there was a disparity between policy and practice; this disparity should be minimized through training and skill development of the teachers.

Teacher's skills for storytelling: Data show that teachers are not skilled enough to conduct the storytelling session according to the guidelines. As a result, they did not get the benefits of the storytelling approach in their teaching-learning activities. More training on storytelling is needed to develop teacher's confidence on storytelling.

VIII.   LIMITATIONS

Three limitations of this study project listed. Some other aspects of the study need to be highlighted which could have been of benefit to give a complete picture of the results if such area were investigated, such as-

- This study only gathers data from the storytelling session out of the total class duration. It would have been beneficial if the whole pre-primary class time was also observed to get a complete scenario of using the storytelling approach for other learning activities.
- The story-crafting was conducted in one pre-primary class with only ten children. It may not represent the other variety of pre-primary settings.
- This study used only the anticipatory stories and drawing to trace the creative reflections of children with a pre-set framework of compulsory, optional and free elements. That framework could be more extended to get the other creative aspects of children's expressions such as; the presentation style, uses of gesture and other supporting elements in the storytelling.

Recommendations for further studies

As it is the first initiative to research on storytelling as pedagogy in the context of the pre-primary education of Bangladesh. These findings may be somewhat limited by the research methods and researcher's perception of the studied subject. A note of caution is due here since the data analysis framework and the story-crafting method used in this study may require further justification. There are different thoughts on children's creativity and assessment of creativity, this study noted some evidence to go forward. Further studies on storytelling approach and its impact on children's creativity is essential for a better understanding of the issue. The use of storytelling approach in other learning activities in the pre-primary settings needs to bead dressed through further research to get more detail about the practices.

IX. CONCLUSION

Education of young children entirely focused on developing their ability to become creative to live their life in any challenging situation. Creativity is considered as an individual psychological property which is dependent on the cognitive development of the child. However, in the pre-primary education, creativity stands for the various expressive arts. To flourish creativity attention is needed to the social and contextual environment in which child brought up. In an educational setting, open, exploratory and collaborative spaces are essential to enabling creativity. The rest of the world also educating children with a view to promoting creativity through their education system. This research data showed that storytelling has a positive impact to promote creativity and imagination in young children. To enrich young children's imagination and creativity storytelling has a magical power. The story has a well-defined role in child education system to create an enabling environment for developing children's spontaneous thinking and dreaming with their own insight. It provides a perfect vehicle for manipulating words for creative ends. To facilitate children's creativity, teachers should provide the opportunities to express their thoughtfulness. This study employed the story-crafting method to create opportunities for children to express themselves through anticipatory stories and drawings. Though there were limitations for using the story-crafting in this research and the story-crafting process was not employed with its full features due to unavailable resources in the pre-primary classroom. This study may be considered as the first step towards researching children's creativity in the pre-primary education of Bangladesh. And the pre-primary teachers will get a better understanding of the storytelling as a pedagogical approach from this study.

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