

# IMPROVING QUALITY PRIMARY EDUCATION: THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

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## ABSTRACT

*Qualitative change in Bangladesh primary education system is the most important priority of the day. The previous two decades have seen the increase of the enrollment and dropout rate and decrease of illiteracy rate in primary education. But the quality of primary education is not satisfactory yet. However, there are still over one million primary school aged children are outside of the formal primary schools. Lack of community participation is one of the major causes of this scenario. In this study, the researcher had tried to investigate the role of community participation for enhancing quality primary education with a focus on present status and impact of Community participation. In order to compare the impact of community participation, 9 Good Community Participation Schools (GCPS) and 9 Less Community Participation Schools (LCPS) were conveniently selected from 3 Upazilas of Tangail district as the sample of the study. For major findings of the study, it was found that there was a good co-operation between school and community in Good Community Participation schools. The SMC, PTA, LGR, and SLIP members and guardian\Parents had co-operated with the teachers for the work of child survey, student admission and so on. They also donated some teaching aids foe the learners and visited the absentee learners' homes as well. Regarding the interaction between school and community the quality primary education level was god in Good Community Participation schools. But, the situation was not satisfactory in Less Community Participation schools.*

**Key words:** *Quality, Primary Education, Community, Participation.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Since beginning Bangladesh has taken a plethora of steps to increase the quality of primary education. The first education commission Kudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission 1972 outlined to develop and nurture the child's moral, mental and social personality; to bring up the child as a patriotic, responsible, inquiring and law-abiding citizen, and develop in him/her love for justice, dignity, labor, proper conduct and uprightness; to learn to read and write in the mother tongue, and to be able to count and calculate; to be able to acquire the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for a future citizen; to prepare for next stage of higher education (Bangladesh Education Policy, 1974:23). The primary education compulsory act has passed in 1990 which declared that no child be deprived of education for lack of teacher, learning materials and adequate space; no child be subject to disparities of access to

primary education arising from gender, income, family, cultural or ethnic differences and geographic remoteness (EFA, 2000:2).

In 2003, Bangladesh prepared a national action plan for 'Education for All' with a specific set of goals to be achieved by 2015 and took the *Dakar Framework of Action, 2000* as the basis of that work. The plan embraces all the goals of EFA for making education accessible to all and provided for all. The country had prepared PEDPI – PEDP3 (1997-2016). Third Primary Development Program (PEDP3) was going on (2011-2016). PEDP3's goal was to provide "quality education for all our children". Purpose or objectives were to establish "an efficient, inclusive and equitable primary education system delivering effective and relevant child-friendly learning to all Bangladesh's children from pre-primary through Grade V (DPE, 2013).

The National Education Policy 2010 also had emphasized on quality primary education which aims and objectives was to ensure the marginal competencies of learners at each level so that they are discouraged from rote learning, rather use their own thoughtfulness, imagination and urge for curiosity and to ensure proper quality of education at each level and to correlate the competencies learnt at the earlier level (as per the aims and objectives of with the next one to consolidate the formations of knowledge and skills (Education Policy, 2010). In order to achieve this objectives NCTB 2011 the revised and redefined Aim, Objectives and Terminal Competencies of Primary Education in Bangladesh and the revised aim of Bangladesh primary education is to assist a child in his/her physical, mental, emotional, social, moral, human, aesthetic and spiritual development to instill in him/her patriotism, science-mindedness and creativity, and inspire them to have a vision for a prosperous life. Thirteen general objectives have set up in order to attain the aims, which have followed by 29 attainable terminal competencies. Under PDPEII, the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE, 2013) has developed two sets of indicators to understand progress in terms of quality. These are Primary School Quality Level (PSQL) and Key Performance Indicators (KPI) PSQL is a set of 20 indicators related to minimal physical facilities that schools would have this minimum standard during the timeframe of PEDPEII (2004-09). On the other hand, the KPI is a set of 24 indicators to assess basically the performance of the system. Access, participation, internal efficiency and some process indicators are include in KPI. Now, it is the largest education primary education system in the world including 1, 04, 820 primary schools (60,632 GPS), 4,58,982 teachers and 1, 93, 82, 687 students. The number of enrollment of students increased from 12 million in 1990 to over 18.2 million in 2012 and net enrollment was boosted from 60% in 1990 to 97.4% in 2012 (DPE, 2013). Though the level of quantity of Bangladesh primary education is good but, the level of education quality is not satisfactory. Dhaka Ahsania Mission Report, 2008, cited that, Bangladesh achieved significance progress in enrollment but the challenges still to be dealt with are; achieving competency based learning, increased completion rate and active participation of community and parents. Overall the aims, target and goal is not achieved yet. Lack of Community Participation is the main obstacle of behind this which can play a vital role in improving quality primary education. Bangladesh has a long tradition of patronizing primary education through community support in the form of outright gift of land, cash donation and providing other sources of income for the schools, voluntary labor, donating materials for construction and the like. But the present scenario is not satisfactory. After the nationalization of Bangladesh primary education in 1973, the participation of community has level down.

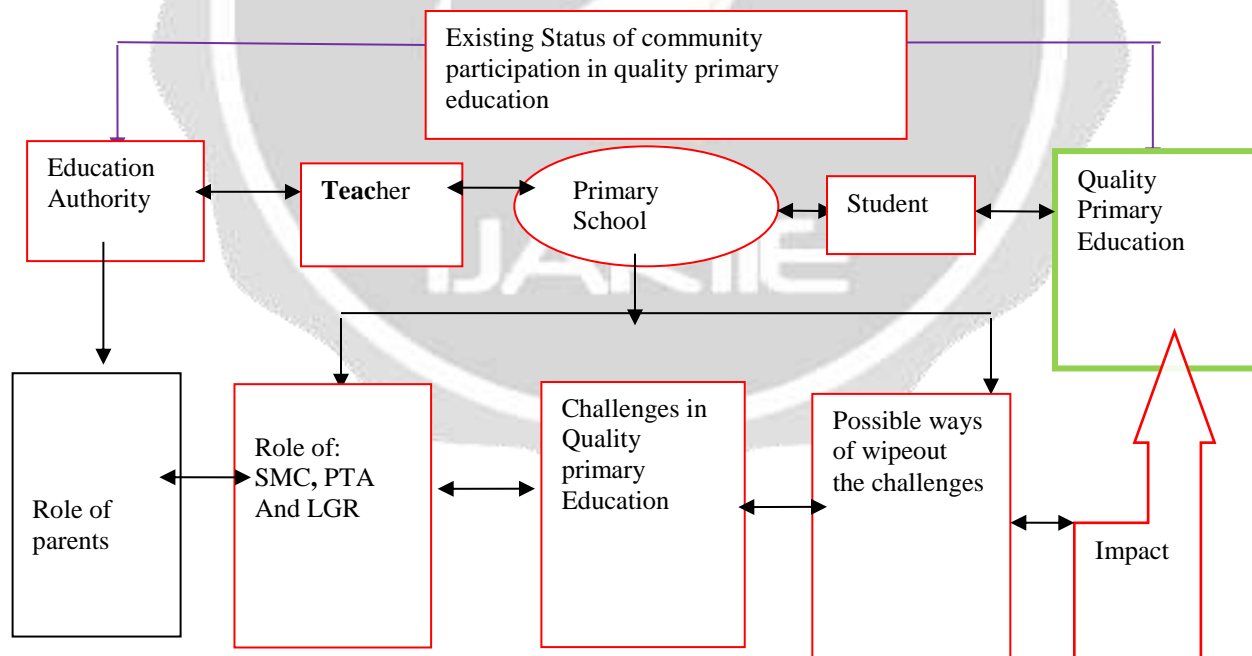
## 2. Rational of the study

Quality primary education is the basement of the nation's progression objectives, which invites healthy and child friendly environment. In order to ensure the multiplication for each young citizen of Bangladesh there is no alternative of smart community involvement which is an immense arena, where people of every level are encouraged to participate in development activities spontaneously by building awareness on their needs problems, roles and responsibilities. The awareness and spontaneity make them self-confident. As a result they themselves take the initiative to solve their own problems. National Education policy 2010 and five-years plans all of the national and international commissions, programs and policies advised about community participation on primary education.

Although, there are a lots of involvements of community in different ways such as School Management Committee (SMC), Parents and Teachers Association (PTA), Mother Assemble and School Learning Improvement Level (SLEP) committee in Bangladesh. But, the communication between school and community are not satisfactory in all GPS. Lack of community participation is the main obstacle the ensuring development in fundamental education. The researchers, educationists discussed that, lack of public accountability and good governance with other limitations at the implementation level particularly in the rural level the quality of primary education poor. So, initiating of improving community participation impact program for quality primary education is an essential action for quality primary education. Even, they also suggested despite many achievements during the last few decades, major improvements are still needed in order for all children to receive the benefit if quality education. So, this is the demand of the hour to investigate the impact of community participation in improving quality primary education.

In this research, the researcher has tried her best to investigate the participation of community for improving quality primary education including their present status, communication, contribution and challenges with impact. As well as she also tried to discover the possible ways to address the situation. In order to achieve the purpose of the study the researcher collected data from SMC, PTA, and LGR members, UEOs, AUEOs, Head Teachers, Assistant Teachers and Parents. The result of the study will be blessing in improving quality primary education.

**Figure-1: Conceptual Frame work**



**3. Research Questions:**

1. What is the existing status of community participation in quality primary education?
2. What is the impact of community participation in quality primary education?

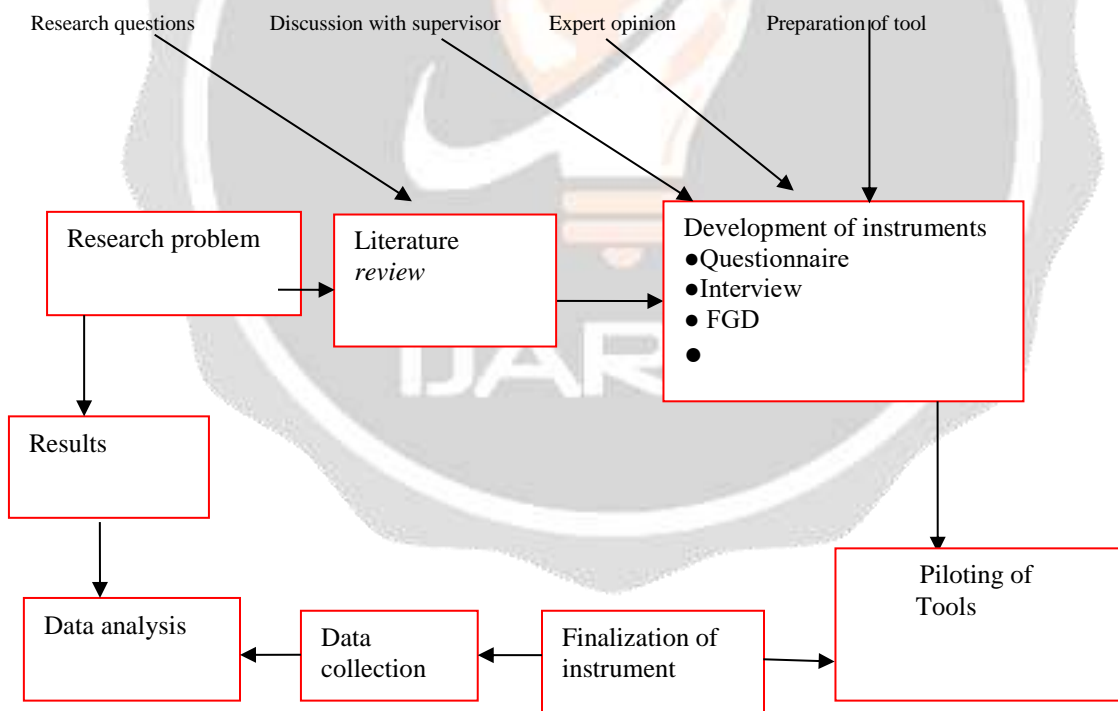
3. What are the challenges in quality primary education?
4. What are the possible ways to address the challenges?

#### 4. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

In order to gather information depending on the research questions, the researcher used mixed method as it is important to understand both the subjective and objective realities. This is because mixed research design allows a better understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data itself (Creswell, 2008), and mixed model design incorporates both quantitative and qualitative approaches within the same phase or across two stages in the research process (Johnson & Christensen (2004), as well.

In this research, both quantitative and qualitative research approaches was used, but, the main focus was on qualitative approach. Qualitative method has been used for the study as it sought to gain in depth insights about the research questions which eventually entailed that the use of qualitative method was the best for this type of study. For the quantitative part two sets of questionnaires one for assistant teachers and one for the upzilla education officers were used. For the qualitative part focus group discussion for parents and parent teacher associations, and interview for head teachers, local government representatives and school management committees were conducted. A step by step research plan is shown in figure3.1

**Figure -2: Research plan**



## 5. Analysis and Findings

Data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approach where necessary. Quantitative data were analyzed using percentage. The narrative data were described in qualitative approach focusing objectives of the study. The raw data that collected were processed by applying computer system of MS Excel. Considering all, analysis of data and the major findings of the study are presented below.

### 5.1 Position of SMC (School Management Committee), PTA (Parents Teachers Association), SLIP (School level Improvement Plan), Parents and Local Government Representative (LGR) in both (GCPS) Good Community Participation and (LCPS) Less Community Participation Schools.

#### 5.1.1 Position of SMC

Majority of the SMC members were regular in each and every meeting in LCPS. Whereas, the scenario of LCPS was totally opposite, most of the SMC members were irregular. An addition, the member of SMC who is selected by Union council / Upazila Municipal was irregular in meeting in most of the time in both GSPS / LCPS.

#### 5.1.2 Communication and Contribution of SMC

There was a good bondage between school and SMC in GCPS. They made sure the students admission, presence, good result and so on by providing teaching aids and good care of them. Moreover, the SMC members visited the house of absentee students and rewarded the regular pupil as well but, the situation in LCPS was unsatisfactory just because the lack of good Communication by SMC. As a result the drop out rate decreased in GCPS.

#### 5.2 . Position of PTA

Every GCPS had active PTA with a smart participation. They ensured the students safety and comfort by maintaining child friendly school environment. Apart from this, the PTA members always maintained a good relation with teachers and SMC members. To fulfill the teachers shortage they managed para teachers (teacher appointed by local community) while, most of the LCPS did no have PTA.

#### 5.3 Position of LGR

Local government representatives were played a vital role by supplied some extra facilities. For instance, they donated chairs, benches, sports instrument and filled the uneven schools fields with soil in unlevelled school field in both GCPS and LCPS

#### 5.4 Position of Parents

The parent's participation in GCPS was better than the LCPS. Majority of the parents participated in mother's gatherings / parents gatherings and various programs and gave their opinions on the other side the parents of LCPS did not took part in any programs.

There were many challenges in improving quality primary education in Bangladesh. The learning environment was excellent in GCPS while, it was terrible in LCPS.

#### 5.5 Challenges in Quality primary Education

The study found a plethora of challenges in ensuring the quality of primary education .Such as, shortage of stuff, teaching aids and so on. However, some main problems are discussed.



#### **5.4.1 Teacher student ratio**

In GCPS, teacher student ratio was about 1:57, whereas, the average number of teachers and learners of LCPS was 1:55 which is advised 1:40 in National Education Policy, 2010. Moreover, there were also 5% and 15% untrained teachers in GCPS and LCPS respectively.

#### **5.4.2 Class size**

Class size was big problem for quality primary education because it disturbs the classroom teaching and learning. The average number of learners in GCPS was higher than that LCPS though the classrooms were overcrowded in both GCPS and LCPS.

#### **5.4.3 Lack of awareness of local people**

Most of the people of the Scholl catchment areas were not conscious about their duty and responsibility. As a result there were bazaars(daily market) in some LCPS area. Many people gathered in the bazaar and created a noise by miking and rough gossiping in all the time which hampered the quality learning environment of the school.

#### **5.4.4 Students health**

Some of the students' health quality was not good which had hampered the quality of primary education. The students faced various diseases. Teachers did not have any training to manage contagious diseases of children. There was no health checking system in the schools.

#### **5.4.5 Poverty**

Poverty is also a big challenge in ensuring quality primary education, and community people were not aware about it. Some of the parents of both GCPS and LCPS were unable to provide food, clothes, and teaching materials for their children. They bound to send their children as laborer and some guardians used their children in house hold chores, decreased the learner's enrolment. Beside all, poverty increased learners' absence and dropout rates.

#### **5.4.6 Social problem**

Social problem is another obstacle in improving quality primary education. Due to lacking of community participation in various educational awareness programs in schools, citizen of local area fail to achieve sufficient ideas and information about society, family and children and demerits of the child marriage, leading to illiteracy, , superstition, dowry, early marriage, and child death as well.

#### **5.4.7 Geographical problem**

Geographical problem aggravated the challenges of quality primary education. River erosion, flood, distance between school and house were a huge crisis for both GCPS and LCPS. During the rainy season water flooded some of the schools fields and hampered the teaching – learning activities.

#### **5.4.8 Distance between learner's house and school**

A long distance between learner's house and school was a big problem in improving quality primary education. Most of the learners of both GCPS and LCPS could not go home for having tiffin or lunch as their houses were far away from the school. Because of poverty they were not able to buy it from school compound. It was very difficult for them to give concentration to their study at school.

### **5.5 Good community involvement increase the quality of primary education**

Collected all data proved that, there was a good co-operation between school and community. In order to ensure the quality education the community people and teachers stood at the same platform and they provided good care, observation and took proper plan and decisions for the learners' betterment. These effective steps, not only decreased dropout rate but, increased high pass rate in Primary Education Completion Examination. Even though, the primary cycle completion rate was highly satisfactory in GCPS, while, the scenario was opposite in LCPS

## 6. Conclusion

According to the light of the research, community participation is undeniably a key factor to ensure the quality of primary education. This is because, the study found that, there was a strong bondage between school and local people in GCPS. All of the entire committee members and parents were active and smart, and their joint enterprises, enthusiasm had paved the way of quality primary education in Bangladesh. However, the situation and condition of LCGPS was really undesirable. Despiser to school and education by community people had hampered the right virtue of primary education. As a result the level of quality primary education of GCPS was better than that of national level, and far better than LCPS.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations may be considerate in order to improve the Quality Primary Education of Bangladesh based on the opinions of teachers, AUEOs, UEOs, members of SMC, PTA and LGRR and parents.

- In order to ensure the quality primary education it should be united Govt., teachers and community in the same platform. It is needed to build up a good relationship between local administration and community.
- It is needed to build up a good relation between school and community. In order to do that teachers should arrange some special meetings like school nearest shop keeper's meeting, x or previous learner's meeting, rich person's meeting beside on SMC and PTA meetings. Schools should also arrange various programs and function in school like picnic, religious festival, cultural function, sports day, prize giving ceremony and various national days and invite the community elite people as chief guest, special guest in. such programs.
- To ensure the attendants of community in various meetings and programs the teachers should invite the community people by letter beside on telephoning.
- In order to make guardian alert about the benefit of quality primary education it is needed to arrange social and cultural function. But to make success of such programs it is very needed to focus by advertise in public media and public places. Community person may arrange such kind of activities by their won initiatives.
- Solving teachers' crisis govt. should give appointed new teachers in every school. The limited staffing pattern of school should be enlarged of more than 8 to 10 teachers.
- Community people may fulfill such kind of crisis by appointing para teacher from the community
- AS well as govt. they rich people of community can provide supply of electricity and IT support in each primary school.
- Building parents' awareness on quality primary education the community people can speak in public places like mosques, temples, pagodas and various religious function and festivals.
- In order to solve various problems of poor learners it is needed to make a poor welfare fund in school.
- All of the members of SMC, PTA and SLIP need to be more active and responsible in improving quality primary education.
- The teachers and SMC, PTA members need to visit the learner's home by rotation in every month and discuss with guardians; besides parents should come to communicate with teachers for the betterment of their children learning.
- Beside mother, father should also be visiting in the school and both of them can participate in school for the wellbeing of their children.

## Suggestions for future study

The future researchers may consider the following topic for future study:

- The Impact of Teachers Professional Qualification: In Improving Quality Primary Education.

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