

# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN FROM MARGINAL GROUPS IN BANGLADESH: PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES

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## ABSTRACT

*This study explores the challenges children from marginal groups are faced within society and educational institutions. This study explores the impact of discrimination on children from marginal groups on their educational experience. It identifies poverty as a major reason for social discrimination, marginalization and social exclusion. This study may help educational professionals to promote inclusive education for children from marginal groups and Upazilla administration can make a plan to achieve the goal of IE which ensures access, presence, participation, and achievement (Allan, 2013). This study investigates the picture of IE in primary schools in Bangladesh that has not yet reached an expected level through policy and legislation framework locally and internationally. Teachers, parents, and peers are not always positive to children from marginal groups that present challenges in primary schools. This is started in the family and is accelerated throughout society and also impacts on the educational system. For this reason, this study examines a new pathway that can help the future research and Upazilla administration to promote IE. The majority of respondents observed that well-off families did not agree to send their children to government primary schools. This creates a barrier to promote IE for children from marginal groups. The current research study, alongside extensive existing research, recommends that tackling poverty is a precursor to improving inclusive education in Bangladesh. Further recommendations are made with regard to the need for teachers training so they can better understand and implement IE in their school settings. The researcher recommends that a programme of setting up new government schools to minimise infrastructural problems and improve student-teacher ratios. The research suggests that improving monitoring and supervision of the implementation of IE in primary schools can bring about a new era that can help the educational professionals to promote inclusive education for children from marginal groups in mainstream schools.*

**Key Words:** Inclusive Education, Children, Marginal Group, Bangladesh, Problems, Possibilities.

## INTRODUCTION

Peter Leonard (1984) defines that marginal groups mean these people who are the outside of the productive activity or reproductive activity in society. People who are experiencing marginality have little involvement in the economy, social politics and practices, and social resources such as education and health services (Kagan et al, 2002). Children from marginal groups in Bangladesh are excluded by mainstream society, and in the context of this study, children from marginal groups mean children from ethnic groups, children of Tea garden workers, and children of Dolits. Tea garden workers live in a vulnerable situation and are involved in production in the tea gardens. Over 90 percent of tea workers are tribal community members such as *Bhils, Gonds, Santals, Mundas, and Oraons* and they have been living in Bangladesh for many years, however, as described by Haque (2013), they are often still considered and treated as outsiders from society as a whole. According to Chowdhury (2009), it can be suggested that Dolits who live in inhospitable areas, are viewed by many in wider society as somehow 'unclean', and they are recognized in Bangladesh by their traditional occupational activities with occupations such as fishermen, sweeper, barber, washer man, blacksmith, goldsmith, cobbler, potters, and oil-presser. According to BBS report 2003 (published in 2006) cited in Chowdhury (2009), on the basis of economic engagement of the people, the percentage of Dolits is 1.11 percent of the total population of Bangladesh. Ethnic minorities typically live in hilly areas like Sylhet, Chittagong, and Mymensingh. Their culture and language are different from the dominant culture and majority language, among these marginalized groups, are the Chakma, Meitei, Khasi, Bhils, Gonds, Santals, Mundas, Oraons and Rohingya. Chakma & Maitrot (2016) note that as per the population survey in 2011 the percentage of ethnic minorities is 1.10 percent of the population in Bangladesh. However, many organizations claim that about 45 ethnic minorities groups exist in Bangladesh (Barman and Neo, 2014 cited in Chakma & Maitrot, 2016). These groups are separated from mainstream society in relation to their separate language, lifestyle, and culture (Sarker & Davey, 2009).

### **AIM OF RESEARCH**

The aim of this study was to explore the following questions:

How can Bangladeshi Upazilla administration promote the inclusion for children from marginal groups into mainstream school?

This research has the following aims:

- Examine educational professionals' views on the impact of social discrimination and its effects on the educational experience of children from marginal groups.
- To explore educational professionals' perspectives of the attitude of teachers, parents, and peers towards children from marginal groups and its impact on the progress of marginalized children.
- To explore the possibilities for education professionals to promote inclusive education for children for marginal groups in primary schools in Bangladesh.

### **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

According to Ahmmed (2013), ongoing discrimination against children from marginal groups creates challenging circumstances for promoting inclusive education in developing countries. A study from Nath (2009) shows marginalization is a common phenomenon in the primary education sector in Bangladesh which is created by political, social, and infrastructural barriers for some groups of society. Developing inclusive education in Bangladesh represents an attempt to prevent any child from being excluded or marginalized in the educational process. Inclusive education is based on the principle of social justice that promotes equality, participation, respect for diversity, compassion, care, and entitlement (Beutel et al., 2018). Rose (2010) also states that inclusive education is based on the amalgamation of the social and cultural diversity of students. According to Begum et al (2018), inclusive education helps to develop an approach to overall childhood development that supports not only teachers but also the wider community in schools exist.

As a part of the curriculum, inclusive education provides an integrated response to children's various learning needs and speeds (Stubbs, 2002 cited in Mahbub 2016). Armstrong, Armstrong, and Spandagou (2011) argue that the 'idea of inclusive education' provides educational facilities for all students beyond the perspective of marginalization. Children from marginal groups are now an integral part of an agenda to promote inclusive education for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Ainscow (2005) suggests that inclusive education is a broader idea that embraces all students (including those from socially marginalized groups) in a universally accessible education system.

In the context of Bangladesh, a report of APSC in 2017 shows that the national enrolment rate in primary school is 97.97%, dropout rate 18.18%(DPE, 2017). These statistics perhaps signal an ongoing issue with the inclusion of marginalized children. The proportion of drop-out rates also suggests that within the concept of marginalization, which includes access, presence, participation, and achievement (Allan, 2013), drop-out rates are not in line with these notions of inclusion. Furthermore, according to the study of Begume et al (2018) the school enrolment rate in

the hill track is much lower than the national average rate. Another study by Nath et al (2005) shows that 60% of the marginalized population has never been to school; in some areas, 90% of the children are out of school. Nath et al (2005) note that this lack of school engagement is common in Bangladesh because marginalized students are restricted in their lives and resources; they feel stigmatization and receive negative attitudes from teachers, peers, and public (Kagan et al,2002).

Kurmi (2014) also states that the socio-economic conditions of parents can impact on the education of children. A study from Nath (2009) also shows that advantaged learners; children with considerable financial and familial support are able to fully engage with their education. Advantaged learners more easily attract the attention of teachers because their position of advantage can make them less of a pedagogical challenge. As a result, teachers are perhaps more likely to adopt a positive attitude towards advantaged learners. However, it could be suggested that if, as a society, Bangladesh wants to achieve the goal of IE the socio-economic disadvantage, of some learners, first has to be addressed in a meaningful way in order to so that “all students, including those from diverse backgrounds” achieve their educational potential (UNESCO, 1994 cited in Malak et al, 2013). Research, such as the current study, can contribute to better understanding of what is preventing some from the opportunity to fully engage in education.

### **RATIONALE**

The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of discrimination against and attitudes towards children from marginal groups in education. It aims to identify the current barriers and opportunities that exist in one Upazilla in order to the educational administration to respond. Raising awareness locally and nationally of issues affecting children from marginal groups in education will be helpful for educational professionals. It will also become beneficial for marginal and non-marginal groups within society and educational inclusivity. Areas for teacher development and training can be identified that can then be addressed to further promote inclusive education. In addition, policymakers can benefit from current insights from teachers and education officers on issues facing children from marginal groups in education, this can inform policy development.

#### **The research question addressed in this study was:**

It is against this legislative, policy, social and educational context outlined that an evaluation of IE in relation to marginal groups in Bangladesh will be undertaken. The following research question has been developed:

*How can Bangladeshi upazilla administration promote the inclusion of children from marginal groups into mainstream schools?*

This research has the following aims

- To identify the key problems facing children from marginal groups in schools and out of school.
- To identify the specific principles and initiatives that can help the upazilla administration to promote inclusive education in mainstream school.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Policies and legislation framework**

The movement of inclusive education started in 1948 by means of the UN Declaration of Human Rights in article 26 to ensure the right to education for all (UN, 2007). After this declaration, many declarations and policies has been released in favour of IE, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN 1989), the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990), the Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action (UNESCO,1994), and the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000). The Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000) is the most favourable declaration to children from marginal groups which has been signed by the governments of the world. Most of the governments, including Bangladesh, vowed to create a congenial environment for children from marginal groups to promote inclusive education. Though some contextual differences predominate in the signatory countries, basic problems appear, such as lack of political will to promote inclusion in developing countries (Rahaman, 2017). According to the study of Charema (2010), among the main obstacles of Bangladeshi schools to the implementation of inclusive education are large size classes, lack of public awareness, and unrealistic implementation initiatives. Another study from Malak et al (2014) notice that majority of IE policies are imposed from the central government in Bangladesh, as a result, teachers and other stakeholders, have to practice it what the decision and policy-makers want.

The Bangladesh constitution (1971) establishes a constructive position on inclusive education. For example, Articles 17 and 28 underpin that the country should supply education to all children without making any inequity (Malak et al, 2014). Under the National Education Policy 2010, PEDP III presents the objectives that cover the universal, compulsory, free and inclusive primary education (DPE 2015). However, a study from Kawser et al (2016) shows

that school curriculum, teaching method, teacher's attitude, resources, and above all lack of social acceptance represents a significant barrier to the promotion of inclusive education.

The Ministry of the Primary and Mass Education started a programme in name the National Plan of Action phase II in 2003. The goals of the NPA II are clear, they underpin the enrolment, successful completion, and quality education for every child irrespective of caste, culture, and socio-economic condition (UNESCO, 2002). However, a study from Barkat (2009) shows that the enrolment rate of ethnic minorities in Chittagong Hill Tracts is 73%, which is lower than the national average of 99.4% and the dropout rate, is high at 65%, which is higher than the national average rate. Despite many programmes having been undertaken to implement policy in Bangladesh, another study of Begume et al (2018) shows that discriminatory cultural attitudes, lack of supporting programmes against poverty (in spite of ongoing incentive for primary education) can create impediments to promote inclusive education of all children.

The largest Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) II started in 2004 and last until 2010 and it emphasized the quality and inclusive education. PEDP III was started in 2010 and it ended on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018. The goal of Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP III) was quality education for all (DPE, 2015). However, research shows that policy and legislation alone cannot ensure the inclusive education because teacher's attitude is still less than optimally encouraging of inclusive education (Ahsan et al 2012 cited in Malak et al, 2014). Some recent studies (e.g. Chowdhury, Chowdhury, Hoque, Ahmad and Sultana, 2009, DPE, 2009a; Nath and Chowdhury 2009) suggest that despite primary stipend programme (PES) helping to increase school attendance, decrease dropout rate, it should be reviewed to more fully meet the need to promote inclusive education (Ahsan 2013 cited in Ali, 2017). However, other studies (CAMPE 2005, Nath et al 2005, Nath and Mahbub 2008) cited in Nath (2009) shows that lack of commitment, motivation, and accountability of teachers and less supervision from education offices is a major barrier of IE for children from marginal groups. In addition, because of lacking supervision teachers do not use proper methodology what they learn from training about IE (Kabeer, et al 2003) and education officers also have less classroom experience so they cannot make quality supervision (Ardt et al 2005). These challenges predominate throughout primary education sector in Bangladesh that can have a long-lasting impact on promoting IE.

### **Attitudes towards children from marginal groups**

#### **General attitude**

Attitudinal barriers are seen everywhere - from top to bottom in Bangladeshi society that can impact on children. A study from Shaikath (2014) shows that most of the students have a negative attitude towards children from marginal groups in mainstream primary schools that creates the barrier of inclusive education. Another study From UNESCO (2002) place that children from marginal groups feel that they are restricted and neglected by teachers and administrators because they are part of ethnic or linguistic minorities. Parents of children from marginal groups feel uncomfortable and embarrassed to go to school for observing the method of teaching-learning in school (Ahmed et al 2005) and their children are left behind from other students. Parents of children from marginal groups also feel that teachers are in favour of children of the well-off householders (Ahmed et al., 2007 cited in Cameron, 2016). The study from UNESCO (2002, p. 83) places one interview of parents, such as parents say, "*children Ethnic minorities and children, who come from scavengers, should study in separate schools. They are the children from exceptional families*". *We do not want our children to learn wrong habits from them. Most of them are sons and daughters of rickshaw pullers/ domestic workers or daily workers.*" Another study of (Ahmad et al 2015, p.6) shows that one respondent of tea garden worker says, "*We are here for working and not for education; the authority was against to educate us*". So, adverse situations create a stressful home environment that impacts on children and their parents (Kiernan & Huerta, 2008; Holmes & Kiernan, 2013 cited in Noonan et al, 2017).

#### **Teachers' attitudes**

Attitude towards children from marginal groups can impact on promoting IE. A study from Nath et al (2005) shows on marginal students such as those from socio-economically disadvantaged groups, ethnic minorities, and tea garden children; found that 35.4% of socio- economic disadvantages students, 40% of the children of tea gardens, and 20.2% of the children of ethnic minority groups are out-of-school. These students are specially marginalized in school (Nath and Mahbub, 2008) because another study of (Nath, 2009) shows that these students are pessimistic, they have no capacity to learn at home by having private tutors, they are poor, their parent is illiterate, from school age they involve in work for supporting parents. According to Ahsan & Mullick (2013), for successful inclusive education, full participation of students from different background in the "mainstreaming" approach is important. The study of UNESCO (2002) shows that one school which is conducted by UCEF in Chittagong for children from marginal groups, the achievement of these students is optimistic, teachers and parents are also happy about their

achievement. A study from Ahsan et al (2012) shows that teaching efficacy of the teacher is the most powerful contributing factor in supporting children's academic achievement. However, the biggest challenge of Bangladesh is teachers are not prepared to implement an inclusive approach in school (Sharma et al 2012). In an inclusive school, every child is accessed in physically, socially, and academically with their peers (Pearce, 2009). In addition, the positive attitude of parents, students and members of the wider community play a vital role (Plamer et al. 1998) because this engagement in school activities that can help teachers to promote IE towards children from marginal groups (Ahmmmed, 2013). However, research suggests that teachers' positive attitude is the main key for implementing towards inclusive education (Brownell and Pajares, 1999; Cook, 2001; Romi and Leyser, 2006; Avramidies and Kayva, 2007; Jordan, Schwartz and McGhie-Richmond, 2009; Rakap and Kaczmarek, 2010) cited in Ahmmmed et al (2012).

### **Additional barriers to IE for children from marginal groups**

A study from Kawser et al. (2016) shows that a lack of social acceptance, prejudice, misconception, and stigma predominate in society those make a great barrier to promote inclusive education. Mullick et al (2012) found that the ratio of teacher and students and large class that affects negatively on teaching-learning activities as a result teacher cannot pay attention to every student properly (Kawser et al, 2016). Akter & Halim, (2016) state that poverty, inadequate facilities, lack of awareness of parents, shortage of consciousness of the community people are the barriers to enrolment to basic education that can impact on IE. Another study of Chowdhury (2009) shows that the Dolits students are teased by other students inside and outside of schools that impact on showing their performance. These challenges negatively impact on children from marginal groups that create a barrier to promote IE.

### **Co-operative working**

Ahsan (2013 cited in Ali, 2017) suggests that the National Education policy 2010 should be revised and the National Action Plan should be taken so that these policy and plan cover all categories students and education system to promote IE. Curriculum, teaching-learning method, and resources are needed to be adapted to ensure the quality education for all learners in mainstream school (Mittler 1995 cited in Ahmmmed et al., 2012). Another research from Begume et al. (2018) suggest that for creating a friendly inclusive culture in mainstream school for all students, collaboration and co- ordination is needed among different education systems and curriculum in Bangladesh. Ahmmmed and Mullick (2014) suggest that a cooperative decision-making process of all school community make a scope to engage them in school activities that can help them to create ownership to develop a positive attitude towards IE. Kawser et al. (2016, p. 2) describe how due to 'the lack of teamwork often policies for inclusive education do not see the light of implementation'. So, Ahmmmed and Mullick (2014) suggest that active participation of community members, parents, community leaders, and including allied professionals (e.g., health professionals) in decision making that is needed to promote IE. Another research found that some school leaders believe that teachers working together are a wonderful technique for solving problems and for reducing teachers' resistance that can help the diverse learners of heterogeneous groups in the classroom (Mullick et al, 2012).

### **Issue in teacher's development**

Several study from Forlin, Earle, Loreman, & Sharma, (2011); Graziano, (2008) found that a strongly emerging issue in the research literature is the need for teachers to be educated to undertake the new role as inclusive educators of children from marginal groups, so that they can meet the needs of all learner as effective inclusive practitioners (Sharma et al 2012). Due to insufficient preparation of teachers for teaching children from marginal groups in classrooms (Folin and Dinh 2010; Sharma et al 2013), IE is still beginning the stage in Bangladesh (Ahsan and Mullick 2013). In- service and pre-service training are necessary to improve the quality of education towards the IE (Ahmmmed and Mullick 2014). A study of Sharma et al (2013) show that limited professional qualification of teachers makes a barrier to promote IE. For this reason, teacher training related inclusive education programme should be taken to improve teachers' attitude toward children from marginal groups (Ahmmmed et al, 2012). Ahmmmed and Mullick (2014) suggest that school-based professional development programmes for in-service teachers can have a positive result that can help teachers to get effective and hands-on experience in a familiar environment.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Data Collection Tools: A semi-structured interview**

In order to collect the data from the respondents in this research study one set of question has been produced for the teachers and education officers who have many years of experience in the primary education sector and in relation to inclusive education. The benefits of semi-structured interviews using open and closed questions outline prompted

the researcher to use this research instrument. The set of question for the interviews with educational professionals is offered in Appendix B.

### Sampling: Recruitment Approach

The researcher's position working in the primary sector educational context and their professional knowledge of schools within their Upazilla provided them with an initial idea of the proportion of children from marginal groups within local schools. This enabled interviewee recruitment within specific schools. Head-teachers as the leader of the school and as such had the ability to explain the overall condition of the school in relation to inclusion. The researcher chooses four schools from a separate perspective, among these one school situated in tea garden area where maximum students were marginalized, another one was the model school where 98% of students were well off, another one was in a remote area where some of the students were marginalized and the last one was in corner of Pourashova where about 50% of students were children from marginal groups.

### Research findings

This chapter discusses the main themes and findings of collecting data from selected respondents (four primary teachers and two education officers) through an interview process. Quotes from the teachers and education officers are used to illustrate each theme in this chapter. Key themes relate to areas that can be considered as having an impact on promoting inclusive education in mainstream schools are presented in Table 1 and 2. The themes which emerge included the impact of poverty, impact of illiteracy, mixed attitude towards children from marginal groups, and marginalized children's negative experience of school. The analysis of the data, based on the teachers and education officers' perspectives of children from marginal groups, highlighted key

Table 1: Shared Themes: views shared by teachers and education officers on barriers and opportunities IE.

1. Impact of poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties with the parental provision of bare essentials</li> <li>• Children are used to supporting the family</li> <li>• Left behind by society</li> <li>• Malnutrition</li> </ul>
2. Impact of illiteracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of parental awareness of the benefits</li> </ul>
3. Mixed attitude towards children from marginal groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peers</li> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Parents</li> </ul>
4. Marginalized Children's Negative Experience of school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited academic achievements</li> <li>• Inattentive in classrooms</li> <li>• Dropout</li> </ul>

Table 2: Non-shared themes from the interview – the perspective of teachers

1. Impact of poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties with the parental provision of bare essentials</li> <li>• Children are used to supporting the family</li> </ul>
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## FINDINGS

As has been highlighted in Table 1 teachers and education officers had very similar perspectives on the influential factors affecting the achievement of the inclusion of marginalized children in primary education. Table 2 also emphasizes the distinct perspective of teachers that can have an influence on promoting IE. It is found that most of the teachers and officers state that children from marginal groups face many challenges in society and in school.

### Theme: impact of poverty

The varied and extensive negative impact of poverty on the inclusion of marginalized children in education emerged as the dominant influence. This section discusses the aspects of poverty identified by teachers and officers that can have a negative impact on children.

### Teachers perspective - Difficulties with the parental provision of bare essentials

Most of the teachers suggested that poverty did not give the scope to parents to go ahead and to send their children to school. Teachers reported that parents did not have the financial means to provide even the most basic of provisions that were needed for their children to go to school. This is a very significant barrier to inclusion and prevents children from engaging in their education and social life properly.

One teacher stated, "Because of poverty parents cannot give educational materials for children to continue their study" (Teacher A). "Sometimes they cannot bring a pen and other materials" (Teacher B).

#### **Teachers perspective – children are used to supporting the family**

Most of the teachers interviewed that marginalized parents sometimes did not send their children to school because they instead involve their children in work to support the family. It was stressed by but some marginalized parents were aware of the education of children. However, this is a major barrier to promote inclusive education and sustainability of inclusion. One teacher noted, "Some parents do not agree to send their children to school because they think these children can earn money that can help them to drive the family" (Teacher A). However, another teacher said, "Most of the parents agree to send their children to school because they feel that their children will be more highly educated" (Teacher D).

#### **Teachers perspective- left behind by society**

Most of the teachers agreed that parents and children were isolated by mainstream society. As a result, they felt humiliation and left behind by society. They also attributed poverty as the reason for social discrimination which then impacted on promoting inclusion. One teacher noted, "Food, sanitation, education problems predominate in their society because they are living under extreme poverty" (Teacher C).

#### **Officers perspective - left behind by society**

Officers agreed that extreme poverty could lead to them being discriminated against and therefore marginalized from the society that could have an impact on their potentiality. One officer noted, "They are discriminated by well-off people because of being left behind by society, illiterate and poor" (Officer A).

#### **Teachers perspective – malnutrition**

All of the teachers agreed that children from marginal groups suffered from malnutrition, as a result, they suffered from many diseases and they could not engage effectively and consistently in their study in school and out of school. This consequently made it very difficult for children from marginal groups to lead their lives as part of mainstream society and in educational institutions. One teacher stated, "Most of the students come to school without taking breakfast" (Teacher A).

#### **Officers perspective – malnutrition**

Officers suggested that malnutrition was a significant barrier that could affect children from marginal groups' ability to function in order to pursue their studies. This inability (due to malnutrition) to effectively participate in education, was stressed as a further obstacle to achieving inclusive education for all.

One officer stated, "As they are poor, they do not get proper nutrition which is apparent in their outward appearance and general demeanor" (Officer B).

#### **Analysis of Impact of poverty**

The majority of teachers agree that marginalized parents face many challenges in society because they are poor. As a result, they cannot bear the educational expenses. It is similar to the comment of education officers, who simultaneously state that marginalized parents are left behind because they are poor and they cannot meet the nominal demands of life that impact on their children. Both groups state that poverty is correlated with discrimination towards marginalized groups which predominates in the education sector. According to Evan & English (2002) childhood poverty leads to more psychosocial stressors on children as well as impoverishing physical living conditions. Hossain and Zeitlyn (2010) and Shohel and Howes (2007) in their research show that the lack of basic needs creates irregular attendance and drop-out in school which indicates a strong relationship between childhood poverty and exclusion from education. Moreover, poor health in childhood (related to childhood poverty and poor diet), has been identified by Pridmore (2007) as a greater likelihood of underperformance at school, and in relation to peers. The impact of poverty tends to be amplified in marginal groups as one study of Mullah et al. (2007) show that in Bangladesh, marginalized people such as tribal are the poorest in the society that can have an impact on sending their children in school. Shohel (2014) comments that poverty is a great problem in Bangladesh society that effect in the educational institution to exercise quality and equity, and it impacts on the school attendance of disadvantaged children and serves as a massive barrier for social and educational inclusion. Ultimately teachers and officers indicate that they feel social discrimination will reduce if poverty is eliminated.

**Theme: impact of illiteracy**

The negative consequences of illiteracy impact on marginalized parents and their children. As a result, Teachers and officers noted that parents were left behind in the society that could have an impact on promoting inclusive education for children from marginal groups.

**Teachers perspective: Lack of parental awareness of the benefits**

Teachers thought that illiteracy impeded illiterate guardians as it leads to very low self-esteem and they did not feel comfortable or capable contributing their opinions or engaging in the activities of society, including matters affecting their children's education. One teacher noted, "They are deprived of normal facilities in society because they are marginalized" (Teacher C). Most of the teachers thought that parents were less aware of the advantage of education of their children

**Officers perspective: Lack of parental awareness of the benefits**

Officers agreed that because of illiteracy they were not aware of rights and could not dream for future that could have a negative impact on children from marginal groups to get support from their parents. One officer noted, "Parents of children from marginalized groups are unconscious about themselves" (Officer A). Another officer stated, "Parents are pessimistic about their children and they never expect a glorious future of children" (Officer B). The significant influence of parental attitudes on children's attitudes to school is detailed by Alexander et al. (1994) suggests that parent attitudes and beliefs shape their expectations about their children, in terms of school and the home environment. Similarly, if parents don't feel that they are capable of literacy, they may also limit the expectations they have of their children to be literate.

**Analysis of the Impact of illiteracy**

The majority of teachers and officers note that illiteracy of marginalized parents represents a significant obstacle to promote inclusive education because they cannot understand the impact of education. As a result, they left behind in society and they cannot participate in any productive activity. Even majority of literature on parent's education discuss that education has a positive impact on the achievement of children (Jimerson, Egeland, & Teo, 1999, Kohn, 1963, Luster, Rhoades, & Hass, 1989 cited in Davis- Kean, 2005) and it change the beliefs and behaviour of parents that can have a positive outcome for children and youth (Eccles, 1993 cited in Davis- Kean, 2005). Teachers note that children from marginal groups do not get any family support for school education. Similarly, officers also state that they are pessimistic about the future of children. However, some teacher state that at present this condition is improved because some students become higher educated and they are trying to change their social exclusion that can promote the inclusive education for children from marginal groups.

**Theme: Mixed attitude towards children from marginal groups**

Some teachers and officers agreed that the attitude of peers, teachers, and parents towards children from marginal groups was a key factor that could have an impact the experience of inclusivity of children from marginal groups in the classroom.

**Teachers perspective: the attitude of peers**

Some teachers thought that children from marginal groups experienced difficulties with the attitudes of their peers in the classroom and playground. They further noted that as a result, children from marginal groups who perceived a discriminatory attitude from their peers could lose their interest in school. One teacher noted, "When children of tea garden workers go to play with other school children, they are teased by other children" (Teacher D). As a result, another teacher stated, "They feel humiliation" (Teacher B). However, one teacher noted, 'Students are cordial and helpful with one another and they behave friendly with one another in my school' (Teacher B). It was generally stated by the interviewees that children from marginal groups often faced a challenge from their peers but sometimes another picture also predominated in schools that could have a positive impact on inclusion.

**Education Officers perspective: the attitude of peers**

One officer noted, "Well-off children do not want to meet and make friends with children from marginal groups because they are not well dressed and their outward appearance is messy" (Officer B). From the officers' interview it emerged that children from marginal groups faced many challenges that impact negatively on their active participation in school. Many research (e.g. Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; Everington & Stevens, 1999; Gerson, 1995; Treder, 1999) found that student attitudes towards inclusion are the significant factor that can have an impact on the educational settings (McGregor, 2003).

**Teachers perspective: the attitude of teachers**



Some teachers thought that teachers were very friendly and cordial with children from marginal groups like other children and some teachers thought that teacher's behaviour was sometimes negative towards children from marginal groups. One teacher said, "Teachers' attitudes towards children from marginal groups are not positive and this is inherent" (Teacher B). In a contrasting view, another teacher noted that in my school, teachers are very positive and that they behave equally towards all children (Teacher D). Although a mixed picture in schools of teacher attitudes to children from marginal groups emerged, overall it was established from the respondents' interview that positive attitude of teachers could help children from marginal groups to participate and to get the successful achievement.

#### **Education Officers' perspective: Attitude of teachers**

The Education Officers agreed that teachers' attitudes could play a vital role in the promotion of inclusive practice. It was generally agreed by the interviewees that positive and enthusiastic teacher attitudes to the principle of inclusive education could encourage the attendance of children from marginal groups and their successful engagement of previously excluded children in the classroom. One officer noted, "Teachers also do not take special initiatives to engage them; teachers do not give inspiration to them. As a result, though some children come to school, they do not get proper education" (Officer B). However, another officer stated, "Teachers are very cordial towards children from marginal groups" (Officer A). A study by Pintrich and Macher (2004) cited in Seker (2011) notes that positive relationship between student and teacher creates a positive mind of students towards the school that can help the teachers to promote IE.

#### **Teachers perspective: the attitude of parents**

Teachers thought that parents of well-off children and community people never impeded children from marginal groups from going to school. One teacher stated, "The parents of my school never place obstacles in the educational path of children from marginal groups; rather they encourage them to come to school" (Teacher C). However, it was contented in subsequent interviews with officers the wider discrimination in society in Bangladesh created challenges for children from marginal groups.

#### **Officers perspective: the attitude of parents**

One officer stated, "Well-off parents do not agree to send their children to government primary school because children from marginal groups read in this school" (Officer B). In a view which contrasted with some teachers interviewed, officers felt that parental attitudes from more financially and socially 'advantaged' groups could have a negative impact on promoting inclusive education.

#### **Analysis of mixed attitude towards children from marginal groups**

The majority of teacher state that students from different social groups all behave in a friendly way with each other. This perception is not unanimous, and some teachers suggest that children from marginal groups are challenged by their peers in school. This minority view held by the teachers was affirmed by officers who also state that well-off children do not socially engage with children from marginal groups. This separation between children does not fit with the model of an inclusive school, where children should get equal chance to participate physically, socially, and academically with their peers (Pearce, 2009 cited in Mahbub, 2016). Teachers note that they have no attitudinal barrier with children from marginal groups rather they behave in all students equally but officers state that teachers are not positive to children from marginal groups. As a result, they do not get proper education alike to other students. Both groups agree that teachers' positive attitude can keep a fundamental role to increase the attendance of children from marginal groups. A number of researcher (e.g. Avramids and Norwich, 2002; Brownlee and Carrington, 2000; Cologon, 2011; Sharma, Moore and Sonawane, 2009; Wilczenski, 1992) suggest that the positive attitude of teachers has an important role to play in the success of inclusive education in classroom practice (Ahmmed et al 2012). A study form Malak et al (2014) show that in Bangladesh, teachers are pessimistic about the children who are difficulties in learning. However, most of the teachers note that parents have no negative aspect towards children from marginal groups. Teachers and officers think that teachers, parents' attitude should be changed for successful inclusive education. The research found that the non- supportive conception of community people that creates many challenges for the school leaders in attempting to build support for the acceptance of diversity in their schools (Mullick et al 2012). Moreover, the traditional social norms (Superstitions) and parental attitude and beliefs create potential barriers to the promotion of inclusive education, especially children from marginal groups (UNESCO, 2002).

#### **Theme: Marginalized Children's Negative Experience of school**

According to teachers and officers, the negative experiences of the school of children from marginal groups are assumed from the limited academic achievement, high dropout, inattentive in the classroom that can have a negative impact to promote IE.

#### **Teachers perspective: Limited academic achievement**

One teacher stated, "They can pass in the examination but they obtain B grade and C grade that are not outstanding results" (Teacher B). Most of the teachers thought that poverty affected their education so they could not make a good result in school examinations because they did not get proper support from their family. However, some teachers thought that they were talent in co-curriculum activities. And some students were exceptional but they could not go ahead because of inadequate opportunities.

#### **Officers perspective: Limited academic achievement**

One officer stated, "Teachers do not inspire to children from marginal groups that make them discouraged in education by their behaviour. As a result, they do not get proper education and their school achievement is not good" (Officer B). A mixed picture was established by the interviewees about the influential impact on the school achievement of children from marginal groups. Furthermore, it was agreed by the interviewees that children from marginal groups could have better performance if they got positive support from the school environment. A study of Bath et al. (2004) cited in Seker (2011) show that a non-supportive atmosphere of IE creates achievement and behavioural problems of children from marginal groups that adversely influence them.

#### **Teachers perspective: inattentive in the classroom**

"Some children especially who are tribal they are irregular in school; we visit their home then they came in school but after three or four days they do not come again" (Teacher D). Maximum teachers agreed that children from marginal groups were not regular in school and who came to school, they were inattentive in class. However, some experiences are different in others. "They are attentive and active in class" (Teacher D).

#### **Officers perspective: inattentive in classroom**

Officers thought that children from marginal groups were left behind in class, as a result, they could not pay their concentration in class and they did not get any joyful environment. So, they were not enthusiastic in class. One officer noted, "They are insipid in class" (Officer A). However, though some positive picture was represented by the teachers and officers, most of them agreed that their negative experience of school such as lack of teachers' zeal, the relation of peers, and less understanding of classroom language affected to children from marginal groups. As a result, they were often inattentive in the classroom that created a barrier to meet the goal of IE.

#### **Teachers perspective: dropout**

Most of the teachers thought that children from marginal groups come to school but at the last moment, we could not keep them in school because they faced some extra challenges like teasing, avoiding that loosed their interest in school, as a result, they dropped out from school. One teacher stated, "There are various kinds of students in school, among them, only children from marginal groups are dropped out" (Teacher B). However, another teacher stated, "Dropout rate existed but day by day this circumstance is improving" (Teacher C).

#### **Officers perspective: dropout**

One officer noted, "Teachers do not take special initiatives to encourage children from marginal groups, as a result, some children come to school, but they do not get proper education and in the long run these students drop out from school" (Officer B). It was generally established by the interviewees that positive attitude and family support could enhance resistance to drop out rates of children from marginal groups, and by relation, this might have a positive result to promote inclusive education. Most of the teachers and officers agreed that children from marginal groups dropout from school or their achievement in school were not outstanding because of inadequate facilities in school and out of school. Some children from marginal groups were getting good results, it was understood that they undoubtedly had a capacity for educational achievements but they need sufficient opportunities and a congenial environment that was established by the interviewees.

#### **Analysis of marginalized children's negative experience of school**

In this investigation, the majority of teachers agree that the achievement of children from marginal groups in school examination is not outstanding like general students. Another statement of officers also is mentionable about the achievement of these students. Officer says that they are backbencher and they cannot understand what the teacher says. Both groups state that all of the children from marginal groups do not come from school but some of them come to school and their achievement is less than other students. They also agree that family status and socio-

economic condition influence their academic achievement. A study from Davis-Kean (2005) notes that parental background and income impact on children's mind which affects the academic achievement of children. However, some teachers also state that some of the children from marginal groups are exceptional in achievement and they have an outstanding result in the co-curriculum sector. Both groups agree that they are insipid and inhospitable in school and these children are mostly inattentive in class. A study from Sabates, et al (2010) cited in Farah and Upadhyay, (2017) shows that in Bangladesh, children who drop out of school, they get less support from parents for their school work and this study also show that parental socio- economic position may have an impact on children's educational outcomes. Similarly, one officer notes that teachers also do not come forward to encourage these children; as a result, they drop out from school. According to Collins, 2009; Leach, 2006 cited in Aikman & Dyer, (2012), the teaching-learning activities within schools and the unbalanced social relations that are reflected in the very procedures in those schools. The research from Mullick et al (2012) shows that in Bangladesh, lacking knowledge about the process of teaching-learning activities make an important barrier to hold the thought of including all children in their classrooms that can have an impact to be attentive in the class of children from marginal groups and drop out of them.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Environment and responsibility:**

the researcher thinks that the curriculum is congenial for the effective IE in Bangladesh. The researcher thinks that a joyful and supportive environment should be ensured in classroom activities and in school which ensures the fearless environment for children from marginal groups. For this reason, an effective committee should be formed with the administration and local influential persons (including political leaders) that ensure the educational environment in primary schools. Though upazilla primary education committee exists, the activities of this committee should be enlarged and made more accountable so that educational professionals can better ensure IE for children from marginal groups.

### **Improved stipend programme:**

Most of the teachers and officers state that marginalized parents and children should be patronized. They think that if their economic condition is improved, their social condition will be revolutionized that can have a vital role to promote school attendance and to promote the achievement of children from marginal groups. Some teachers and officers also suggest that school feeding programme should be enhanced and made more effective in school. In addition, the researcher thinks that every government primary school should have a fund in association with public-private partnership (PPPs).

### **Special initiatives:**

The researcher thinks that central stipend allocation system should be decentralized and school authority should be empowered to allocate stipend to children from marginal groups. The government also should announce that those who are children from marginal groups can get the exceptional result in school examination, they get an opportunity to get a government job and their parents will get all of the state facilities. Every marginalized family should be patronized by the government to improve their social condition and sustainability engaging any work. In addition, the adult literacy programme should be arranged for the parents of children from marginal groups with economic support that can have an opportunity to engage them in any productive work.

### **Rethinking about Kindergarten schooling:**

One insight addresses from the findings that distance from school and home can have an impact to promote inclusive education as it affects school attendance and engagement. Another insight drawn from the interviewees is that well off parents do not agree to send their children to government primary school; their trend is to send their children to a kindergarten school. Bangladesh constitution has enshrined an article that declares the free and compulsory primary education but kindergarten schools are operated for profit. One officer also stated that well-off families did not agree to allow their children to be admitted government primary school. So, the researcher recommends that the provision of kindergarten schooling should be altered. The government provide financial support and improve the monitoring systems in kindergarten schools so that they can accountable. Governmental financial support and monitoring would allow for policies of inclusion to be extended to kindergarten level education. This would better enable every student to get free pre-school education. Educational provision should also be extended to allow for more government primary schools to be established in the rural area that contributes to reducing the ratio of teacher and students. As a result, all students will agree to get admitted in mainstream primary school that will begin a new arena to promote inclusive education for children from marginal groups.

### **Attitude and community involvement:**

Teachers and officers state that attitude of parents, peers, and teachers towards children from marginal groups sometimes create problems that can produce a challenge to promote inclusive education for children from marginal groups. The researcher thinks that teacher training, community participation, and marginalized parents' participation should be encouraged. The majority of teachers also state that community people and specially marginalized parents should be more involved in school activities. Though SLIP (school learning improvement plan) engages the community and empowers them through documented objectives written 'in black and white'. The control of support measures for marginalized groups should be more decentralized and given to schools, alongside more funds and financial control so that they can decide how to utilize this money to promote the goal of IE. Marginalized parents should be involved in the decision-making to utilize this money.

### **Communication and consultation:**

Communication and consultation with parents and community can have an opportunity to engage them in school activities that can help teachers to promote IE of children from marginal groups in mainstream school. Teachers must communicate with the parents of children from marginal groups and inform the progress about children from marginal groups but it is very often ignored. One officer also states that teachers are not enthusiastic to go to the home of children from marginal groups. The researcher also thinks that for effective communication and a positive attitude towards children from marginal groups, teachers and officers should have proper knowledge about inclusive education. Teachers and officers agree that teachers and officers training is needed to reduce the impediment to promote IE in the mainstream school. For this reason, they mention that consultation with parents and community people can keep an important role to promote inclusive education. Officers also similarly express their comment about community participation but one officer states that consultation with teachers should be demonstrated so that they can understand deficiencies in their professional behaviour and attitudes towards children from marginal groups. The researcher recommends that training of inclusive education for teachers and officers should be prioritized in PEDP IV programme. Simultaneously, the effectiveness of training should be ensured because many training programmes exist in the primary department but no effective result has come yet.

### **Monitoring and supervision:**

The researcher thinks that lack of monitoring and supervision and lack of proper knowledge of officers about IE create a barrier to ensure successful IE for children from marginal groups in mainstream school. The researcher thinks that monitoring and supervision system should be promoted and sophisticated. For example, during the monitoring and supervision, officers should observe and check the academic progression and response of children from marginal groups that will ensure the responsibility and accountability of teachers and officers. However, existing status of monitoring officers, e.g. assistant upazilla education officers is not perfect to monitor the head teachers, as they have the same professional rank and that often creates an impediment to effective monitoring. So, the researcher thinks that the post of assistant upazilla education officer should be upgraded.

### **CONCLUSION**

This dissertation discussed children from marginal groups; their social challenges were linked with poverty, illiteracy, lack of awareness of their parents that could create a barrier to promote inclusive education for the upazilla administration. It also examined IE policy and legislation frameworks and the implementation of this policy presented from many studies. The research findings can benefit education professionals involved with children from marginal groups. Social discrimination predominates at grass-root level in Bangladesh that can have a significant impact to promote inclusion for children from marginal groups in mainstream primary school. As a result, everywhere children from marginal groups are challenged by attitude and facilities that can have a mental effect to promote inclusion. However, some causes for optimism emerged in the research, for example, teachers' commented that children from marginal groups often displayed higher than average talent for athletics, and in academic examinations, some were achieving outstanding results. Success stories can have a positive result to promote inclusive education. It is also undoubted that comprehensive participation of all groups of society can ensure a sophisticated educational environment in primary schools in Bangladesh that can help educational professionals to promote IE of children from marginal groups into the mainstream school.

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