**Assignment 1**

**Reflection Paper**

**Example of a research that I participated**

**A**s I am working in the learning program of primary level children in Bangladesh so that I have to be involved in action research on pedagogy. Furthermore I take part in the study on Competency Achievement Test (CAT) of the children, effectiveness of learning materials, program review and evaluation study and so on. In 2012 I took part in a study titled, ``Competency Achievement of Readiness School Students in SHIKHON Program: Trend and Prediction.” The objective of the study was to assess performance of readiness school learners of SHIKHON program based on the grade level attainable competencies. I am going to share my experience of the study.

**Brief Summary of the research**

**E**ducation is one of the biggest enterprises in Bangladesh. Considering the impact of education in promoting living standard basic education has been deemed as the basic right of an individual as well as a child. In case of Bangladesh, the state is committed to the provision of basic necessities including adoption of uniform, mass-oriented, free and compulsory education through which an equitable society can be created so that all kinds of exploitation can be removed (Articles 15, 17, 19 of the Constitution)[[1]](#footnote-1). Bangladesh became one of the signatories to the UN Millennium Declaration in 2000, and has promised to implement the MDGs roadmap by 2015. According to the progress report of MDG that where Bangladesh stands on the target for “Achieving Universal Primary Education” is claimed to be on track, showed noteworthy achievements in terms of net enrollment rate in primary education 60.5% in 1991 to 91.9% in 2008 which was 87.2% in 2005. But the rate of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 is 43.0% in 1991 to 54.9% in 2009 which was 53.9% in 2005 for which the recommendation drawn to need attention in this area[[2]](#footnote-2). The commitment of Bangladesh government could be exemplified by its taken significant initiatives, including *the Compulsory Primary Education Act 1993*, which made the five-year primary education program free in all primary school. The government adopted demand side intervention policies such as food for education program and stipend program for primary education which are the good for learners’ retention in schools. Despite of many initiatives a significant number of children dropped out from the primary level that cannot complete full cycle of primary education. The data shows that only 52% students complete their primary level successfully.[[3]](#footnote-3) Moreover, the attendance rate among the children who are in school is below 60 percent which indicates that challenges persist in bringing quality education and joyful learning to all children.

**T**oaccomplish the goals of EFA by 2015, in Bangladesh primary education is provided to the hard to reach and vulnerable out of school children through Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) programs and the government together with NGOs are performing as the duty bearer as well as the main provider to deliver these programs. Among all the existing NFPE programs SHIKHON of Save the Children is one of the major NFPE programs in the country.

**S**HIKHON program of Save the Children started its operation in 2007 and reached over 155,000 vulnerable children, aged 7-14, across rural Bangladesh in phase I. With a successful completion of phase I, SHIKHON started its phase II activities from 2012 targeting 1, 60,400 children. SHIKHON program along with its three implementing partners (CODEC, RDRS and VERC) educates children in 4 years by following the National Primary Education curriculum set by the NCTB and by using NCTB textbooks in all its school from grade I to V including 3 months of pre-primary education which is known as readiness class. During this time children are expected to achieve the competencies of government covered in 5 years by formal schools as well as the competencies of pre-primary that are defined for readiness class. This study aims to assess the competencies achieved by the students at the end of readiness class and also aims to take into account the findings for future planning.

**T**he study was conducted in four divisional regions of SHIKHON working area in Bangladesh: *Rangpur, Sylhet, Rajshahi* and *Chittagong* and the sample covered 221 schools and 1105 students. Among the students 48% was girls. The students were assessed by a Competency Achievement Test (CAT) consisted of 25 questions to assess 25 learning outcomes, which were set on the basis of 15 measurable competencies under 7 learning fields of Social and Emotional, Language and Communication, Elementary Mathematics, Creativity and Aestheticism, Environment, Science and Technology, Health and Safety covering 3 major developmental areas as Social and Emotional development, Language development and Cognitive development. Moreover 221 teachers were interviewed to figure out their status, interests and perceptions on students learning and readiness course design. As per the study following findings were found:

* 90.3% of the students were within the age range of 8-10 years. The remaining was either under aged or over aged.
* Among all 89% children brushed teeth, 77.8% children cut nails, 85% combed hair and 94.4% wore slippers.
* Overall 1.4% children were found with impairment as physical, cognitive, hearing & speech in SHIKHON readiness schools.
* Overall girls’ performance is better than boys in all learning fields.
* In 25 learning outcomes of CAT overall 12.9% children achieved all competencies where 6.4% were boys and 6.5% were girls.
* Among all the partner organization CODEC performed better almost all the areas than others. The performance of RDRS (S) was seemed to be lowest.
* The tools and process of data collection was later validated by SHIKHON team during Learning Workshop in *Rangpur* (PRLW). Children performance in PRLW was better than that in the CAT of study.
* In social and emotional field overall 91.4% children were found to be competent in expressing themselves.
* In language and communication overall 81.6% children achieved competencies whereas others could not. The learners performed better in describing about known object, picture and scenario and felt difficulties in writing letters.
* In elementary mathematics 88.2% children were competent where they were found more comfortable in pre-math skills as 98.4%, basic number skills (counting 96.7%, comparison 98.6%). Very interesting thing was they felt difficulties in writing numbers which was also under basic number skills.
* In creativity and aestheticism 76.5% children were measured to be competent.
* In environment the overall performance was 70%. In this learning field learners performed best in identifying different elements of surrounded environment. Only 35.4% students were found to be competent in taking part in conservation of environment which was in fact need to be set as a matter of attention.
* In science and technology 70.6% children were found to be competent which was highest in telling about the vehicles that run on road that was 86.25 and lowest in differentiating between living and non-living objects that was only 55.0%.
* In health and safety overall 87.7% children were assessed as competent.

**F**rom the teacher’s interview it was found that 62.9% of the teachers in SHIKHON School have completed SSC, 26.7% have completed HSC and rest of the teachers are either below SSC or are graduate and above. The findings showed that 97.7% of the teachers received basic training and in case of monthly training majority of the teachers have attended 2 to 3 trainings. It was found that teachers find teaching *Bangla* alphabets easy but finds it difficult to teach the students to write the same alphabets. Moreover, from the interview it was found that teachers find creative task the easiest subject to teach. In addition to this it was found that compared to the number of teachers who find environment easy there are more teachers who find environment difficult. The finding also revealed that when faced with difficulties they give extra time to the problem subjects, take help from LF or try to solve problem by attending monthly trainings.

**T**he teacher’s interview helped to get some suggestions on student’s capacity building and course design. The suggestions on student’s capacity building included using materials for explaining, giving extra time to weak students and making them study with the good students, raising awareness of parents and assessing students regularly. In case of course design suggestions were to increase the course duration, to provide materials in time, to introduce English as a subject in readiness class and also to set up own house for school.

**I**t was observed that majority of the students recognize *Bangla* alphabets but when they are asked to write the alphabets the percentage falls. Correspondingly teachers also informed that they find it difficult to teach writing. Therefore teacher’s skills in teaching writing need to be emphasized during trainings.

**F**rom the study it can be seen that SHIKHON students have performed quite well in some competencies and have acquired the knowledge of maintaining hygiene. This is a positive result for the program as well as for the community as these children could not have attained these competencies without the presence of SHIKHON School. However, some areas need attention and few recommendations are made to improve those areas. Some recommendations are student should be selected more carefully to maintain age range, hygiene discipline of students should be improved, writing skills of students need to be improved, and alternative approach should be taken while asking some questions and focus need to be given on teachers’ difficulties in order to enhance their capacities. These recommendations can be incorporated in future planning.

**Who initiated this process and why?**

**S**HIKHON program of Save the Children initiated the process. SHIKHON believes in scientific program documentation as well as the program review. At each grade level comprehensive records are kept on attendance, achievement, school operations and community participation. As a part of it at the end of each grade children are assessed their learning. The data shows comparable results with the national assessment. The study aimed to contribute toward this planning by assessing learners of readiness class. The findings were used for further program planning and review.

**F**urthermore, the primary education system of Bangladesh is competency based. A set of terminal competencies are insinuated for primary education in Bangladesh those have been segregated subject wise and class wise accordingly. A set of attainable learning competencies are also made out for pre-primary class which is directly linked with primary education. The competencies of pre-primary are mainly for the preparedness of grade 1 and it is expected that those will be achieved by the learners before getting admission to the school. In a competency-based education provision, aim of student assessment should be to measure students’ achievement of competencies. Thus, competency-based test instruments are required to assess students learning. The instrument of the study was designed based on competencies rather than contents on the theoretical frame of Bloom’s taxonomy which considered the background of learners and course design of the program.

**Who benefited from this process and how?**

**T**he main participants of the study were the children of readiness class who come from the hardest to reach societies who are out of the light of education. The children got the chance to get primary level education. SHIKHON program of Save the Children with its implementing partners develops an effective strategy to address the educational needs of vulnerable and out of school children of Bangladesh. It applies the model of Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) which employed unique, community-based approaches to help out-of-school children learn as much as students attending in formal primary schools in a shorter period of time. As the children go through the national level standards of competencies it is very necessary to identify their learning status and progress as a part of project evaluation, development and review process. The next level course, curriculum and materials were developed based on the findings and recommendations of the study which directly contributed towards the program evolution.

**In what ways, and how much control did you have over this process and the knowledge generated through it?**

**T**he research was conducted by me as a co-researcher. I had the considerable control over the process to ensure the quality of the research. The research design, instruments development, data collection process and analysis were reasonably conducted as well as controlled by me as a researcher. But the whole process was shared with different stakeholders and implementers. The primary respondents of the study were children of readiness class. Secondary respondents were teachers of respective classes.All the respondents were oriented and their participation had been ensured to avoid errors. The required sample size of SHIKHON students for this assessment was determined by using 90% confidence level with 10% margin of error; this study have identified a scientifically representative sample.

**T**he data was collected by the external professionals who have experience in this sector to make the findings more reliable and justified. All data was collected in the month of late September and early October when the schools completed their full course of readiness or just yet to complete. Meanwhile, all the learners those tested in the study went through the designed teaching-learning process on respective competencies. So the time was as matured as it was needed for the study. The entire data collection was completed within two weeks. During the data collection process SHIKHON central assessment team members visited the study area in order to monitor and support the assessment work of the volunteers. The SHIKHON staff members also provided necessary guidance and feedbacks to the volunteers during their field visits in order to ensure quality of data.

**T**he test items contained mostly oral communicative questions for which the sampled learners were examined one by one. The sampled learners were brought outside of the classroom to avoid the discontinuity of the existing teaching-learning process of the class. Through this process the learners could not listen among one-another. The interviewers ware oriented on child safety guard of Save the Children and they were gentle enough to handle the learners so that the learners did not feel any discomfort to communicate and respond before them. The teachers were also brought to outside of class when interviewed. In the time of teacher’s interview the students were provided significant tasks to continue their regular learning.

**A**ll the process along with the environment was very reasonably controlled but the transparency, accountability and participation of beneficiaries could not be interrupted through the process.

**What are some strengths and weaknesses of the process you have described?**

**The s**trengths of the study were:

* The scientific taxonomy based instrument on competency was the main strengths point of the study where competencies of NCTB have been reflected basis on learning fields and developmental areas.
* Validation of data by internals was another positive effect in findings.

**L**imitations of the Study were:

* In the assessment period, some of the study areas were affected by flood. In that situation some of affected sample schools needed to be replaced.
* The total target of school in one of the partnership areas could not be completed due to the sickness of an interviewer during assessment time. 265 children and 53 teachers of 53 schools, out of 280 children and 56 teachers of 56 schools were brought under data collection in *Rajshahi* divisional region of one partner’s working area.
* All the competencies of NCTB were not taken to assess the learners. Only the cognitive domain has been taken place to administer the test. Furthermore, the competencies that SHIKHON program worked with have been considered to assess the learners.

**Given what you have learned about PR, how would you describe the quality and levels of participation of yourself and others in this process?**

**I**n the study I was one of the researchers. I had the substantial control over the process. But the participation of related expertise and stakes were tried to be ensured. I learned about PR from the research that the participation of the beneficiaries could be more in the different way. The design of the research and draft tools could be shared and piloted before conducting research. The bottom up approach could be applied.

**T**he mode of the research was mainly qualitative as achieving the competencies is the issue of quality learning but the analysis was based on quantitative data. The data was interpreted by focusing quality achievement by the learners. To ensure the quality of the study I had to participate fully with full swing of my understanding. The participation of others in perspective of quantity was half of my participation bout from qualitative aspect it was satisfactory.

**How do you suppose the process and outcomes might have changed had it been done in a more (or less) participatory manner?**

**T**he process and outcomes of the study could be improved more, if I could make sure the wider participation by all the relevant stakeholders such as children, parents, teachers, technical staff and education expertise. The qualitative endeavor would be different if the participatory manner was different.

1. Recited in Nath SR & Chowdhury AMR (2009:3). Education Watch 2008, *“State of Primary Education in Bangladesh- Progress made, Challenges remained”.* Bangladesh: Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. (2009:54). 2009. *“The Millennium Development Goals- Bangladesh Progress Reports”.* Bangladesh: Planning Commission, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ahmed M (2011:9). 2011. *“The Sector-wide Approach in Bangladesh- Primary Education: A critical view ”.* Bangladesh: Institute of Education and Development, Brac University. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)