RESEARCH PAPER

# Challenges and prospects of Non-formal education program of Bangladesh

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**ABSTRACT**

Non-formal education is very effective in developing countries for socio-economic condition. It create a worthy chance for poor, child labors, street and orphan children as they are getting this type of education from various organization. Both private and public organization is operating numerous project to ensure basic education. The principal objective of this study is to investigate the challenges of non-formal education program. This study identified some prospect of non-formal education on the basic of real obstacles of this education in Bangladesh. This study is qualitative in nature and main method of this study is in-depth case study. In this study Face to face Interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) technique was used for data collection. The data collected from the study found lot of challenges regarding non-formal education. Family poverty, migration and environmental crime, create the main challenges for ensuring successful implementation of this project or program. About 90% of the students are from poor family background, 60% family migrated from rural to urban area, etc. Study also found that students of this program have less interest on getting proper education as family's main focus is in earning money. Early marriage, eve- teasing and family violence is remarkable barriers for female students. Juvenile delinquency, drag, mobile gaming is alarming phenomenon for the students of non-formal education. Non- government organizations try to work a lot in this field but not getting enough funds and co-operation form government as well as other donor. Sustainable and proper initiatives should be taken from government; non-government and community for provide the non-formal education. Indigenous resources (both material and immaterial) should be utilized within the cultural framework of Bangladesh for ensuring education right of citizen.

**Key words:** Non-formal education, program, challenges, organization.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Human resources are main driving force for any nation and education can turn a person into it. Education brings positive change in social structure, values and norms system of any state and can eliminate the darkness of mind. But, in developing countries a larger portion of people cannot see the light of education. Children also cannot continue their formal primary education because of poverty, malnutrition, child labour,

crime, early marriage, family violence etc. To fill this gap a lot of non-government organizations with the support of government are trying to provide non-formal education for different target groups. In Bangladesh a lot of non-government organization is operating their innovative programme for expanding the light of education in non-formal basis [1-2].

Education is the backbone of a nation and without ensuring proper education to its entire citizen a nation cannot reach the destination of success. The world is now focusing on education because it is main mechanism to supply human resources. Developing countries in the recent world is trying to overcome socio-economic challenges and hence cannot fully concentrate on educational development. Children from these countries are bound to go for work during their school schedule. Dropout rate in primary and secondary education level is alarming in most developing countries [3]. Formal education is key system for providing sustainable knowledge and is quite successful in urban and other regions. The formal education system had eroded the gender gap and is providing sufficient knowledge all those who are exposed to it [4]. However, there is still less enrolment of student per year. Hence government and non-government organization is working hard to provide non-formal education to the children and elderly people, and are successful at some extend [5].

Non-formal education ensures the equal access of all people in levels of education. It is observed to be very effective in child education especially the poor, dropout child and other under-privileged students [6]. In Dhaka, a lot of children live in slum area and are not exposed to any formal education. Their families are unable to provide and support education due to lack of money and excess of need for it. As it is every citizens right to attain education, extra-effort is needed in this type of students [7]. On-formal education has a versatile advantage in regarding age, class, merit etc. A lot of organization takes that advantage in doing this philanthropic work. Government also run a lot of project for non-formal education.

Non-formal schools are now playing a great role for supporting the rest of students who do not get chance in formal schools. A systematic analysis of the main features of non-formal education, diversely from formal schooling, shows that participants are led to non-formal programs because these offer the expertise that they hope to acquire and the necessary assistance for a better understanding of their own selves and of their world [8].

Non-formal education programme is ran outside of the formal setting that is why this programme is ignored [9]. The main challenges in the non-formal education programme are the bad socio-economic condition of students. No study was conducted on investing the real challenges of this programme related to social and economic problem of students. That is why, the present study targeted to find out the challenges of the students and related it in that programme. Besides finding challenges, the present study also make some realistic suggestion and recommendation for making fruitful and effective of this non-formal education program. One important justification of this study is that to gain more knowledge about the in-depth challenges of students and how to this programme cope with this challenges.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature and case study method was used to investigate deeply and find in-depth data with information from the cases. About fifteen cases were chosen by using sample random sampling method from the study population. The students under Non-formal education programme in Dhaka city of Bangladesh was subjected to the study from two centres. The two centres were named as alor Pothe (Way to Light) and alor bhubon (House of Light) from where 8 cases each have been selected.

The present study applied face to face interview and two Focus Group Discussion was conducted as data collection techniques. Both open-ended and close ended questionnaire was prepared and pre-tested.

Data collected from field visit and the information was classified on the basis of their characteristics and study guidelines. Some important speech from the respondent will be quoted directly from the respondent. But, for enriching the theoretical framework of this study data and information also collected from existing relevant research articles, books, thesis and research report, websites, annual report of different ministries, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics newspaper articles and from the database of Dhaka Ahsania Mission.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges of non-formal education program for children in Dhaka city were investigate on the basis of various points. Fifteen cases presentation of that study shows the challenges and real condition of learners of non-formal education program. On the other hand, from the focus group discussions this study found the challenges related to operating this non-formal education program in Bangladesh. This part of study presents the result of study and its discussion.

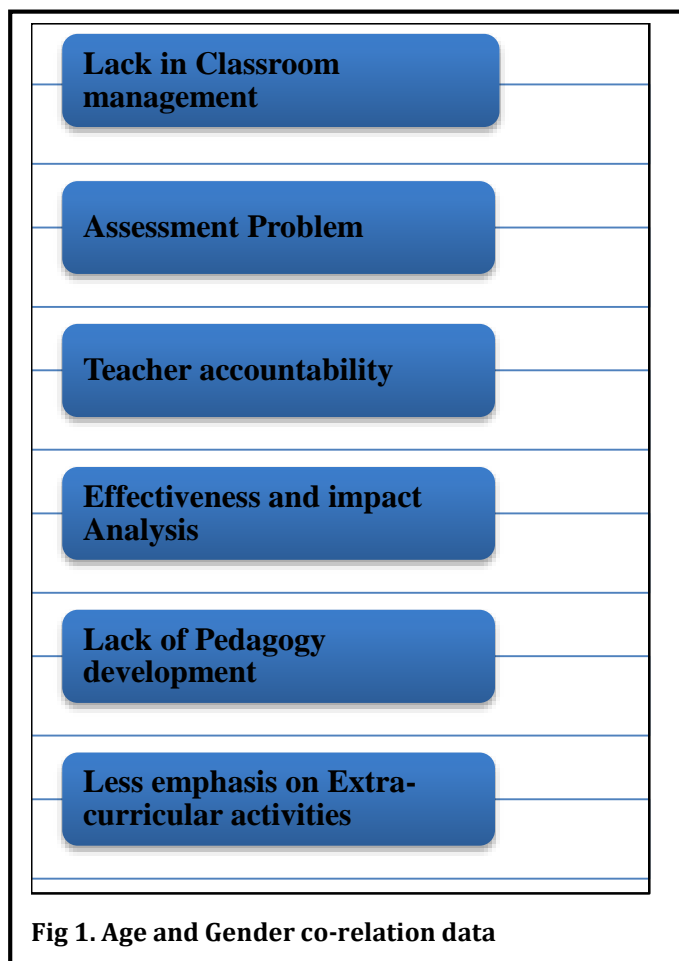3.1. Students socio-demographic status:

Results are chosen from two different centres called Urban Community Learning Centres (UCLC) of education in Dhaka city. The study maintained all principle of the confidentiality that is why this article also skipped the name of students in every stage.

3.1.1. Age and gender of the cases:

Most of students from the study were female in non-formal education center whereas one third of the students are male. The male children are engaged in low incoming job and try to support their family. That is why their percentage in the education is less than female. Development worker and social workers are tried to engage them by using home visit and raising social awareness. The age of the respondents limited 8 to 16 as they are students of class one to eight.

The information revealed that 26.65% of students fall in in the 3 different age ranges (from 8-10 years, 10-12 years and 12-14 years)

**Table 1. Age and Gender co-relation data**

| Age (Exclusive) | Gender Male | Female | Total | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8-10 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 26.6 |
| 10-12 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 26.6 |
| 12-14 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 26.6 |
| 14-16 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 20 |
| 16-18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **5** | **10** | **15** | **100** |

| |
| Lack in Classroom management |
| Assessment Problem |
| Teacher accountability |
| Effectiveness and impact Analysis |
| Lack of Pedagogy development |
| Less emphasis on Extra-curricular activities |

**Fig 1. Age and Gender co-relation data**

about 20% students from the range of 14-16 years age are attaining the non-formal education. Whereas no students from the age range of 16-18 years are attaining the education (Table 1). The data shows that female students are more serious and exposed to learning than male. In various cases study it is found that students are not admitted to non-formal education centre in their appropriate age [10].

### 3.1.2. Students work engagement and family conditions:

Most of the learners came from the village area with their family for their livelihood. The family condition of those students bound them to involve in work. Study found that the learners of this program also engaged with other work along with their education (Table 2). Student's

involvement in work also creates a lot of problem in their education. The students work with learning creates a lot of problem in their educational development. In most case students cannot reach to the center on précised time. The work pressure at juvenile stage of students highly impacts their mental and physical health. If the young women and men from the slum area are trained well then they can become dedicated and responsible teachers. This will provide them income and they will also encourage their kids for education [11].

Most of the students' guardians are engaged in low-incoming occupation [9, 12] leading to restricted income. Many families of learners are migrated from rural area which lack education and income based occupation (Table 3). The migrants either had very limited resources for livelihood or they are still not exposed to amenities generally provided to urban people. In such type of situation it become difficult for people to about one time meal, hence their children have to sacrifices their education. The family on migration said that

"Because of poverty we shifted Dhaka (capital city). We thought we will live I n a batter place in Dhaka but for financial crisis we bound to live at slum. This slum itself a big challenges for our proper taking education"

### 3.2. Academic challenges

Non-formal education is the flexible system of education where the learners can get education in comfortable time and place. From the case and focus group this study identified some important issue on the basis of study objectives.

Time management is one of the major problems in the non-formal education program. Non-formal education program run center/informal school all day long. The program ran from the 8:30 am and day off at 5:00 pm. Most of the time they face the teacher insufficiency and they have work a lot. The present study found the same academic problem in all over the country. Ehsanur [13] briefly described the Challenges of non-formal approach in an article where the outcome was similar to our work (Table 4).

Beside these mentioned challenges some other challenges are- The narrowness of the concept of education to the community; Fragmentation of organization and program; Resource problems; Problems of knowledge and skill of program staff; Techniques and capabilities problem; The responsibilities of international agencies; Course design related problems; Honorarium related problems; Time management related problem; Lack of professionalism; Ladder system problem; Teacher Recruitment related problem; Limited training facilities; Frequently transformation of job; Supervision And Monitoring related problem (Figure 1).

One volunteer from focus group said, "We are working in the field level for proper implication of this program but to run this program properly we need minimum honorarium. But lack of these facilities teachers is not interested to provide quality education and not marinating time and curriculum. That also makes big academic challenges to be success of this non-formal education program".

3.3. Finance and time related challenges

In this program, Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) included a lot of co-curricular activities, but lack of proper findings, materials and trainers they cannot promote it run this program smoothly. Beside basic subject education (DAM) students

### Table 2. Work field and Impact of work on education of students

| Sr. No. | Work Field | Impact |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Phone flexiloader | Engage in online criminal activities and hamper class time |
| 2 | Shopkeeper | Cannot concentrated on education, do normally tea delivery boy to customer |
| 3 | Printing press labour | Heavy and hard work makes his tired and can attend school regularly |
| 4 | Stationary shop keeper | Become busy, Owner can call him anytime that create barriers in going school proper time. |
| 5 | *Leguna/*Bus helper | Physical impact |
| 6 | Flower seller | Create Inferior complexity and goes to take drag |
| 7 | Sells man fabrics shop | Bound to maintain order of owner in such a small ages |
| 8 | Waiter at restaurants | It makes physically and mentally weak and cannot concentrated on education |
| 9 | House Servant | Usually female students engage in that type of work and sometimes tortured |
| 10 | Collecting Paper and Garbage | It increase drop out form centers and drive to drag |

| Table 3. Guardian's Occupation | |
|---|---|
| **Sr. No.** | **Guardian Occupation** |
| 1. | Rickshaw Puller |
| 2. | Construction laborer; |
| 3. | Bus driver; |
| 4. | Watchman; |
| 5. | Butcher; |
| 6. | Garments worker; |
| 7. | Home Servant; |
| 8. | Small Business; and |
| 9. | Workhouse for cycle or rickshaw repair etc. |

also learn extra curriculum like dance, sports, song, handicapped activities and computer training. For this reason the program need huge financial support and technical expert for extended help. On the other hand these programs need to be launched and run for longer time/duration. Maximum project related to non-formal education is short term and not limited to 2-3 years. To observe the impact and result of these projects, it needs to be designed as long term program. Developing program also needs to maintain the sustainable result, but short duration program on this sector create a

| Table 4. Major Threats and Risks of Learners | |
|---|---|
| **Sr. No.** | **Major Threats and Risks** |
| 1. | Early marriage and eve-teasing related problem |
| 2. | Sexual Harassment at slum area |
| 3. | Force from parents to work and earn |
| 4. | Bad peer group |
| 5. | Slum Community are not interested to support this program |
| 6. | Love and emotional related problem |
| 7. | Not interested to take part in exam |
| 8. | Drag addiction related problem at this area |
| 9. | Crime and involvement in delinquency |

big challenges to bring this change. The NGO's are working for the technological promotion of non-formal education most of the time they lack funds, donors and other community organization do not feel to provide support in the co-curricular activities. This financial constrain let their activity limited and reduce the rate of success [14].

One key informant said, "Most of the project of non-formal education is short in context of duration. The staff/employee feel job insecurity in that program, during the projects if employee get better job, they switch for better career. That's creating a big challenge to provide smooth application of quality education to target groups. Most of the project is for 2-3 years and for local NGOs this duration is only for 6 month to one year that is why employee is not concentrated on their own job".

### 3.4. Socio-economic problem/challenges of learners

Maximum students at non-formal education program lives at slum or remote area. Some problems that we identified in this study related to the student/learners of this program and finely mention. Hasan and Sumaiya [15] investigated different issues and limitations related to non-formal education about the time flexibility and facilities of non-formal education. They mentioned about the problems like: Poverty and malnutrition; Drug addiction related problem; Crime and involvement in delinquency; No

| Table 5. BRAC Project on Non-formal Education in all over Bangladesh | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sr. No. | Project Division | Age |
| 1 | Pre-Primary Education | 4-5 year old |
| 2 | Basic Education (NFPE) | 6-10 year old |
| 3 | Adolescent Education | 11-14 year old |
| 4 | Adult Education | 15-45 year old |

appropriate environment for study; Slum community neglect students activities and demotivate them; Early marriage and eve-teasing; Sexual Harassment; hygienic problem at slum area; Force from parents to work and earn, Bad peer group; Community are not interested to support this program ;Love and emotional related problem; No interest in taking part in exams; Limited initiative for mainstreaming process; work beside the education, non-cooperation from local political and religious leader and religious barriers. One respondent desires about the residencies facilities, "If I live in a batter place rather than this slum area, without any sound pollution and bad smell, I can study a lot".

3.5. Mental and cognitive barriers of learners

The vulnerabilities, shocks and barrier they faced in everyday life, Poverty or financial crisis is one of them. Most of the students are child labour, they are working for their livelihood as well as studying. Every day they have to struggle for their next day's bread. It is very tough to continue both but try to manage both the activities despite of all difficulties. Most of family are financially insufficient, and their housing pattern, medical facilities, clothing, living standard all are very low. Most of the female learners at these UCLC are not free from any kind of emotional shocked, phobia and post-traumatic stress disorder. Most of the Learners are not psychologically sound, they have a good

interest in knowledge but for external factors created from family, residential area and community, they cannot be emotionally relax [8]. In case of girl, most of the respondent experienced eve-teasing and harassment in their day to day life. They think that family support is not enough for them to be secure.

3.6. Major threats and risks of learners:

Major threats and risk of non-formal education of DAM, UCLC project that they follow multi-grade approaches but their teachers need to be trained. It was observed that they are not enough trained as per the requirement. A class has three hours non-stop class, so the teacher and students are getting bored and monotonous. Though it was observed that the students learning at NFE had good writing and reading abilities as that of formal education [16], which means if the system is well established then the students can perform well.

The major threat to non-formal education is risk and vulnerability of its students (Table 4). Students of this centres lives in remote area like slum, they unavoidably engage in crime and drag. Female students forcefully got married and cannot continue schooling. Mental and psychological risk can drive this portion of people to liability of nation. So special attention must be taken from the concerned authority and low enforcing agency.

### 3.7. Non-formal education in other developing countries and Bangladesh:

Non-formal education programme is running all over Bangladesh. Most successful organization in providing non-formal education is Bangladesh is Rural Advancement committee (BRAC) [14]. The program believed that had quickly trained teachers with small stipend can be effective and are somewhat important for its success. Therefore, BRAC brought its success by dividing this education project into 4 categories [17]. Those are shown in following table. BRAC brought its success by dividing this education project into 4 categories (Table 5).

In India and Bangladesh the NFE show great change from the date of its emergence in case of student enrolment and education. [18] but the comparative data among the two country show India to be more successful. India show outstanding progress in this field. Mehta, A. C. [19] stated that free and compulsory elementary education is constitutional commitment and is a fundamental right in India. Though the Government is the main provider of elementary education but a large number of private and voluntary agencies are also involved in providing school education. Impressive progress has been made in all spheres of elementary education but despite spectacular quantitative expansion of educational facilities. Kapur, R. [20] also express that in India formal system of education has not been beneficial to a major extent for the deprived and underprivileged sections of the society [21-22]. Due to these causes, major emphasis has been put upon non-formal system of education. The significance of non-formal education has been recognized by the Government of India. In the present existence, it is regarded as an essential part of revised educational planning.

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROSPECTS

Non-formal education should be implemented in every part of Bangladesh. To remove illiteracy and development for total standard of living style and spreading female education by making them consciences:

- Create awareness among the people and community about the non-formal education program and its contribution to the family, community and nation.
- GOs, NGOs, INGOs and donor organization must come forward and took emphasis on this Non-formal education program [14];
- Non-formal education program should contain all necessary ingredients-curriculum contents, teaching-training approach, materials and equipment etc. which will give employment attractiveness from the very beginning of implementation process;
- Adolescents and youths should be given particular attention as they have special needs and potentials;
- The learners should get practice learning opportunity through work-settings in the market situation; and to make it possible, the training centers should be required to establish linkage with production and business enterprises;
- Skill training component should offer a range of possibilities in terms of trade and skill level;
- Teachers/Instructors should be locally recruited and specially trained for their job.

- Non-formal education program should be monitored and assessed with particular consideration given to the process and outcomes in the light of poverty alleviation objective;

o Non - formal education program management should establish a database for students and a follow-up system for the graduates moving into the market situation for employment

o The contents of the teacher training packages should be so selected and arranged that they should meet the need of both multi-grade and multi-class situation of the schools located especially in the rural remote areas of the country.

o A strong monitoring, evaluation and feedback mechanism should be established in the district and school level in order to facilitate the effective use of multi-grade and multi-class teaching techniques.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Non-formal education cannot fulfill the need of proper education and academic development of child but this education grip a vital position in the developing countries like Bangladesh. On-formal education organized the poor children in different learning centre. From those centre they are getting norms and values orientation. They are learning about social relationship, our own culture, good behaviour and self-dignity. Students of this centre because aware about the negative effect of early marriage, drag and other social problem. They also building up their leadership capacity by taking this education. It has long term positive impact on the entire nation. So non-formal education is doing excellent work for developing the nation.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

## 7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

NA

## 8. SOURCE/S OF FUNDING

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