

**A STUDY OF THE FACTORS AFFECTING  
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF  
BANGLADESHI PRIMARY SCHOOL  
CHILDREN OF DHAKA CITY**

Abstract of  
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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Primary education has been expanding in Bangladesh at a reasonably fast rate in the recent years, compared to the adult literacy rate of 35.5 percent, primary school enrollment rate was 79% in the year 1991. Unfortunately, however, this expansion of primary education seems to have been achieved at the cost of educational quality. But there has not been any systematic comparative study to measure the erosion of educational standard in quantitative terms, although there is a widely felt perception of this fact among the educationists and educational researchers.

## **2. TITLE OF THE STUDY**

A Study of the Factors Affecting the Academic Achievement of Bangladeshi Primary School Children of Dhaka City.

## **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objectives of the investigation may be phrased as follows :

- (a) To identify the correlates of academic achievement of primary school students.
- (b) To understand the contributions of the primary schools in the academic achievement of the students.

## **4. INSTRUMENTATION, METHODOLOGY AND SCHEME OF THE STUDY**

### **(i) The Sample :**

The study was conducted in Dhaka City. The sampling approach taken for this study can be described as purposive and stratified. A total of 12 schools were selected as the sample for this study. The sample included equal numbers of

government and non-government schools. Each of the schools has five grades in the primary section. Eight students were selected from each grade. Therefore the total number of sampled students was 480. The investigation also included the responses of 120 teachers, 480 parents, 12 principals of the sampled schools.

(ii) Tools and Techniques used :

For collection of data for the quantitative part of the study the following tools were used :

1. Torrance Test of Creative Thinking Non-Verbal Form B (1979).
2. Achievement Motivation Inventory (Mehta 1969).
3. Scale to Measure Home Environment (Reddy 1973).
4. Socio-Economic Status Scale (Singh & Saxena 1984).
5. Scale to Evaluation Criteria for Teachers and Principals (Mehdi 1978).
6. Pupil Achievement C.R. Test Batteries for UPE project Bangladesh (1985).

Nutritional Status of the Children was assessed on the basis of weight, height and mid-arm circumference.

Collection of data for the qualitative part of the study was done by observing the schools and their facilities, interviewing the students, reviewing the systems of admission and evaluation, appraising the role of head teachers and the qualifications of the teachers, and mainly by observing the teaching-learning process in the classrooms.

(iii) Collection of Data :

Collection of data was done in three phases. On the first phase, the questionnaires on Creativity, Achievement Motivation and Home Environment were administered to the students. After completing the test the students were interviewed one by one by the researcher. After the interview the scripts of both homework and classwork of the sampled students were checked by the researcher. In the second phase, a standardized achievement test were administered. In the third phase, teaching-learning process in the classrooms of the four selected schools were observed by the researcher.

(iv) Techniques Used to Interpret Data :

The research involved both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The analyses were done at both the individual and school levels. Both univariate and multivariate analyses were done to interpret the quantitative data. Correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, Step wise regression analysis, t-tests were done.

In the qualitative approach, the contributions of the various factors were evaluated through analysing the observations, interviews and discussion.

## **5. MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The data obtained through the calibrated questionnaire in the quantitative study were subjected to statistical analysis and the information obtained in the qualitative study was subjected to logical analysis. In quantitative analysis important variables were chosen by simple comparisons.

The variables used in the two approaches were not exactly identical although there was a large area of overlap. This was a necessity because certain variables could be investigated only through one approach. The major findings are discussed under four headings.

- i) Factors Identified as Important in both Approaches.
- ii) Factors Identified as Important in One Approach.
- iii) Problems of Quantitative Approach.
- iv) Contributions of the Schools.

**(i) Factors identified as important in both approaches :**

The variables which showed up as important in both the approaches are : (1) Father's Education, (2) Mother's Education, (3) Home Tutor (Who teaches the child at home).

**(ii) Factors identified as important by one approach :**

As mentioned earlier, certain factors were studied under one approach only due to methodological constraints. When some of these factors were found as important factors of academic achievement, they naturally could not be confirmed or rejected by the other approach. The factors are :

1. Creativity (Quantitative)
2. Staff Composition (Quantitative)
3. School hours (Qualitative)
4. Selection procedure (Qualitative)
5. Evaluation system (Qualitative)
6. Characteristics of the head of the school (Qualitative).
7. Assignment giving and follow up (Qualitative).
8. Types of family (Qualitative).

**(iii) Problems of quantitative approach :**

Data for quantitative study were collected by applying standard tools. The questionnaires were filled in by the appropriate respondents, such as the students and the teachers. During the qualitative phase of the study which was done after the completion of the quantitative phase, it was revealed that even the standardized tools can generate misleading information due to either incompleteness of data specification or supply of motivated data by the respondents. The problem is illustrated below through one example. To Mehdi's questionnaire on teaching method, most teachers responded by indicating that they used a diversity of methods while teaching. In fact the teachers of the bottom schools claimed to be using the widest range of teaching methods. During classroom observation it was found that none of the schools used any thing other than the lecture method.

**(iv) Contributions of the schools :**

Most of the variables identified by the quantitative analyses as important factors of academic achievement belong to the category of Home Factors. Only one of the variables belonging to the school category, namely, Staff Composition (i.e. teachers' qualification and teachers' experience) was found important by the quantitative study. This finding would naturally raise doubt about the real contribution of the schools in educating the children of Bangladesh. Fortunately, the qualitative study throws adequate light on this issue.

The key factor in a school is the quality of the teachers. "Quality" encompasses much more than

qualifications, it includes teacher's motivation, discipline and capability. The teachers of the top schools are superior to the teachers of the bottom schools in respect of all these qualities. They try to make best use of the short class hours. In every class of the top schools, the teacher gives home work and classwork, and as far as possible, check the assignment scripts. Assignments are also given in the bottom schools, but there the teachers are not sincere about checking the assignments. These teachers also appear unconcerned about classroom discipline.

The emphasis given by the top schools on homework has profound implications. Homework compels the students to study at home, which compensate for inadequate classroom teaching due to short class hours. Those students who are tutored well at home perform better in the examinations than those who are not. Frequent examinations and the motivating influence of the teachers create a very competitive state of mind among the students and their parents. Class tests, which distinguishes the top schools from the bottom schools, provide a regular feedback on students' performance.

#### **6. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCHES**

The study points to the need for further research on two problem areas facing the primary education system of Bangladesh, namely :

##### **(i) Teaching Learning Process :**

The teaching approach at the primary level needs to be thoroughly revised in order to make it more interesting to the students and less dependent on home coaching. At present,

different schools and teachers take different approaches. During classroom observations, some classes were found very stimulating, while many others were dull. There is a need to carry out a series of action research to design appropriate teaching-learning process models in necessary detail. School teachers could then be trained to use those models.

**(ii) Curriculum Development :**

School curriculum prescribed by the National Curriculum and Text book Board (NCTB) consists of syllabus and text books. It is felt that primary level curricula should also include various teaching aids and manuals for their use. Besides all the components should be integrated in an effective manner, so that school teachers will not have to take extra initiative to use teaching aids. A lot of applied research will be necessary to develop the proposed curriculum.