

# THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF HEAD TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING THE SCHOOL LEVEL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SLIP) IN BANGLADESH

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## ABSTRACT

*The study explored the application of head teacher's transformational leadership in school level improvement plan of the primary education in Bangladesh. The study sought to pursue the experiences and opinions of those who work in a leadership capacity for the development of teaching and learning quality in the primary school. The aim of the study was to investigate the head teacher's working experiences and implementation of transformational leadership in the School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP). The data collection method was semi-structured interview. The data was collected from seven head teachers of primary schools in Bangladesh. The qualitative methodology was used for data collection through face-to-face interview. The qualitative data were analysed and compared thematically in order to triangulate the results.*

*Thematic analysis of the qualitative data identified 'inspiration motivation, individual consideration and intellectual stimulation' as enacted aspects of head teacher leadership, with participants highlighting several positive outcomes that they were practiced in SLIP preparation and implementation with stakeholders. In addition, the study finds out that consultation with SLIP committee provided good results but discussing with all stakeholders produced better results in terms of SLIP preparation and implementation.*

*In the light of these findings, the research recommends that head teachers should apply transformational leadership in of SLIP preparation and implementation in order to meet the high expectation of school communities and improve the teaching-learning quality of schools.*

**Key Words:** Transformational leadership, Head teachers, Implementing, School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP), Bangladesh.

## INTRODUCTION

### The context of the study

School leadership has an eminent impact on schools and students when it is extensively distributed and school leaders improve teaching and learning by influencing staff motivation, commitment and working conditions most effectively. (Leith wood, Harries & Hopkins, 2008). In addition, Bush (2008) notes, "leadership and management need to be given equal prominence if schools and colleges are to operate effectively and achieve their objectives" (p.4).

Under Article 17(b) of the Bangladesh Constitution, the state shall take effective measures to provide education that satisfies the needs of all citizens and society (Bangladesh Government, 1972). The Bangladesh government has taken many initiatives in primary education with various levels of success; among these the introduction of the 'School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP)' which was introduced under PEDP-2 (DPE, 2016). The SLIP is a key initiative for decentralising school leadership.

### **The rationale for the study**

In my professional context, understanding how to efficiently implement SLIP is a priority. Being a district level education officer, I have the opportunity to hear the expectations and ambitions of local people for their schools, and I can inspire and motivate head teachers to meet these expectations. The literature shows that transformational leadership can play a role in improving schools (Bush, 2010). The research findings aim to make a small contribution to our understanding of the potential of transformational leadership in the implementation of SLIP in primary education in Bangladesh. This research can be useful in future development in the field of school level improvement plan of Bangladesh. As a result, the process of SLIP enhances the practice of transformational leadership by school leaders, teachers and educators.

### **The purpose of the study**

The purpose of this research was to gather information on strategies/approaches that apply to the development of primary education of Bangladesh, more specifically SLIP. The research has identified enablers and contextualized lessons from professional experience that influence the development of my selected topic. I have carried out a literature review on the subject and identified the current issues related to school improvement planning within primary education of Bangladesh and continuing professional developments in this area. This literature review has also considered debates and/or areas of innovation and development relevant to the topic. From this review, I identified the issues or field of innovation that are of the greatest interest and investigated this further to gain an in-depth understanding by comparing insights from the literature review with the perspectives and reflections of professionals on their practice.

### **The significance of the study**

This research can be significant to the head teachers who are practice transformational leadership in implementing the SLIP to develop their leadership qualities and skills. After all, it is understood that:

Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organisation

(Bass & Riggio 2006, p. 4)

In Bangladesh, the head teacher is the member secretary of the School Managing Committee (SMC) and focal person to his/her school community. S/he works as a guide in developing and implementing the improvement plan for the school. The SLIP approach encourages members of the School Managing Committee (SMC), parents, assistant teachers and school community to promote teaching and learning in settings to meet student's unique interests and needs much better (Epstein et al, 2018). The SLIP is not a formal document prepared at the beginning of each primary school year to be archived. It is carried out through a continuous process of reflection on the school development program, in which the school team discusses, propose, realize, evaluate, adjust, and register the actions that will need to be developed to reach the objectives collectively agreed. In this process, the head teacher uses his professional knowledge, constructing it and reviewing it regularly in the school improvement plan, based on theoretical studies and in the exchange of experiences between peers and with other stakeholders of the community, including students and parents. In addition, more activities are likely to be carried out and more parents and teachers will probably be involved in different ways through SLIP. So, the head teachers of the primary school, as well educators and administrators of education can be interested to the findings of this research.

### **Limitations of this study**

There are some limitations in this research. The sample size was very small, 7 participant interviews only. Due to the small sample size, maybe some information has been not been unveiled. Furthermore, when I undertook the interviews, I tried to put the participants at ease; however, some participants did not feel comfortable in being completely open regarding SLIP preparation and implementation because I am a senior official of their department and generally, they like to share positive information with senior officials. Despite these limitations, this research can provide valuable information to the related professionals of primary educational settings.

## **A brief outline of the dissertation**

In order to identify the findings for this qualitative research, a semi structured interview schedule was prepared for data collection. According to the research title “the transformational leadership of head teachers in implementing the School Level Improvement plan (SLIP) as a school improvement program”, the interview was structured in four parts: context, creation of the SLIP, implementing the SLIP and the impact of the SLIP on school development.

Including the introduction, there are five chapters in this research paper, beginning with the background and context of this study in this chapter. A review of relevant literature is undertaken in the second chapter. In Chapter Three, the research approach and design and ethical considerations are discussed. The findings of this research are considered in Chapter Four. Finally, in the Chapter Five, conclusions are drawn and some recommendations based on findings of this study are put forward.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **About School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP)**

A school improvement plan is a roadmap for meeting school needs. According to Epstein et al., (2009), the school improvement plan should reflect the pupils’ aspiration, their families and the wider community. In this way, more activities are likely to be implemented, and more parents are likely to become involved productively in ensuring the success of the plan. Veeriah et al., (2017) studied the contribution of transformational leadership to school culture in a primary school cluster in Selangor, Malaysia. They have found that school improvement planning was key to school success. In addition, Yang (2014) suggest that school improvement planning should promote a shared vision, distribute power, and, in doing so, keep the stakeholders focused.

In Bangladesh, the SLIP functions as a bridge between the school community, teachers and national education policy. Through the SLIP, the head teacher, assistant teachers, school management committees (SMCs), parents and all other stakeholders should work together to improve the quality of learning for students, and SLIP activities should enhance stakeholder sense of ownership of the school (UNICEF, 2015). In addition, SLIP activities should strengthen the SMC, parents and local community involvement in the life of school (UNICEF, 2015). Furthermore, SLIP seeks to strengthen the participation of SMC, teachers and school community in improving the quality of learning ((Mullick et al., 2012). With its focus on vision making and stakeholder engagement, transformational leadership can play a key role in the development and implementation of school improvement planning in Bangladesh. The most recent key policy in the education sector in Bangladesh, the National Education Policy (Bangladesh Government, 2010) also attempted to address social values (e.g. inclusive practices and reduction of discrimination). School level Improvement Plan (SLIP) is such an activity where social values can be address through head teacher applications of idealized influence and inspirational motivation (UNICEF, 2009).

### **Head teachers’ leadership influences school effectiveness**

“There is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership” (Leithwood et al., in Bush, 2009, p. 375). Ensuring more effective schools with improved students' achievement depends on the capacity of head teachers and leaders (O’Brien, 2016). In the twenty-first century, there is a growing perception that being a head teacher needs certain professional preparation, for example, to adequately address the expanding role of a head teacher (e.g. coaching staff to improve quality of teaching; monitoring student data; improvement planning in response to school data and local needs) and the growing difficulties of the school context (Bush, 2009). Leithwood et al., (2008) note ‘strong claims’ regarding head teacher/school leadership influence school effectiveness, which include: school leadership has an influence on effective pupil learning; school leaders must influence and motivate to their staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning; effective school leaders have a significant influence on both the school and wider community; and leadership is more effective when distributed.

These claims align somewhat with SLIP’s objectives which include: developing schools as a child-friendly institution; involving and motivating to teachers, parents to improve the quality teaching-learning of the school; building intensive relationship between school and wider community; creating a feeling of ownership of the local people towards the school and finalizing the SLIP planning by sharing with local people, School Managing Committee (SMC) and Parents-Teacher Association (PTA) [DPE, 2016]. This document includes comprehensive guidance on SLIP planning and implementation and is distributed to all head teachers, AUEOs, UEOs and other relevant educational officials.

## **The relationship between transformational leadership and School level improvement Plan (SLIP)**

Leithwood (1992) notes that stakeholder theory assumes that work with different types of stakeholders all of whom have moral stake in the organisation but may have various type of beliefs, values and so forth, is key to organizational success. For that reason, an organization should seek involvement of stakeholders (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1998)

In Bangladesh, schools have changed a lot in the past few decades. A notable difference is the social diversity of Bangladeshi primary schools today; the bureaucratic system in Bangladesh requires school leaders to do everything according to standards, and now to improve their schools by responding to choices of wider community which reflect its distinctive context (Salahuddin, 2011). Although, school leaders are bound by the rule of law to make decisions, power is delegated to individual educators and networks to ultimately manage the schools at a local level (DPE, 2016). SLIP is the key process for ensuring this.

### **The challenges for SLIP implementation in Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, there has been increased involvement of school managing committees in school development and improvement. This, along with better links among parents, teachers and communities supports the drive towards decentralization (UNICEF, 2015). Although SLIP has been recognized to have a positive impact all over the Bangladesh, some difficulties exist to implement the SLIP. For example, with a few exceptions, some SMC members are inactive and have negative attitudes towards female teachers (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2008). Despite 60% teachers of primary school head teacher in Bangladesh being female, sometimes members of the SMC will not work alongside these head teachers in SLIP advancement. SLIP guidelines are prepared by the Directorate of Primary Education. This is another challenging aspect – use of a centralised management system for implementation of the school level improvement plan (Mullick et al., 2012). While the head teacher has some freedom to enact the transformational leadership, he/she still constrained by SLIP guideline. In addition, other challenge in implementing SLIP in Bangladesh is community contribution is very low; about 11.8% of schools received donations from the local community. Besides, perceptions regarding SLIP are not clear always to the SMC member and stakeholders; especially to prioritizing teaching learning activities in the SLIP (Cambridge Education, 2016).

## **DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Research approach and design**

The aim of this study was to better understand the experiences of head teachers working with other stakeholders to promote school level improvement planning and their perception of the role of leadership in this field. The research sheds light on the participants' understanding of transformational leadership.

According to Dawson (2009), when the research aims to explore judgment and find out about perceptions, opinions or attitudes from the viewpoint of those who have experienced them, a qualitative approach is more appropriate. Similarly Newby (2014) notes that qualitative research enable participants to offer interpretations of actions or a point of view, thus offering the analysts insights into their situation. According to Menter et al., (2011), quantitative data collection can help researchers identify general patterns but can not provide in-depth insights into the experiences of the participants. Since the objective of the study is to understand the experiences of the participants, a qualitative approach has been considered most appropriate. The data collection method was a semi-structured interview. Before deciding upon the data collection method, it was necessary to decide whether questionnaires or interviews were more appropriate for data collection. Questionnaires can enable the researcher to understand why public think or function in a specific way or to illustrate the reasons why something has or has not worked (Menter et al., 2011). Questionnaires have many advantages; for example, they can help many more respondents to collect a wide range of information in a short time. (Menter et al., 2011). However, they do not agree for follow-up questions to analyse responses or probe further, and for this study, which aimed to understand the participants' experiences and perceptions, this was essential. Interviews allow the participants to provide elaborate answers, and this can indulge the researcher understand in greater detail the factors which influence action, motivation and attitude (Menter et al. 2011). The aim of the study was to explore the enacted (or not) characteristics of transformational leadership theory in the implementation of SLIP. The School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP) has rarely been discussed in previous research and, therefore, it seemed clear that this research should be exploratory. As such, the research used semi-structured interview to uncover the levels of transformational leadership behaviours as demonstrated by head teachers in schools.

## Sampling

A systematic random sample (Menter et al., 2011) policy was followed to select the sample from the population for this research. A sample of 7 was taken from an alphabetical list of 3 subdivisions (Upazila/Thana) under 2 district's schools. 7 schools were selected from 155 schools in the jurisdiction of the population (3 subdivisions).

Data was collected from Bangladesh through face-to-face interview with head teachers of Bangladeshi primary schools. 7 head teachers were interviewed. These head teachers have been chosen because they have experience related to my chosen topic. To maximize the research's potential success, I approached the lead professional in the setting relevant to my topic and discussed the inquiry topic and method I intended to use. Not all of the lead professionals accepted the invitation to participate in the research. I approached 10 potential participants of my population and 7 professionals accepted the invitation to be interviewed. I asked that he/she confirmed this in an email and/telephone within 7 days. In approaching potential participants, I emphasised that they were under no obligation to take part and could change their mind as to participation at any time. A consent form (**See Appendix 1**) and participant information sheet (**See Appendix 2**) was provided for the potential interviewees. With regard to the research aims, I have attempt to approach a balance of participants with respect to gender and area/location.

## Data collection and analysis

The research question was addressed through primary research. The research used semi-structured interviews (face-to-face) as the data collection method (**See Appendix 3**). The semi-structured interview requested of participants that they reflect on their experiences of transformational leadership in implementing on the SLIP. An interview is a common mode to collect qualitative data (Wilson, 2013). Menter et al (2011) suggest that an interview should be enacting when the researcher has already identified the prime research topics that he/she would like to address. Semi- structured interviews were appropriate for this research because the semi- structured interview, although the researcher often has a list of broad questions to ask to standardize the interview process, allows the researcher to be flexible, to use prompts or sub- questions to stimulate further discussion. A semi-structured interview also allowed the participants to respond to the questions using their own terminology, meaning the researcher can gain better understanding of the interviewee's "attitudes, motivation and rationale" (Menter et al., 2011, p.127)

These interviews were conducted with the head teachers of Bangladesh school's in order to receive relevant information on transformational leadership behaviours which are applied in schools. The findings arising from data analysis of these interviews was then used to suggest some of the transformational leadership traits which might be followed up by other institutions to gain prospective returns of the students as well as academic teachers. As a method, the interview was considered appropriate because it requires the researcher to "engage, understand and interpret the key feature of the life-worlds of the participants" and unfolds the, "descriptions of specific situations and actions, rather than generalities" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 355).

In this study, the data was collected as follows. At first, the teachers were informed through mail and/or phone call about the interviews provided with a brief introduction (**See Appendix 4**) about the purpose of the study. They were asked individually if they are interested in taking an active part in this study and were also asked if they were comfortable, as part of this, in providing personal/professional information. The head teachers who consented were assured of the confidentiality of their data provided. It was made clear in the consent form that identities would be kept secret and names would not be mentioned in the study and in wider circumstances; participant names would not be shared. Secondly, the interview was planned on an agreed day with those who accepted the invitation. After, participants had been selected, I arranged a date and time to meet the participants for their individual interview in an agreed room should this be the preferred mode of interview. As advised by Menter et al., (2011) Before the interview, I remembered each participant: the main focus of this research; why I was conducting the research; why I had asked them to participate; and the use to which information provided would be put. I did also remind them that: the information they provide in the interview was confidential; all information resulting from the interview would be presented anonymously; and they had the right to stop the interview at any time or withdraw their data from the study. I asked participants for their consent to record the interview and ensured that they had signed the participant consent form. The interviews were recorded, and the duration of each interview was about 15-30 minutes.

The main questions in the interview protocol have been put in order. Sub-questions were used to test for greater understanding and to ensure that every interview covered all the necessary areas in order to ensure consistency. At the end of the interview I thanked the participant, stop the recording device and reminded the participant that they could withdraw any data by contacting me by email. The participants were also informed that a summary of findings would be available after the dissertation was published.

After each interview, the records were transmitted to a location in a locked file where they were transcribed and safely stored under password protection. In addition, paper copies of signed consent forms were stored under lock and key in a secure location. Informed consent forms are destroyed after the successful completion of the dissertation module for which this research exercise is carried out.

### Validity and bias

The validity of the research is considered to be key to effective research because if the findings of the research are not considered to be valid then they are meaningless to the study. The researcher should show that data are trustworthy, that research tools are credible, and that (s)he has sought to minimise bias (Denscombe, 2010).

The researcher addressed external and internal validity. External validity defines the degree at which results of the study are transferable or generalizable to other context ((Leedy and Ormrod, 2015). Validity is strengthened where the researcher can exhibit that the findings arise from the data analysis (Cohen et al., 2011). Internal validity refers to the extent to which evidence (data) used supports a research claim. In this research, study of data was used to enhance internal validity, with qualitative data carefully analysed to address each interview question. This research was commenced in one setting only; thus the findings cannot be generalised to other settings but they may be relatable. According to Dawson (2009), when the research is to investigate judgment and determine processes, facts or situations from the point of view of those who have experienced them, a qualitative approach is more appropriate. Similarly Newby (2014) shows qualitative research allows participants to interpret their actions or views to provide analysts with insights into their situation. In this study, all participants who participated to the data collection more experienced in their field. They had been working 8-23 years as head teacher of primary school in Bangladesh. As such, they were appropriately qualified and experienced to participate in this research, increasing its validity.

To strengthen the validity of qualitative data (and gain the clearer possible insights from answers to the interview questions), before and during the interview every attempt was made to put participants at ease. The researcher tried to ensure clear communication to every participant, explaining points where necessary (Cohen et al., 2011). Furthermore, all responses were transcribed as soon as possible after the interview so that the researcher could remember as accurately as possible which could affect the data (Denscombe, 2010). In the findings chapter, participant quotes were used word-for-word to illustrate points. This strengthens the validity of the data as the reader can see precisely what was said by participant in a particular issue (Denscombe, 2010).

On the other hand, ensuring the validity of qualitative data presents many challenges, since the researcher himself is part of the phenomenon investigated (Cohen et al., 2011) and can influence the data collected simply through his presence (Dawson, 2009). Although I am a senior colleague of these participants, before and during the interview I sought to be friendly and at ease with the participants, but challenge inevitable arose with respect to this.

The presentation of a research processes and findings have to be transparent. Without transparency research results have not acceptable. Transparency means that in order to convince our reader, we have to be as clear as we need. Menter et al., (2011) Insist on the transparency of the research process, so that the reader can critically evaluate the research and determine its value for himself. In this study, the principle of transparency was made to abide and used the interview questions were designed to be as neutral Bangla language as possible, in order to collect clear information and avoid generating biased responses. It is noted that all participant's first language is Bangla. Audio recording is completed during the interview so that there is no word left out of the interviewee.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### *Findings 1 - Head teacher's understanding of transformational leadership*

It has been proven through several studies evident in the literature review, that transformational leadership promotes positive energy among the team members and encourages followers to become future leaders (Yang, 2014). It is a quality that motivates the team members to work towards a shared vision to achieve success. **The data collected makes clear that most of head teachers (5/7) appeared to understand what transformational leadership is and were able to describe ways in which they have been practising such leadership in School Level Improvement Planning (SLIP) process.**

In this research, the way in which the HTs described the school improvement planning process suggests that they have identified three of four characteristics of transformational leadership; positively influencing (6 head teachers out of 7); motivating (6 head teachers out of 7); and encouraging (6 head teachers out of 7). In addition, the

interviewees referred to other leadership characteristics such as: positional authority (4 head teachers out of 7); convincing power (5 head teachers out of 7); and support at work (7 head teachers out of 7).

The findings seem in line with in the literature reviewed. For example, one head teacher stated:

I have always had a dream about this school. To make this dream a reality, I have to take help from all stakeholders. And different things have to be done to transform the dream into reality. Only when these dreams are disseminated among others/stakeholders it can be called transformational leadership.

(Participant 2)

Another head teacher stated that:

If I can inspire everyone to prepare and implement a plan, then it is called transformational leadership. The team members dream of development when transformational leadership is implemented.

(Participant 4)

One more head teacher stated that:

I dream about my school, I think about the development, if I can spread my dream of those who are in my group, and then it is transformational leadership. I create a vision to guide the change by inspiring and implementing the tandem change with committed group members.

(Participant 5)

Furthermore, a head teacher noted:

I think that I have to adopt some strategies to implement my goal and vision. It is a team work. All members of the team have to be motivated to reach the goal. The Transformation Leader to inspire all members of the team to achieve the goal.

(Participant 1)

Participant 6 and 7 also showed a similar view that transforming one's dream into a common vision for all team members for achieving success was understood by them as transformational leadership. In light of these data/comments, it can be suggested that most of the head teachers considered transformational leadership as a quality that inspires others towards success, development, and achievement. The literature review supports this data as according to Yang (2014), transformational leadership assumes an essential job in school improvement through advancing a mutual vision, circulating force, and keeping the partners motivated (Yang, 2014). This is further supported as Eliophotou-Menon and Loannou (2016) who note that in instructive settings, a transformational leadership style can help the educator persuade, move and ingrain improvement in the school network (Eliophotou and Loannou, 2016). Furthermore, transformational leadership is regularly understood to encompass four factors; idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Antonakis, 2012). Antonakis (2012) notes that head teachers can inspire followers (SMC members) to maximise positive impact for the organisation. This is the appeal of transformational leadership. In that capacity, they are regarded by leaders who motivate through their vision and engender a feeling of mission (Northouse, 2016). Furthermore, inspirational motivation proposes a picture of pioneers who convey high expectations to supporters, rousing them through motivation to focus on the common vision (Northouse, 2016).

With respect to the results of this research, it is clear that idealized influence is an attribute of transformational leadership that was referred to by the highest number of participants since 6/7 referred both to leader motivation and leader influence.

### ***Finding 2- The process of SLIP implementation***

**All HTs noted that the active involvement of SLIP committee members was key to effective SLIP preparation and implementation.**

It has been proven through several studies evident in the literature review that SLIP preparation requires the integrated work of 5 committee members. The head teachers leading the team should be able to motivate all members towards one shared vision leading to accomplishment of objectives. Head teachers practising in schools should have an understanding of SLIP preparation procedure and they should realize the importance of shared vision amongst the team members when preparing the SLIP.

All participants appeared to understand procedure, stating that the formation of 5-member committee is required for the preparation of SLIP and all members should be consulted. For example, Participant 1 noted:

According to the SLIP guideline 5 members designated for prepare and implementing the SLIP. Head teacher is the team leader of the committee. But all members of SMC and Assistant Upazila Education Officer actively involved in preparing the SLIP because they all are accountable and designated for development of school.

Likewise, Participant 3 noted:

According to the SLIP guidelines which are made by the Directorate of Primary Education, 5 members designated for prepare and implementing the SLIP.

And Participants 5 stated:

Indirectly all my stakeholders are included with prepare of SLIP. AUEO consult me to preparing SLIP. According to the SLIP guideline 5 members involved for prepare and implementing the SLIP.

This is similar to participant 6, who commented, “We have 5 members SLIP committee. They all are present in preparing the SLIP.” Furthermore, participant 7 mentioned the structure of the SLIP committee and the role of the members of this committee.

These points are also supported by Participants 2 and 4 who recognised the importance of correct understanding of the SLIP procedure and were found to be aware of SLIP guidelines and alluded to the importance of shared vision amongst the team members when formulating and implementing the SLIP.

This is supported by the literature. Salauddin (2011) notes that, the bureaucratic framework in Bangladesh requires school pioneers to act in accordance with government guidelines to enhance their schools by responding to views of the wider community which mirror its particular setting (Salahuddin, 2011). Furthermore, Yang indicated that, it can be deduced that most of the teachers considered formulation and implementation of SLIP as a shared responsibility in which the welfare and betterment of the students and the interest of the key stakeholders (Yang, 2014).

As indicated by Yang (2014), school improvement planning ought to advance a common vision, disperse control, and, in doing as such, keep the partners focused. A school improvement plan is a guide to address school needs (Yang, 2014). Veeriah et al., (2017) examined the commitment of transformational leadership to school culture in a school in and noted that school improvement planning was vital to school success. Furthermore, Yang (2014) proposed that school improvement planning ought to advance a mutual vision, circulate control, and, in doing so, ensure stakeholders’ involvement.

### **Only a few HTs saw stakeholder consultation as key to SLIP preparation and implementation.**

It has been proven through several studies evident in the literature review that SLIP preparation and implementation can be undertaken by isolated committee members, but it is better to consult with all other stakeholders. As a team leader, the head teacher should be able to inspire all stakeholders towards one shared vision leading to accomplishment of wider community’s objectives. Head teachers should realise the importance of share vision and take effective initiative to provide education that met the needs of all citizens when preparation and implementation the SLIP.

Only a few participants made specific reference to wider stakeholder consultation in the preparation and implementation of SLIP. For example, Participant 1 noted:

Every December of the year the teachers complete the child survey and motivate the parents to admit their children in my school. Child enrolment rates are increasing through SLIP.

In addition, Participant 4 does prefer and take necessary action to involve different stakeholders when formulating SLIP plan. Furthermore, participant 7 stated:

At first, we do SWOT analysis to understand the current conditions of the school. We make a general meeting with all types of stakeholders and at that meeting we determine our vision and value. We determine our vision based on the priority list that we made through SWOT analysis.

And the vision and value include our SLIP.

In addition, some of the head teachers (Participant 2, 3, 5) were aware of the importance of involving all school members in the formulation of SLIP but did not gave examples how they did so.

The findings above align with key ideas from the literature. One of the head teachers stated,

My school’s SMC, PTA and the guardians are played a role consulting in the SLIP.  
.....They played main role during preparing the SLIP.

(Participant 2)



As per the complete response of Participant 2, it is clear that being a head teacher; she is aware of the importance of considering aspiration of student and parents when formulating SLIP. As Epstein et al. (2009) note, the school improvement plan ought to mirror the goal of families, and the more extensive community. According to Das, the SLIP preparation process should involve the participation of SMC, guardians and neighborhood community of school (Das et al, 2015). Moreover, in Bangladesh, there has been a rollout of overseeing advisory groups in school improvement. This, alongside better connections with guardians, teachers and networks underpins the drive towards decentralization of school improvement (UNICEF, 2015). According to the constitution of Bangladesh, to meet the needs of society/wider community effective measures should be taken by the head teacher on behalf of state (Bangladesh Government, 1972). Furthermore, Eliophotou-Menon and Loannou (2016) noted that, on the settings of education a transformational leadership can help the head teacher inspire, trust and motivate in the school community.

### ***Finding 3 - The Process of SLIP Creation***

**The HTs offered numerous examples of ways in which they set high expectations and supported and influenced stakeholders in effective creation of the SLIP. However, HTs were also able to identify examples where involvement in SLIP creation and implementation was less successful.**

According to research in this field, transformational leadership does have a strong influence on the process of SLIP creation that includes considering high expectations, supported and influenced of teachers and parents as well as involving all stakeholders and supervising or supporting the work of all members indulged in SLIP creation. The understanding of the teacher about the importance of stakeholder involvement and provision of support to all members in SLIP creation process should be in line with the literature if the claim has to be correct.

All 7 participants stated that they take into consideration the expectation of teachers during SLIP meetings. According to Participant 2,

It is very important to set a high expectation for the teacher and the wider community. I said it is an industrial area, so all people are not higher educated but their expectation is the future of their children will be better. I try to understand the expectations of the mother when I talked to the mother of children. Besides I discuss in our staff meeting with my teacher about their expectation. When we are preparing the SLIP I met these two types of needs and I suggest to the other member of the SLIP committee include in the expectations. We all decide together and find out the way of expectation.

It can be deduced for this response that Participant 2 has given equal value to the expectations of both teachers and parents. According to participant 6:

I always try to set a high expectation for the teacher and the wider community. I think it can be two ways. One from teacher to parents and other is parents to the teacher. For example, when we do any developmental work then we can make a cashier among the parents. In this way, we can ensure the transparency and participation of the community and teachers. As a result, they will be more interested and high expectations for the development of the school.

It is clear from the response of Participant 6 that she gives high importance to the expectation of parents and strives to fulfill their expectation through SLIP. All other respondents used the word “Wider community” or “Community” along with teachers when expressing their interest in fulfilling high expectations. This is evident in the respondent of participant 5:

The teachers and the wider community are more aware of their expectations because of the preparation and implementation of the SLIP each year. By the implementation of the SLIP, they are optimistic day to day to meet their high expectations. It is possible to reflect the high expectations of teachers and community by implementing SLIP.

The response of Participant 1 and participant 3 is quite similar as they realize the fact that local intervention in SLIP creation is needed to ensure quality and success. Hence, both the respondents showed the importance of shared input of all members including funding. Participants 4 and 7 were also found to want to involve school staff as well as the local people to take part in SLIP creation.

However, almost all participants stated that SLIP is not always successful and if unsuccessful, it is largely due to insufficient involvement from the SMC in the process. This is evidenced by Participant 1, who notes:

Sometimes, SLIP has less success due to insufficient participation of SMC Members and local communities. In this situation, we make revised plan for the next year.

And Participant 4 said:

In the last few years, when the SLIP was introduced, SMC's participation was less. As a result, SLIP could not make success as expected. But SMC members have now realized the positive impact of SLIP. Therefore, if the SLIP is unlikely to be successful, they will come forward to help different types of help, such as cash, labour, advice etc.

The findings have proved to be in line with many theories in literature. Most of the participants did not value the parents' expectations and involvement in SLIP creation adequately. In Bangladesh, SLIP fills in as an extension between local demand and a national policy of school improvement. According to Rossmiller (1992), head teachers need to turn their interest on local demand; head teachers could influence stakeholder capacity by providing a vision, engaging with stakeholder views, being an example through experience and by promoting high expectations. On the other hand, where involvement in SLIP creation and implementation was less successful it matched Marks and Printy's (2003) recognition of lack of stakeholder engagement.

#### ***Findings 4-The impact of SLIP on school improvement***

##### **The HTs offered numerous examples of ways in which their leadership had encouraged stakeholders to participate in developing and enacting the SLIP.**

Almost all participants noted that they had influenced stakeholders for the success of SLIP in the school through enacting the SLIP action. This is evident in responses, such as Participant 4's:

I tell my stakeholders that development of this school is not possible at all time from the central level of the government. So we should take initiative from the local level for our children's better future. Now they understand it and actively participate to generate and activate of SLIP.

Likewise Participant 5 noted:

My main work to enact SLIP is to motivate my teachers and stakeholders to walk them on my dream path. My strong and democratic leadership inspired them.

Furthermore, Participant 3 commented:

Now assistant teachers share their development ideas with me also. For example, an assistant teacher proposed to me, if in front of classroom keep a water filter then students can easily drink water. He gave advice; it can be implemented through SLIP. We have implemented that.

Similarly, Participant 6 said:

I always welcome to my teachers and stakeholders for sharing the suggestion and new idea to development of school. They give me new idea and want to do implement the idea in SLIP. I take their good suggestion for improvement of my school. For example, very recently, pre primary class room has been decorated by SMC and teachers by their fund. I think this is a good impact of SLIP.

Participant 1, 2, 6 and 7 were also of a view that their leadership skills enabled them to motivate stakeholders to share ideas and engage in team work in support of SLIP implementation. These descriptions relate to the notion of transformational leadership, created through HT inspiration and involvement of stakeholders in leadership. The literature related to this finding is discussed after the next section.

##### **In addition, the HTs offered numerous examples of ways in which their leadership had influenced the quality of T&L through SLIP implementation.**

All 7 participants agreed that SLIP had a positive impact on the teaching-learning quality of the school and had significantly improved the school management through SLIP implementation as evident by responses. Participant 2 noted:

I believe SLIP has a very positive impact on improving our teaching-learning quality. Now our teachers are more confident than before the period of SLIP. Teacher and local people feel now this school for our children's better future. Local community and teachers are working together now through SLIP for development of teaching-learning quality. As a result, people will be more conscious and increase teacher's accountability. After all, increasing our quality of work and improve the teaching-learning quality of my school.

Similarly, Participant 4 stated:

When we did not have a SLIP, we could not afford to buy our learning materials regularly lack of money. After implementation of SLIP local and government fund rising every year and we buy a lot of teaching learning materials, even we make some materials locally. As a

result, our teaching learning quality increase gradually. So I can say a long term impact create of SLIP on teaching learning improvement in my school.

Participant 1, 3, 5 and 7 expressed a similar opinion and Participant 6 strongly accepted that quality of teaching and learning had improved through SLIP implementation. She noted:

SLIP works as a milestone for improvement of teaching learning quality. My school is more joyful and has improved gradually after implementing SLIP for last few years. Every year we prepare huge number of teaching learning materials funded by SLIP. So SLIP has very positive impact on teaching learning improvement in my school.

The findings have proved to be in line with the literature. As Leithwood et al., (in Bush, 2009) note, a school cannot run effectively and improve its student attainment trajectory in the absence of effective leadership. Improved student achievement depends on the head teacher's skills in leading his/her staff to focus on the quality of teaching and learning (O' Brien, 2016). As Leithwood et al., (2008) note, good school leadership influences student ability to succeed, and the HT can exert this influence and motivate stakeholders to engage in this process through sustaining a focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Through school improvement planning, head teachers and wider stakeholders are able to together to improve the quality of learning for students (UNICEF, 2015).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary of findings

In Summary, most of the head teachers not only understand what transformational leadership is but they could also explain how they have been practising in preparation and implementation such leadership in SLIP. At the point when the head teachers were asked, "When preparing the SLIP how in did you decide upon the vision and values that would guide it?" some participants reflected good comprehension of the SLIP strategy and were observed to know about the significance of vision within SLIP. In addition, they understood the significance of vision among the colleagues. Furthermore, all participants expressed that the development of 5-part panel is required for the preparation of SLIP and all individuals ought to be counselled, involving committee members in devising the SLIP plan. Besides, most of the head teachers knew about the significance of including all school individuals in the preparation and implementation of SLIP. To address question, "In what ways does the SLIP enable you to set high expectations for the teachers and wider community?" all participants expressed that they were keen for teacher to take part in the SLIP meeting. Be that as it may, few really recognized the significance of including guardians in this process. When asked about the SMC's participation, all participants offered credit to SMC for the achievement of SLIP in the school.

### Reflections on the literature review

The literature review proved relevant in informing an understanding of SLIP formation (and school improvement planning) and its importance in primary school setting. This enabled a comparison of theory with practice. In addition, Research about the importance and process of SLIP making, along with gathering primary data through interview, enabled me to use the literature to present findings and discuss the issues within these more fully.

### Reflections on the methodology

The methodology focused on the transformation taking place in education in Bangladesh, specifically the primary school and the leadership of head teachers in implementing the SLIP. Therefore, to place the head teacher in a central position within the investigative process was an important consideration. The qualitative methodology offered insights into the views felt and expressed by the head teachers, which is the strength of the research design. This gave voice to the head teachers, the main people responsible for the changes involved in SLIP implementation.

The semi-structured interview followed the schedule set and the interview time and process was appropriately flexible to allow insights into participants' views. The interview was audio recorded in Bangla, so that participants were comfortable with the interview, because their mother language is Bangla. All Participants were easy to interview because I am their departmental (Primary Education of Bangladesh) colleague. Moreover, the approach of conducting interviews positively impacted my confidence and ability to investigate critical issues such as SLIP formation, implementation and its significance.

The dissertation involved referring to broad range of literature which enhanced my knowledge and critical thinking skills. However, during the data analysis process, I encountered some challenges. I spent a lot of time in preparing transcripts; English being my second language, this was a challenge for me. But in this case my

supervisor's cooperation was immense. Furthermore, undertaking this dissertation has taught me how to differentiate theory from practice and use theory to analyse (make sense of) practice.

The research design clearly has some limitations. It was based purely on data collected from interviews and the number of participants was limited. Had more data collection time been possible, more head teachers could have been included in the study to ensure greater reliability of the findings? Moreover, despite assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, participants may have been reluctant to confess that they lack in knowledge about SLIP and how SLIP is formed; after all, participants were 'subordinate' to me in position. Therefore, the way that participants actually perform in their schools and what they profess in answer to the interview questions may differ significantly, adversely affecting the reliability of findings.

### Implications and recommendations

In the light of the research I can say if all head teachers seek to motivate and engage the SMC/stakeholders of the school through transformational leadership, their involvement in school development can be increased. As a result, head teachers can get more cooperation from the members of the SMC and wider stakeholders. If such a trend were to continue, head teacher's positional authority and convincing power could be gradually increased and their practice of transformational leadership can have a greater effect on the effective implementation of SLIP.

The administration of Bangladesh is bureaucratic. So, head teachers could encourage the SLIP committee to be more active in following the SLIP guidelines as much as possible (as prepared by Directorate of Primary Education). This might be achieved through the practice of transformational leadership, specifically sharing a clear vision for school improvement. In this research it is seen that some of the head teachers not only involve the members of SLIP committee but also they include local community to prepare and implement the School Level Improvement plan (SLIP). They make a three-year plan for SLIP in discussion with stakeholders of the school community, considering the present situation of their school. This is successful alongside the bureaucratic system and is good practice that should be recommended. Through this stakeholder interaction, the ownership of the local people towards the school increases gradually, and this can be very helpful to SLIP preparation and implementation. Since primary education in Bangladesh has experience significance development. Primary head teacher have been integral in leading this improvement. This improvement has been driven also through the national education policy which has focused on increasingly decentralised leadership. SLIP has been a tool for an acting this.

National educational policy 2010 serves as a guide for the development of education in Bangladesh. When this national education policy was formulated in 2010, the political party which was in charge of state administration that party re-elected very recently. So normally it is possible to expect that the same political party will continue/sustain the national education policy 2010. The government will further accelerate the development and progress of primary education in Bangladesh. Besides, the Vision 2021 (Bangladesh Government, 2010) can be achieved through decentralizing management system where need involvement of local citizens in addition to official processes. Thus, the recommendations of this research of pertinent to the current educational drive for school improvement through the decentralisation of school leadership and accountability.

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