

PROMOTING TRANSITION TO SECONDARY EDUCATION: HOW SCOPE PROVIDES SECOND CHANCE TO DROP-OUTS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN FOR POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In Bangladesh, low transition rate and high dropout rate is a critical issue in secondary education. Government has taken many initiatives to address this issue. But still, after completing primary cycle many students enroll in secondary education but drop out before completing secondary education. So I have chosen as my research topic the issue of transition to secondary education, particularly how to provide a second chance to drop-outs and vulnerable children and youth for post primary education. The purpose of my study was to explore the SCOPE project of IED, BRAC University to find out which factors lead to dropout, and how the SCOPE project addresses these to promote transition to secondary education through different supportive activities. I also wanted to know how key stakeholders perceive these initiatives. This research is important because it addresses a key problem in secondary education and this study will help educators to take the successful interventions and initiatives that influence student enrollment and continuation at the secondary level. I used the qualitative research approach. I collected data through interviews, focus group discussions and document review. Through this study I have found that many students could not access and continue secondary education due to their socio-economic and family background, educational cost, school related factors, child labor and gender discrimination. The findings show that to promote transition in secondary education the SCOPE project developed learning centers, trained teachers to make lessons attractive and engaging, provided the necessary facilities such as low cost education, clean and attractive classrooms, sanitation facilities for girls, schools near the homes of students, safe learning environment, building parents' awareness, and counseling adolescents on sexual and reproductive health and gender issues. All these initiatives helped to promote interest and motivation among the disadvantaged families and children to be admitted for a second chance and continuing post-primary or junior secondary education. The project has developed this low cost model of post-primary education which can be replicated and expanded.

Key words: Promoting, Transition, Secondary, Education, Scope, provides, second chance, Drop-outs, vulnerable children, post-primary, education.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a key tool for national development of a country and it is a basic human right of every individual. Education is important for every person in a nation. Education enables a man or woman to

realize their potentials and goals. No country can be developed unless everybody is educated to meet the challenges. Most of the developing countries have focused on primary education, but though secondary education is a crucial stage in the education system it has been neglected in many countries. But, to achieve the goal of Education for All (EFA) governments should take different interventions to increase access and completion in secondary education also.

Secondary education in Bangladesh consists of two main streams – general and madrasa. Secondary education serves mostly the adolescents and youth, who play a vital role in their families and communities. But at the secondary level low transition and dropout is a critical issue in our country. The Education Watch studies in 2005 found that of the students who enrolled in class six, 47.8 percent continued up to class ten and 39.8 percent could cross the barrier of test examination, while 20.1 percent passed in the school final (Education Watch, 2005). Although students' enrollment in primary school has reached a satisfactory level, but transition to secondary is not keeping the same pace. Different issues are related to the problem of smooth transition to secondary level. Both government and non-government sectors are providing some special programmes, particularly for the disadvantaged children and youth, to increase access or transition to secondary schools. The Institute of Educational Development at BRAC University (IED, BRACU) has started the SCOPE project (Second Chance for Post Primary Education) since March 2009 (IED, BRACU Project Implementation Manual, 2009). This is an interesting programme which is the focus of this study.

Recently, the SCOPE project included some more components in the programme which are sexual and reproductive health rights and gender (SRHRG). Now, the project is called "SSCOPE", meaning Schooling, SRHRG, and Counseling of Post Primary Education.

However, this study is focused on the objectives and activities of the previous SCOPE project, which stands for Second Chance for Post Primary Education.

Statement of the Problem

In our country, the secondary education system is faced with several difficulties and that has effects in both the short and long term. The main problem in our country at secondary level is low transition rate to secondary education, and high dropout rate of youth. Transition means changing from one step to another step. That is, children move out of one school system into another or within the same school between different years. For example, when a student completes grade five from a primary school, he/she is eligible for admission to secondary school. But, as the studies show, low enrolment rate and retention rate of the students is a problem. Transition from primary to secondary education in 2004 was around 83 percent. Education Watch 2005 reports out of school children as 28 percent. BANBEIS 2005 reports that in secondary education in 2003 completion rate was 16.6 percent, dropout rate was 83.4 percent and survival rate was 49.4 percent (Ahmed et al., 2007).

As shown above, high dropout from primary education and low transition to secondary education is a main problem in our country. For this problem many adolescents/youth do not get access to secondary school. SCOPE project of IED aims to address this problem and has been running several activities to reduce this problem for some years. These need to be studied to see how these have been influencing the access to secondary education for these children.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research was to conduct and analyze an in-depth study of a SCOPE school that has been enrolling dropout students. Through this particular study data was collected through focus group discussion, interview and document review completed at the school office and Institute of Educational Development (IED). The focus was on identifying strategies, facilities and practices that have been utilized and implemented to increase student enrollment.

Although the government takes different kinds of initiatives to reduce dropout and retain students in the classroom, but they still cannot achieve the goal successfully in secondary education. Through this study I tried to find out which factors lead to dropout and how to promote access/transition to secondary education through different supportive activities. Particularly, I wanted to explore the SCOPE project and its activities and how they promote access or transition to secondary education. I also wanted to know how key stakeholders such as parents, community, and the learners view these initiatives.

Significance of the Study

The study looked at an important problem in secondary education – how transition to secondary education is hampered through different challenges faced by many disadvantaged youth – and how this may be overcome by the initiatives of programmes such as SCOPE. The research findings on how SCOPE ensures its aim and objectives, how students as well as parents are benefited

by these initiatives, and the challenges they face for implementation are significant for understanding the problem of transition to secondary level, especially for disadvantaged youth.

The findings of this study can be used to help educators understand the successful interventions and initiatives that influence and facilitate student enrollment and continuation at the secondary level.

Research Questions

How does SCOPE help out-of-school children and youth to gain post-primary education and how do they transition to secondary education?

Key questions

The following are my key questions which I formulated to get the information for my research question.

- a. **Key question 1:** What is the background and context of SCOPE and its objectives and strategies?
- b. **Key question 2:** What are the activities of SCOPE and how do they promote a second chance for post primary education? How are these viewed by the key stakeholders?

Sub-questions

The following are my sub-questions which would provide the information for answering my key questions.

- a. **Sub-question 1.1:** What are the objectives of SCOPE and how are they to be achieved through the project activities?
- b. **Sub-question 1.2:** Who are the beneficiaries and how are the schools selected?
- c. **Sub-question 2.1:** What interventions are made and where do they take place, in school or out of school and why?
- d. **Sub-question 2.2:** How do the key stakeholders, such as project personal, community, parents, learners view the initiatives of SCOPE and whether this has helped to increase access to secondary education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Status of secondary education in Bangladesh

Secondary education is an important stage in the education system in Bangladesh as it lays the foundation for higher education. Previously, it consisted of five years of schooling from class six to class ten and ended with the secondary school certificate or SSC. But major changes have been introduced by the National Education Policy 2010, which are being implemented in phases. Now, the secondary education system is a 7-year cycle with 3 years of junior secondary education, 2 years of secondary education and 2 years of higher secondary education. There are three streams of secondary education: general, technical/vocational and madrasa. Secondary schools follow the Bangladesh Textbook Board curriculum. Nearly 98% of the secondary institutions are managed by the private sector. Government secondary schools are situated mainly in the urban areas. Public examinations are held at the end of grade 10 (Secondary School Certificate Examinations) and the end of grade 12 (Higher Secondary Certificate Examinations), which are organized by six Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Examination in different regions of the country (Rahman et al., 2010).

Those who complete the primary cycle are eligible for admission to secondary school and secondary schools work for the adolescents. The targeted population for secondary education is of the age group 11-15 years. But, Education Watch 2005, (Ahmed et al., 2005), found that student's dropout and repetition rates are highest among the students of class ten. In 2004, primary to secondary transition rate was 83%. In 2003, secondary completion rate was only 16.6%, while dropout rate was 83.4%.

These figures show that secondary education is not achieving its targets and there is a huge loss of resources by all concerned, particularly by the families of those students who fail to complete secondary education, or drop out.

But there is some positive trend in terms of gender parity in secondary education. The most distinct feature in secondary enrollment in the 1990s was that girls' enrollment increased at more than double the rate for boys. In lower classes girls' performance was better, while in higher classes it was not so good compared to boys. In 2003, the overall attendance rate was 71 percent and there was no variation between boys and girls (Ahmed et al., 2007).

In this regard, Education Watch 2005 (Ahmed et al., 2005) found that the promotion and repetition rates were higher for the boys than the girls and dropout rates were higher for the girls than boys. In class ten, the promotion rate for the boys was 76.1% while it was 65.2% for the girls. At class

ten, dropout rates of the girls were 8.9% higher than that of the boys and repetition rate was 2% higher for girls. So, although enrollment advances of girls at secondary level compare to boys, but in class ten the boys are ahead of the girls in participation in public examination (p. 88-89).

Factors influencing transition to secondary education

Discussed below are some of the factors or issues that are linked to transition to secondary education, particularly in the context of Bangladesh. Literature review shows that certain vulnerable groups such as girls, working children, street children, low income family's children and disable children are more likely to drop out and not complete primary cycle or transition to secondary education. Some school related factors and cost of education are also seen as important factors linked to transition to secondary education.

Meaning of transition

Transition occurs when students move out of one system to another system, like from primary education to secondary education, or when children move out of one school system and into another. Transition between primary and secondary school is a critical issue in Bangladesh. Difficulties happen in making new relationships with teachers and students, in adapting to new norms and expectations, and adjusting to a different system. Transition is used to address how children move and the adjustment phase from primary to secondary school. One study showed that issues such as social adjustment, teacher's expectations, organizational issues, pupil's perceptions, cultural factors, socio-economic factors, gender differences, collaboration between primary and secondary school are affected in the transition from primary to secondary school (Evangelou et al., 2008).

Reasons for low transition

Many issues are related to low transition to secondary education in Bangladesh. Among these low completion rate at the primary level is a major reason for low enrolment rate in secondary schools, particularly for girls. Only two thirds of all students enrolled at the primary level finish grade five and are eligible for secondary school, but not all of them enter secondary school. Many factors were found to be related to transition such as students who repeat a grade, who are over-age for their class, absenteeism, illness, low self-esteem, poor academic performance, school environment etc. (Mahmud, 2003).

Other reasons for low transition were found to be the family's socio-economic condition, school distance, parent's attitude, lack of school, parent are not able to bear educational expenditure and child labor (Shohel&Howes,2007).

Demographic factors of the students affecting transition

Socio-economic condition of the family and other factors often decide what types of students are eligible to access secondary education. According to Lamb et al. (2011) students from low income families and students with disabilities are dropout from school. Family background, demographic factors and experience in school are important factors which influence the rate of dropout and thus affect the access and transition to secondary education. With regard to this, Ardt et al. (2005) found that, "Children who are homeless, children of low socioeconomic families and parents who are not educated are restricted from public education. Children in urban slums could not get opportunities to continue their study" (Ardt et al., 2005, p.9).

Barriers affecting girls' secondary education

Gender discriminations faced by girls in the family and society pose a significant barrier to girls' secondary education. If a family faces financial problems, they prefer boys to be sent to school rather than girls. Also a significant portion of the female population marries between the ages of sixteen and nineteen. When they are married they are socially isolated. Moreover, if there is no school near the home parents are not interested to send their daughter to a school which is far away due to safety and security concerns. So, girls face many obstacles to access secondary education. Poor families, higher cost in secondary level, remote and poorer areas, early marriage, increasing vulnerability and lack of security of adolescent girls in secondary school are the barrier of girls' education.

Working children and street children face barriers to education

Working children are another vulnerable group who face barriers to access or transition to secondary education. Many working children of Bangladesh, boys and girls, have no access to education. On the other hand, child labor is increasing day by day in our country. Two-thirds of working middle-class people employs children for doing household work. For this reason, these children involve in low-skilled and low-paid work and in future, without education and skills, they will

continue to live in the cycle of poverty. In 2006, about 3.2 million children engaged in child labor in Bangladesh. Among them 421,000 were involved in household work and out of them 75 percent were girls. As they work in households they are specifically vulnerable and excluded from achieving education (Child Domestic Workers Increase Bangladesh, 2013).

School-related factors for low transition

Some school-related factors influence transition in secondary education. According to Ardt et al. (2005), most schools do not have adequate facilities. There is also lack of resources, inflexibility in terms of school hours or curriculum, insufficient schools, lack of skilled teachers, classrooms that are not clean or safe, lack basic necessities such as textbooks, blackboards and working toilets (p. 12). These poor school conditions often act as barriers to children participating in secondary education.

Cost of secondary education

Most of the students could not transition from primary to secondary education because of educational expenditure. According to Education Watch (2005), in secondary education there are twelve areas of expenditure or cost. These are admission/readmission fee, monthly tuition, buying/collecting textbooks, buying/collecting supplementary books, stationary, school dress, examination fees, various other fees, transport for schooling, payment for private tutors, transport for private tutoring, and school tiffin (Education Watch, p. 34). In 2004, the cost was 1,160 takas for the non-government secondary schools and 1,933 takas for Dakhil madrasas. There was an expected higher level of expenditure in the urban institutions (p. 102).

Dropout linked to low transition to secondary

Dropout is an important factor that is linked to the low transition to secondary schools. Children may drop out from primary school and so are not eligible for secondary school, or they may complete primary education but not go on to secondary education. There are many reasons for dropout like low household income, child labor, inability to pay school fees etc. Most of the children who are out of school are dropouts from school. Dropouts include those whose schooling starts late and their progression is delayed by repetition. There are many reasons for children to stop going to school. The most common are lack of interest in school, costs, distance, pregnancy, opportunities to earn income, long time absence, household work, corporal punishment, bullying, disability and schools are not child friendly (Lewin, 2011).

Programs promoting transition to secondary education

Literature review has shown how government and NGOs in Bangladesh are initiating programmes for promoting transition to secondary education. These are discussed below. Experiences of some other countries in this respect are also discussed.

Government programs in Bangladesh

Among the different initiatives taken for increasing transition to secondary is the Secondary Female Stipend Program, which was started in Bangladesh in 1982 to help increase the enrolment and retention of girls in secondary schools thereby delaying marriage and childbearing. It is funded by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and the government of Norway and Bangladesh. The objectives of this program are to ensure higher secondary enrolment and retention, delayed marriage, fertility control, population reduction, enhancing employment opportunities and empowerment of women. To ensure that the objectives are promoted, one of the strategies applied is that married girls are excluded from the stipend. The impact of this program has been an increase in girls' secondary enrolments on an average of 7.9% to 14% in some project areas and dropout rates fell from 14.7% to 3.5% (Raynor & Wesson, 2006).

The Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC) project of Bangladesh provides second chance education to more than 75,000 out-of-school children in 22,000 Ananda schools (Learning Centers). The project selects Upazilla as considering high poverty, low enrollment and completion rates and help meritorious poorer children to complete primary education. This project provides these children a second chance for primary education and also helps them move on to secondary education. A recent study shows that 70% of pass Ananda school graduates have moved onto secondary school. Ananda is a community-based educational centre for the most marginalized children.

NGO programs in Bangladesh

The transition from childhood to adolescence is often a difficult situation. One NGO named Shonglap, works with Bangladeshi adolescents' girls. They have a one-year program for adolescent girls of the religiously conservative communities of Cox's Bazar. The main target group of Shonglap is adolescent girls who dropout from formal schooling. The age range of adolescents is from 10 years to

less than 18 years. The program helps adolescents to gain knowledge of life skills and occupation skills. They do different kinds of activities to empower adolescents such as providing knowledge about menstruation, HIV/AIDS, information to reduce health risk especially reproductive health. Adolescents' participation in Shonglap has an effect on re-admission to school and mainstreaming dropout girls into education (Rashid, 2011).

As discussed above, the high dropout rate and low transition rate from primary to secondary level is a critical issue in Bangladesh. Some of the main reasons for dropout were found to be rigid rules and regulations of the institute, poverty and other pedagogy related issues. To address the alarmingly high rates of dropouts at secondary level in Bangladesh, IED- BRACU started an action research project known as Second Chance for Children of Post- Primary Education (SCOPE) from March 2009. SCOPE was designed based upon the needs of the society, to create access to secondary level education for the disadvantaged children who are dropouts from the mainstream. SCOPE developed a model to ensure junior secondary education as second chance for disadvantaged primary school graduates and dropped out students from secondary level (SCOPE manual, 2009).

Other country programmes

Second chance for post primary education is very important for out-of-school children. Many countries took different program/ project to ensure secondary education. Nigeria started a project to ensure secondary education for disadvantaged youth named Second Chance Organization of Nigeria for out-of-school adolescents. The project took three main objectives – to give young people access to correct information about sex, relationships and reproductive health, to train adolescents in peer education and peer counseling, and to challenge the attitude of parents and school authorities (Etherton, 2006).

In 2003, the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok initiated a project on equivalency programs within the framework of the Asia- Pacific programs of Education for All (APPEAL). Equivalency Programs (EPs) are alternative education programs equivalent to the formal system and promote lifelong learning for out-of-school disadvantaged children, youth and adults. These programs help them to access basic education and continuing education in order to improve their level of learning. Equivalency programs were undertaken in 2004 in India, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand (UNESCO, 2006).

Out-of-school programs in the United States consider mostly adolescents who lack the more advanced reading and writing skills necessary to succeed in higher education and the workplace. It strives to engage young people in learning activities, to create learning opportunities to support participant's academic achievement, helping young people transition successfully to adulthood and enhancing students' reading and writing abilities. This program helps learners in their homework and provides individualized tutoring to support academic learning and providing cultural, social, or recreational activities. Programs work primarily for those who are performing academically below grade level. They also provide a safe structured after-school space for students to develop their social skills and enhance student's academic abilities (Moje & Tysvaer, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

Research Participants

Our research participants were students, teachers, parents, community peoples, program personal of SCOPE and team leader. We conducted four interviews, out of them one with program personnel, one with the team leader, one with SCOPE teacher and one with primary school head teacher. We also conducted two FGDs with selected SCOPE school students and parents and community people. We had selected them because they were closely related with my research topic. The SCOPE teacher is a male and his qualification is B.Com. He received basic training, subject-based training, and classroom management training. He receives refresher training every month and conducts English subject class for grade six.

Our other participant was the govt. primary school head teacher, who is a female. The qualification of the head teacher is M.Sc. She has received C-in-Ed training, Basic In-service training and subject based training. The head teacher has been working for three years in this school and her total service period is seven years. She teaches grade IV and grade V.

For FGD We talked to 10 students of grade VI. Most of them are slum dwellers and very poor. They have no ability to continue their education without the help of SCOPE. The occupations of these students' parents are van driver, rickshaw driver, factory worker and fruit seller etc. I also conducted another FGD with parents and community people. I talked to 12 parents and community people. In this study, I selected participants purposively to know their views about the SCOPE initiatives.

Data Collection Methods

The main purpose of my study was to explore how SCOPE activities promote access/transition in secondary school and how the different stakeholders view these initiatives. It is very difficult to get the necessary data through one single method in qualitative research. I went through the process of collecting data using different methods like interview, FGD and some document review, which are described below.

Interview

While interviewing, we took down notes, as well as used a tape recorder. After interview, the missing information can be gotten from the tape recorder by transcribing. Before conducting the interview, we went to the school with my letter of consent and described the purpose of the study with the participants. We were committed to them to keep the confidentiality. We assured them it will not be harmful for them and told that it will be used only research purpose and their names will not be used in this thesis.

Focus group discussion

In this way we get a rich understanding about a group of participant's experiences and beliefs. We choose FGD because participants can express their opinion openly and We got in-depth information. For qualitative research focus group discussion is an important tool. We conducted two FGDs, one FGD with parents and community people of SCOPE school, and another with SCOPE school students. We used FGD to know the key stakeholder's views about SCOPE school. Here stakeholders mean parents, students, and community people. For conducting FGD, I scheduled the FGD and invited the participants and for that I developed an FGD guide. At first, we introduced the topic and explained the purpose of the focus group. I asked everyone to introduce themselves. We told them all will take turn to talk and no one should interrupt others while they are talking. We wrote down the key points of the discussion and used a tape recorder for recording.

Document review

We reviewed manuals of the SCOPE project, which helped me to know the aim and objectives of SCOPE project, course design, activities of field officer, how they set up a new center, how they select teacher etc. I also reviewed SCOPE concept paper, which helped me to know why SCOPE project was started, who are the benefited groups, when the project started, major activities to ensure objectives, what types of training teacher gets, why they initiated counseling in school etc.

Data Analysis

The next step of data collection was to analyze the data. Then it was transcribed from Bangla into English language. Then I reviewed the research question, key questions, sub-questions, and research methods, and separated the data collected under different methods used. While doing this, I reviewed the data several times. Then I highlighted the data that corresponded with the different research questions, organized the data into different categories and labeled them. After categorizing I summarized them. After reviewing the data, I found different themes and issues emerging from the data. For capturing the thoughts and meaning of the data, I wrote the themes down on separate pieces of paper. Then I summarized the main points under each theme. In this way, I followed the steps of data analysis, so that my findings would be based on data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results section is presenting and illustrating the findings of this study that have been collected by in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGD). We conducted two FGDs, one with parents and community people and another with students, four interviews (one program personnel, one SCOPE team leader, one head teacher in primary school and one SCOPE teacher).

Context and need for SCOPE project

The interviews and FGDs showed that there was a great need for a project like SCOPE to give a second chance to those who were unable to continue in secondary education. The dropouts from secondary education were increasing day by day. Only about 20 % of those who enrolled in grade six were able to complete grade ten and complete secondary education. Considering this situation IED, BRACU started the SCOPE project. The project selected its working area in regions with low literacy rate, low primary completion rate, where the school is very far from the learners' house, and there is a high dropout rate. The SCOPE project was needed in this area to minimize the dropout rate, increase

transition rate and create opportunity to help poor children to be admitted to secondary school (Interview # 1, 03/07/13).

Dropout was a major issue which is directly related to transition. The study found that children coming from broken family, unstable family and insolvent family were the ones dropping out from school. Reasons behind dropout were shown as social insecurity for female students, mixing with bad boys, passing with poor knowledge so they could not cope with advanced learner, parents could not bear educational expenditure, and poverty. One participant said that “poverty is not the main problem, parents not being conscious increases dropout rate” (Interview # 4, 09/07/13).

Very few children in this region go to secondary school after completing primary level and most of them drop out from school. There are also school-related factors that lead to drop out. The Team leader expressed her opinion in such a way, “students mainly drop out for poor quality of secondary education, poor academic achievement in secondary education and early marriage” (Interview # 2, 04/07/13). Others cited reasons for dropping out of school as, “poverty, school distance, parents not conscious, adolescent period, educational cost and school hours are the reasons for dropout (Interview # 1, 03/07/13).”

This data shows that there was a need for some type of intervention to support the children who were dropping out of school due to the reasons shown here. SCOPE was set up in this region to provide a second chance to these dropouts to enter and continue in secondary education.

SCOPE project objectives

The SCOPE project stands for Second Chance for the Children of Post Primary Education. SCOPE developed some interventions to meet the educational needs of students coming from disadvantaged families, which could be a model for supporting these children to achieve secondary education. IED, BRACU implemented this program to create access in Junior Secondary Education for the children coming from disadvantaged families who are dropouts from school. In SCOPE school, dropout children get opportunity to be admitted to secondary school for a second time, and for this reason it is called second chance. The Institute of Educational Development (IED) of BRAC University runs the project since 2009. As one of the research participants said, “we started SCOPE to develop a model to ensure secondary education for disadvantaged primary school graduates and those who dropped out from secondary school due to poverty” (Interview # 1, 03/07/13).

The program personnel defined the objectives of SCOPE as “to increase access in secondary education for disadvantaged children to continue their study up to SSC” (Interview # 1, 03/07/13).

The objectives of the SCOPE project are described by the team leader who said, “Our main focus is making a low-cost model to ensure secondary education for disadvantaged children and help them to develop their holistic development” (Interview # 2, 04/07/13). This shows that the project is trying to develop a model of supportive activities that will not only ensure secondary education for the disadvantaged children, but will also promote quality education in the school. These activities are described in the next section.

SCOPE project activities

The SCOPE project head office is situated at IED, BRAC University. There are project personnel based here in Dhaka who help to ensure that the project objectives are carried out. To carry out the activities smoothly six different groups (such as: operation, teacher development, learning group, sexual and reproductive health rights and gender, psycho social group, management information system and monitoring groups) work at IED. They constantly keep on-going communication with all field level staff and stakeholders. At the field level the project has 9 branches, 39 centers and 10 staff. They work in the field and this is followed up by the head office.

The project leader takes any initial decision by discussing with all the group members. Every week each group leader sits together with the team and discusses different issues such as where support is needed, what the present condition of the field is, what problems they face and how to overcome the problem. The group leaders then discuss the meeting issue with their group members. The team members then discuss this decision with field researchers. The field researchers discuss this issue with the teacher and social counselor. In this way each decision is spread to the field level (Interview # 2, 04/07/13).

All this data show that the SCOPE project is well set up and has staff working at the head office and the field level to achieve the project objectives. They have also brought some changes to the project name and activities based on their experience in the field and needs of the learners.

SCOPE school and facilities for learners

SCOPE has set up its school near the houses of the learners so that they cannot drop out due to school distance, and there is no need for transport. They also provide free materials, and build parents’

awareness. To implement SCOPE project, at first they conduct survey for selected area. After survey they ensure they will get learners, then communicate with parents and community people to raise awareness about the issues and the objectives of the project. They rent a tin shed one-room school for students and provide materials for students. There are 42 students in the school. The number of teachers is three and one Shomaj Shongee madam. They recruit teachers. The qualification of teachers required is minimum HSC level but all teachers have completed graduation. They coordinate with all the stakeholders from head office to the field level and always communicate with them” (Interview # 2, 04/07/13).

Every month they arrange meeting with head office to field level officers. One participant said that, “Every staff meeting we discuss our success and failure and take decision what we will do next month and what initiative we will take” (Interview # 1, 03/07/13).

This data shows that the SCOPE project has set up low-cost schools with the required number of teachers who are qualified, and there is regular communication and meetings between project staff and the teachers to ensure that the decisions of the project are implemented.

If any students are absent in class, the teacher communicates with their parents to bring them back to school. SCOPE was started to provide junior secondary education for the disadvantaged and dropout children. The Team leader described the different facilities they provide so that the learners can come to school,

We provide resources and opportunity, we set up school, particularly to fill students’ need, and these schools fill their educational need, desperation need. If students did not come regularly or they could not concentrate in their study it is also informed to the parents. We provide all materials free for students. We build awareness among parents by personal contact, parents’ meeting and celebrate national days. We discuss disadvantages of early marriage to reduce early marriage. We give students financial and mental support. In SCOPE there is no need for tuition fee. All lessons are completed during school time. They get financial and mental support. We always communicate with parents (Interview # 2, 04/07/13).

Most of the students said that if the project did not help they could not continue their study. School provides them all things without money such as books, kata, pen, geometry box etc. and they only pay 150 takas per month. Even they have no need for private tutor because the teacher teaches them very well. They do not need to study at home because all the lessons are completed in school. They got admitted to this school because in this school only 50 students are admitted but in other schools the number of students is more (Focus group # 2, 08/07/13).

This data show that the SCOPE project provides certain benefits to the learners, both financially as well as in terms of mental and academic support, to help them continue in school and not drop out.

Project staff and teachers

At the field level, field operation officers regular supervise the school. The qualification of the field operation officer is Master’s degree. IED provides different types of training for them such as research training, subject based training, basic training, orientation (survey, counseling). The monitoring team also monitors the school and gives the teacher feedback frequently and informs the field officer. If there are problems, they immediately solve the problem. In this regard, the Team leader said that the, “monitor group provides report and we take action according to the report. Every rule is set against a particular problem” (Interview # 2, 04/07/13).

The project staff provides all the materials for the students. They give the teacher supportive feedback and visit the school systematically. To help students and give them mental support they recruited the Shomaj Shongee or social welfare counselor and started counseling in school. They recruited the field operation officer, school teacher and Shomaj Shongee from the school area. Field Researcher has own office. They collaborate with all the staff from head office (Interview # 2, 04/07/13).

The SCOPE team leader said that

Parents’ meeting is held once in a month. But students’ problem is discussed on the 3rd day every month. We cannot wait for monthly meeting. Then we go individually to the students’ home. If parent’s and child relationship is not well it affects the student’s education. If their relations are not well then child cannot share their problem with parents. When we identify the problem we go to their house and try to make them understand. We try to minimize their problem on both sides (Interview # 2, 04/07/13).

In focus group discussion one parent said that, “if our child is absent in school, the teacher comes to our house enquiring why our child did not go to school. Shomaj Shongee madam does not teach the students, her responsibility is to go to the students’ house, door to door. Why students do not come to school? Are they suffering from fever or other diseases?” (Focus group # 1, 06/07/13).

This data shows that there is a good monitoring system in the project, and different actions are taken promptly by the teacher or the counselor to solve problems faced by the students so that the students do not drop out of school, which is one of the main problems that the project is trying to address.

Counseling activities in SCOPE school

SCOPE project has recently introduced counseling activities since April 2013. They have introduced some social welfare counselors known as Shomaj Shongee who work for those students who come from disadvantaged family or face different family crises. So, mental support is needed for them to concentrate in the class. Shomaj Shongee is staff of the school. They work at school 4 days in a week and conduct one-hour session regarding emotional well-being and deliver information on sexual and reproductive health, rights and gender to the SCOPE school students. The qualification of Shomaj Shongee is minimum HSC level and age range is 19-25 years. They provide service to the adolescents in group sessions, individual sessions and at parents' meeting if necessary. The counseling team provides training for Shomaj Shongee such as communication skill, stress management, anxiety management and time management (Interview # 2, 04/07/13).

Referring to the counseling activities, the students said that in school they have a Shomaj Shongee madam for their mental health development. They tell her all of their problems and she tries to give help to solve the problems (Focus group # 2, 08/07/13). Shomaj Shongee always encourages students. She provides students mental and emotional support. She behaves towards the students as a friend and always tries to make them happy. Most of the participants of FGD said that "it is great initiative for SCOPE to recruit Shomaj Shongees in school" (Focus group # 1, 06/07/13).

Counseling is practiced in school at the same time as educational activities. This is generally not found in other secondary schools. Before starting counseling in school they conducted many FGDs with different groups and from this they felt that counseling is needed for adolescents. If students get counseling they can overcome many challenges. It is also needed for student's emotional well-being, and solving sexual and reproductive health related problems (Interview # 1, 03/07/13).

From school students I came to know about social counseling, sexual guidance and attitudes. In focus group discussion one student said that,

Shomaj Shongee madam teaches us many important things. We learn what mental problem is, how physical change happens, what the reason of mental pressure is, how to manage our mental stress, how to build good relationship with parents and friends, how we should respect others and how we can solve the problems. In SCOPE school teacher helps us how to become modern and disciplined and obey rules and regulations (Focus group # 2, 08/07/13).

The counseling activities are relatively new, but they are seen as very useful for the students who are adolescents facing critical period in their life as well as being disadvantaged in society and in education.

Training teachers to make teaching-learning friendly for disadvantaged students

Training is an important part of implementation. The project trained teachers to create child-friendly environment and ensure child-centered educational approach in the classroom. (Interview # 1, 03/07/13)

To develop teaching-learning skills, the project provides training for teachers. When teachers are recruited they get subject-based training, communication training, classroom management training and how to use materials. Every month the teacher gets refresher training. The staff also regularly monitors the school and the teacher gets supportive feedback frequently. To conduct the class, the teacher gets materials and teacher's guide for every subject. In this guide is described all the important aspects of teaching-learning such as, when group work is needed and when lecture method is needed according to content. The SCOPE teacher appreciated the training and support she receives and said that, "at the end of the month we get one-day refresher training and it is very helpful to us to conduct class nicely" (Interview # 4, 09/07/13).

Since SCOPE targets the disadvantaged and poor students, they try to make classroom learning much easier for this group. The language of NCTB books are hard, students cannot understand them easily. So, they train the teacher in such a way that they can make every lesson easy to students. They train teacher how they can identify their slow learners and what type of initiatives they should take for them. Teacher knows how to relate additional examples, picture, activity, illustration in classroom activities for students' better understanding and connect it with students' prior knowledge (Interview # 2, 04/07/13).

The SCOPE teachers create joyful classroom environment by telling stories, interesting things or singing songs. The teacher teaches them through pictures, materials and engages them in the classroom by different activities. Here teacher's role is that of a facilitator. She ensures gender friendly

environment in the classroom. Teachers are always careful so that no unwanted incident occurs inside the classroom, because they work for adolescents. If someone fails to understand she goes to the side of the weak students, tries to make it easy for him/her and always encourages students that they can do it. Sometimes they give the weak students extra time after class. During class if students are not attentive then they pay particular attention to them. They assess students in both formative and summative ways and also follow the assessment system of government (Interview # 4, 09/07/13).

Role of community in SCOPE school

The project involves parents as active participants in the school. About this, the program personnel said that, “every month we arrange meeting to inform parents their child’s strength and weakness and how they can help their child for further improvement. The community people help them to search a suitable school, to conduct survey and give information for selecting the teacher (Interview # 1, 03/07/13).

This data highlights that the role of the community is recognized as very important in bringing about changes in the educational opportunities for the disadvantaged children. The community makes the parents more conscious of their responsibilities towards their children’s education. The community takes this role quite seriously and gives their time and ideas to help the SCOPE project succeed in its objectives.

SCOPE support for transition to secondary school

Reasons for low transition to secondary school

The reasons why children do not transition to secondary were brought out in the interviews. After completing primary education all students could not get opportunity to be admitted to secondary education for economic condition, poverty, social security, facilities given in primary school are not provided in high school, high cost of secondary education, schools are not available, very few primary attached to high school, school distance, most of the parents are illiterate and lack of parents’ awareness (Interview # 3, 07/07/13).

According to the SCOPE team leader, “some of the reasons behind no transition are, one is poverty, one is school, we have not enough school for smooth transition, and for gender discrimination” (Interview # 2, 04/07/13). On the other hand, the SCOPE teacher said that poverty is a main reason for low transition. One big problem is that parents want to involve their children in income earning work. From every 100 students who complete primary level, only 60 or 65 students are admitted in secondary school (Interview # 4, 09/07/13).

Support provided by project activities to promote transition

The interviews showed that everything that the SCOPE project does is for the well-being of students so that they do not dropout and are retained in school. They provide all school materials free for the students, set up the school near the students’ house, there is no need for transport, school dress or coaching fee, the classroom is well decorated, they create a child friendly environment in school, and provide trained teachers. The project also recruits social counselor for students’ mental health development. It is a low cost model which helps students to come to school regularly and at the same time it reduces dropout (Interview # 2, 04/07/13).

During focus group discussion parents said that SCOPE did many things for them. IED started SCOPE school and admitted their children. If they did not start school, they would not be able to continue their children’s study due to poverty. Their children would spend their time playing, even mixing with bad boys and their life would be destroyed. At present they are more attentive to their study and their attitude has changed. Even they do not misbehave with their parents (Focus group # 1, 06/07/13).

To increase transition, SCOPE engages in different activities. About this, the SCOPE teacher said that when students complete their primary level, they go to their students’ houses to talk with students’ parents and inform them that they have started new school for grade six. If they admit their children in the school they would get different facilities such as books, pen, khata etc. Here school dress was not necessary. Private tuition fee would not be required because teachers complete all their lessons during class time (Interview # 4, 09/07/13).

The special initiatives for supporting transition were described by the Team leader of SCOPE in the following way,

We work only for disadvantaged children who are not enrolling in the secondary education due to poverty, unable to continue their education due to gender discrimination and geographical location. We give opportunity to admit them in secondary school. In our school direct cost and indirect cost is very low, school time is flexible. So that students could adjust school time to their household work. Parents are a major part of decision making. We select

school hours after talking with parents. If parents think their child should study in the morning, then they come in the morning and if they want to study in the afternoon then they come in the afternoon. It depends on parent's decision (Interview # 2, 04/ 07/13).

The interviews also showed that the project recruited teachers from the school area so that they always communicate with parents and community. The project also motivates the poor parents because they do not need additional expenditures for educating their children.

This data shows the project activities for supporting and promoting transition to secondary education for the children from the poor families.

Different stakeholders' perception about SCOPE

The stakeholders mostly gave very positive perceptions about what the SCOPE project is doing for promoting transition of poor children in secondary education. These perceptions are discussed below.

Parent's perception

From the FGD most of the participants stressed that due to their living conditions and poverty, they would have no opportunity for continuing their children's education if the project had not helped them. They appreciated the care and support given by the teachers and the social counselor to their children. They said that, the parents of the children studying in the SCOPE school are very poor and they live from hand to mouth, so they have no ability to buy things necessary for their children's education purpose. They mentioned that the teacher and Shomaj Shongee all are very good and teach their children very well. If the SCOPE school did not start, their children could not be admitted to another school, because the expenditure of secondary school is very high. But SCOPE school provides all materials free for students. The parents want their children to be educated but they have no way. If the SCOPE school helps to continue their children's education up to SSC level they would be very grateful to SCOPE (Focus group # 1, 06/07/13).

Teacher's perception

The teacher in the SCOPE school also expressed similar views. The project provides everything free, but in other high schools, student pay admission fee, monthly salary and tuition fee. It is not possible for poor parents to bear this cost. He thinks it is a good decision of IED to start such kind of program. The students that are admitted in SCOPE school, among them 75% students would drop out if SCOPE did not help them, because they could not get admitted in any school due to their financial problem. The poor children can study till grade 8. The parents are happy as the (study) cost is low. Most of them stop their study if SCOPE didn't open their school. As group work is used as a teaching method, the competent (good) students can help the less competent students. The length of the session needs to be increased, especially for Math and English. The students will get more time to learn if the school turns into one shift instead of two shifts. Extra schools can be established to meet the necessity / demand of extra students. The vocational education can be introduced along with present curriculum. It would be better if a guide is developed for each subject. As a lot of student cannot afford education after grade 8, the schools need to extend up to SSC (Interview # 4, 09/07/13).

Student's perception

In the FGD with students, most of them said that, the teachers take care and teach them very well, for this reason they understand well and no one fails to understand or repeat class many times. They need not buy anything as all things are provided from school. If they studied in another school, they would spend more money. They suggested that if their class duration is increased it would help them for clearer understanding. They also want to study in this school up to SSC, because many children drop out after completing grade eight. If they drop out after completing eight then with this knowledge they would not be able to help society (Focus group # 2, 08/07/13).

The suggestions made by the students come from their aspirations for higher study and to become contributing members of society. The project has inspired them to continue their studies.

Project personal's perception

The project personnel viewed the project as a great opportunity for the poor children's education and development. They also linked it to long-term benefits such as reducing early marriage or providing mental health support for the children. They stressed that the project works for parents' awareness and on building good teacher-student relationship. They said that,

We think it is a great opportunity for disadvantaged adolescents to continue their secondary education. We provide them everything without cost. We build awareness among parents to admit their child. It reduces early marriage and dropout rate. We recruited teacher from school

area so that teacher student relationship is good. For developing their mental health, we provide counseling through the Shomaj Shangee (Interview # 1, 03/07/13).

Community members' perception

The FGD with the community members also supported the view that if SCOPE school had not helped them it was not possible to admit their children in another school. When they heard that IED will start SCOPE school for secondary education in their area, then they became more confident that their students will be able to continue education (Focus group # 1, 06/07/13).

The views of the community members appreciated that IED started SCOPE school so that many disadvantaged students could get opportunity to continue their study as it would help to stop students from dropping out and continue in secondary school. It would also help society because every year a lot of students drop out from secondary school and they often get involved in different crimes. But the SCOPE project is helping these children to remain in school and get a good education.

DISCUSSION

This study examined how the SCOPE project of IED, BRAC University is working to promote transition at the secondary level for the disadvantaged children. I am discussing the findings through my conceptual framework which is based on literature that I reviewed on programs that promote education for disadvantaged groups, particularly for students at the secondary level. The factors that are important for consideration in providing educational opportunities are discussed below.

Educational cost

The second chance education needs to address the factors that lead to dropout or low transition. If family income is insufficient, parents have no ability to educate their child because they cannot bear the huge educational cost. In Bangladesh, secondary school cost is comparably higher than primary school cost. As shown in the literature review, 98% of the secondary institutes are managed by the private sector and have there is a big expenditure cost for secondary education. As it is not possible for disadvantaged families to bear this educational cost, the SCOPE project has developed a low cost model to provide secondary education to these students from poorer families. SCOPE school provides all types of facilities, such as no admission fee, no tuition fee, no uniform, no teaching learning materials and no transport is required from the students. This intervention is important as my literature also shows that the issue of education cost is a great factor.

Awareness-raising of parents

Poverty is not the only issue related to low transition. Students' family background is an important factor which related to low transition. If parents are homeless they live in rented house or slums. They are not stable. If any adverse situation occurs, they leave the place and discontinue their children's education. Uneducated and not conscious parents are another factor. Children from these types of families are also likely to dropout from mainstream schools and transition is thus hampered. Literature review also supports this factor. The SCOPE project works for the children who come from these situations. Before starting a school, they conduct surveys to identify the disadvantaged families and select these children to provide another opportunity for education to them. They also raise the awareness of the parents and every month they arrange meeting with them and if necessary they provide counseling for parents. The SCOPE project also applied this strategy. They started 10 pilot centers and after building awareness of the parents and the community about project objectives and activities, today the number of centers has risen to 39.

Girls' education

Gender discrimination is another important factor that hinders transition to secondary education. If the family socio-economic condition is not so good, parents prefer to educate their sons. The girls are involved in household work. They get less opportunity than boys. Many obstacles exclude girls from education such as school distance, early marriage. If school is very far from the house, parents have no interest in their daughter going to school because they feel insecure. It also increases early marriage. The SCOPE project emphasizes on girls' education to promote women and girls' empowerment. So, they set up school near the students' house so that the issue of school distance does not prevent girls from attending school. To reduce early marriage, they provide counseling in school. In the selection of teachers in SCOPE school, they give priority to the female rather than male teachers. Not only that, in the case of enrollment of students they emphasize girls more rather than boys.

Flexible and child-friendly school

In our country, a lot of children do not continue study due to their involvement in child labor. As found in the literature review, in 2006 there was about 3.2 million children in child labor in

Bangladesh. Among them 421,000 were involved in household work and out of them 75 percent were girls. As they worked in households they are specifically vulnerable and excluded from education (Islam, 2013). They need flexible school hours. But the mainstream education system maintains a fixed schedule. To address this, SCOPE has arranged flexible school hours in their schools. It is fixed by the parents considering their needs. Students do not feel any difficulties to come to school on time and regularly.

Skilled teachers

Skilled teacher is an important school factor to retain students in class. The teachers have their minimum qualification as Higher Secondary, but most of them are graduates. After recruitment, the teachers get different types of training to make the class lessons interesting to their students. They use different types of strategies to retain students in the class. In this study, I found that the SCOPE school students are interested to come to school regularly due to attractive classroom environment. In this way SCOPE creates an environment to ensure secondary education and at the same time reduce dropout.

Counseling activities

Recently, the project has started some counseling activities. They have recruited social welfare counselors known as Somaj Shangee. Their work is to help the adolescent students understand and handle their problems. They discuss about the students' emotional well-being and deliver information on sexual and reproductive health rights and gender. This is a component of education that is missing in mainstream schools, and so the disadvantaged children studying in SCOPE schools are given a special opportunity to develop, not only academically, but also in social and mental aspects.

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted on the SCOPE project which stands for Second Chance for Children of Post-Primary Education. This was a qualitative research. The study was conducted to know how SCOPE is promoting transition in secondary education through different activities for dropouts or out-of-school children and youth to achieve secondary education. I collected information on the important factors related to transition to secondary education and how the project was helping this. I took the views of different stakeholders such as program personnel, team leader, primary head teacher, SCOPE teacher, parents, community and learners. My purpose was to find out how SCOPE implemented its activities to provide education to dropout and disadvantaged children. Most of the children dropout after completing primary cycle or get admitted in secondary school but do not complete secondary cycle.

The findings of the study reflected that the different stakeholders have positive perceptions about the SCOPE school. SCOPE provides all materials free for the students, does not require admission fee, tuition fee, or school dress, has flexible school timings, school is near the students' house, teachers are friendly and skilled, and the school is child friendly and gender friendly. Also the project started counseling for mental health development of the students. If IED of BRACU did not start the project, many children would dropout from primary school because their parents could not bear the higher educational cost of secondary education. As a result of SCOPE's activities, disadvantaged children get the opportunity to continue their study and dropout children get the opportunity to be readmitted to school a second time.

Finally, the SCOPE project has developed this low cost model of post-primary education for the disadvantaged youth. It should be further developed, expanded and replicated so that the poor and disadvantaged children of our society can get the opportunity for higher education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study indicates some strategic actions that can be taken to promote higher transition to secondary education and ensure quality education. Based on my research findings, I would like to present the following recommendations:

- Need to increase duration of teaching time because students need more time for their better understanding
- Need to increase more provision for second chance schooling
- Need to provide students technical education for their better future
- To ensure their higher education SCOPE school should be extended up to SSC level
- Number of students should be increased

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