

The IDEAL Project for  
Improvement of Primary  
Education in Bangladesh

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## Introduction

Primary education is a basic necessity for any person to be considered as literate, and thus able to contribute to the economic, social, and political development of a country (M. Hussain, personal communication, November 5, 2003). In accordance with this brief, in the 1990's, the Bangladesh government made primary school compulsory and free for all children from grade one to five (Japan Bank for International Cooperation [JBIC], 2002).

Due to the efforts of the government, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and foreign aid agencies, the opportunity for children to attend primary school has progressed steadily (JBIC, 2002). However, there are still many problems in primary education in Bangladesh. For example, there are not enough schools for all Bangladeshi primary school students and many students do not attend primary school or dropout because of their low family budget (M. Hussain, personal communication, November 5, 2003).

It is important to note that in spite of various projects by the government, NGOs and foreign aid agencies which target primary education, these problems have not decreased significantly. Ms. Yuko Ogino, the directorate of primary education of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), explains that most projects concentrate on increasing "quantity," such as number of schools and school facilities, instead of "quality" (personal communication, February 9, 2004). This explains, for example, a survey of Education Watch in 2000, which reported that approximately one third of primary school graduates did not achieve the level they should have achieved (JBIC, 2002). In short, the issue of the quality of educational performance must also be addressed (Alam & Haq, 2001).

Unfortunately, there are only a few projects devoted to improving the quality of primary education compared to the number of projects, which focus on quantity. One of the projects

working to improve “quality,” is the Intensive District Approach to Education for All (IDEAL project) carried out by cooperating foreign aid agencies and Bangladeshi government. This paper will show how the IDEAL project can help to improve poor educational quality, which is the most serious underlying problem of the primary education in Bangladesh. To begin the present situation of primary education in Bangladesh and its most serious problems will be identified. Following that, the methods and results of the IDEAL project will be described. Finally, an assessment of the success of the IDEAL project in addressing these problems will be offered.

### Review of Research

The information about background and present situation of primary education in Bangladesh is principally from articles of newspaper such as The Independent and The Dair Star, a report of Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JABIC), library books in American International School/Dhaka (AIS/D) and internet sites. Main sources about IDEAL project are from the reports of JICA and United Nations Children’s Fund Bangladesh (UNICEF-Bangladesh). For interviews, specialists for the improvement of the primary education in Bangladesh clarified the basic information and narrowed the topic of this Senior Project. People working in UNICEF-Bangladesh and JICA for the IDEAL project provided further information unavailable from written sources. The opportunity to visit to two IDEAL schools (primary schools working under IDEAL project) with the voluntary interpreter was very helpful in understanding the current status of IDEAL project. Since the Additionally, interviews with teachers working there contributed opinions about IDEAL project from the different point of views. Also, all teachers in AIS/D concerning with this paper gave many useful advises to make it better.

## PRESENT SITUATION OF AND PROBLEMS IN THE QUALITY OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

Today, government-supported primary schools in Bangladesh have serious problems related to its quality of education (Ohashi & Murayama, 2003). The different components of the problems are elaborated below. These problems are divided into two sections, the problems of the learning environment and the problems of the quality of teachers.

### Problems of Learning Environment

Problems in the learning environment can be divided into five major areas. They are classroom, curriculum, subjects, learning materials, and facilities of sanitation.

#### *Classroom*

There are about 60 or 70 students in one classroom in the primary schools in Bangladesh (Ohashi & Murayama, 2003). This is because the number of students is much greater than the number of schools available in Bangladesh (M. Hussain, personal communication, November 5, 2003). Moreover, most schools have to be run on a two-shift system in which the classes are divided into the morning shift and the afternoon shift (M. Hussain). Therefore, the time which students can study at school becomes much less than what is required (M. Hussain). In fact, the time of one class is about 35 or 40 minutes (R. Yoshioka, lecture, December 11, 2003). For example, the official instruction hour of primary schools in Bangladesh is about 2.5 hours per day for grades 1 and 2 (JBIC, 2002). It means those grade students can study only 444 hours in a year compared to 1108 hours in the primary school of AIS/D. (JBIC, D. Fussell personal communication, February 29, 2004).

### *Curriculum*

The curriculum of most schools in Bangladesh, including primary schools, emphasizes rote learning (JBIC, 2002). Therefore, students learn lower cognitive skills involving the memorizing of factual knowledge rather than critical thinking for problem solving (JBIC). The teaching-learning process is teacher-centered, where the teachers speak to students one-sidedly and there is no interaction between teacher and students in the classroom (JBIC). As a result, many students cannot follow the classes (JBIC). For example, some primary graduates cannot recite all the English alphabet nor can they write down the letter although they should have learned them during primary school (Nath & Chowdhury, 2001).

### *Subjects*

The subjects that primary school students study at school, are Bangla, English, mathematics, social studies, general science, health science and religion (Alam, 2001). They do not learn music and physical education (PE) at schools (Alam). The athletic Director in AIS/D, Ms. Luann Albanese, said having PE at the primary school age is very important because it's easy for people to develop basic athletic skills at younger age (L. Albanese, personal communication, March 23, 2004). There are many Bangladeshi adults who do not even know how to run properly because they did not take PE during their younger age (L. Albanese). Music is also same. Younger people can develop their music skills more easily than elder people can. Not taking PE and music classes is a disadvantage for them.

### *Learning Materials*

Most of the primary schools in Bangladesh lack learning materials such as teaching aids and textbooks. As mentioned in the introduction, the level of primary school students is very low. This situation is caused in part by this lack of learning materials (M. Hussain, personal communication, November 5, 2003).

Teaching aids such as wall pictures, historical maps or slides are almost nonexistent in formal primary schools in Bangladesh (Primary School Teaching Aids, n.d., JBIC, 2002). This lack of appropriate visual aids is mostly due to economics. Firstly, teaching aids sold at stores are too expensive for primary schools to buy (JBIC). Also, teachers could make simple teaching aids but they do not have enough time to do so (JBIC). This is because, their salary is too little to support them and they must tutor outside of the school to earn more money (M. Hussain, personal communication, November 5, 2003). As a result, it is difficult for teachers to carry lessons forward smoothly and for students to understand the lessons, forcing them to rely on memorization rather than analysis or realistic thinking (JBIC).

Textbooks are provided free for primary school students by the government, but these texts are difficult for students to understand, because most descriptions are abstract and therefore developmentally inappropriate (Ohashi & Murayama, 2003). Moreover, textbooks which should be provided in January, the beginning of the school year, are usually not provided until March or even later, because the publishers cannot finish their work on time due to their mismanagement (M. Hussain, personal communication, November 5, 2003). Further complicating this problem is that all 76,809 Bangladeshi primary schools use the same textbooks, making it impossible for the publisher meet the deadline (JBIC, 2002, Y. Ogino, personal communication, February 9, 2004).

### *Facilities of Sanitation*

Also there are serious problems in the classroom environment and quality of sanitation. Most classrooms do not have any lights and fans, making the classroom very muggy (Ohashi & Murayama, 2003). The assistant Upazila education officer, Ms. Sarker Rowshon Ara, said this lack of physical comfort also discourages students' motivation to study (personal communication, March 13, 2004). The number of primary school facilities has not kept up with increased enrolment, but the number of other amenities such as bathrooms and drinking water fountains lags even further behind (JBIC, 2002). Drinking water is not as important because students can bring their own bottles of water from their home, but the lack of bathrooms is a serious problem (Sarker). Also, in some primary schools, although they have bathrooms, they use those bathrooms as storeroom because they do not have enough room to store (Sarker). Moreover, in most of primary schools in Bangladesh, there is no person who cleans up bathrooms unless the individual schools hires somebody to do it (Sarker). So, bathrooms which should often be clean, are often dirty (Sarker).

### *Problems of Quality of Teachers*

Teachers should be the core of quality improvement in education (Centre for Policy Dialogue [CPD], 2001). In order for teachers to meet professional standards, they must have ample opportunities for continuous professional development (CPD, 2001). In turn, teachers must be accountable for their performance, which should be subjected to professional and public assessment (CPD). This section is divided into two main problems of quality of teachers, the situation of teacher training and the response of teachers to students.

### *Situation of Teacher Training*

There are 309,341 teachers in formal primary schools for 17,667,985 students (JBIC, 2002). Those teachers say that they have received teacher training, but according to the data of 1995, only 85.3% have completed secondary school, and a mere 13.4% are university graduates (Ohashi & Murayama, 2003). There are two prevailing models of teacher training (JBIC). One is Primary Training Institutes called PTI, which offers a year-long education course (JBIC). And the other is a training carried out by NGO, which gives two-week initial orientation, monthly one-day refresher and regular classroom supervision (JBIC). Most primary school teachers have received training at PTI before they actually started teaching children at primary school, but it is doubtful whether the training is effective because the trainers themselves are reported to be not well-trained (JBIC). Some of those trainers have never even had the experience of teaching primary school students (JBIC).

Additionally, teachers do not have enough time to prepare lesson plan before the class because they have to work at other jobs besides teaching to earn more money (M. Hussain, personal communication, November 5, 2003). As mentioned before, their salaries are too low to live. As a result, most of the teachers can neither concentrate on teaching nor use class time efficiently (M. Hussain).

### *Response of Teacher to Students*

Due to a curriculum which is teacher-centered and emphasizes rote learning, teachers do not give any support to lower learning students and tend to pay more attention to better students (Alam, 2001). Therefore, some students fall behind and eventually dropout (Alam). Since students have to take exams every year to be promoted to the next grade from the level of

kindergarten, there are many students who cannot pass and remain in the same class for another year (Alam).

## METHODOLOGY TO IMPROVE QUALITY IN PRIMARY EDUCATION OF BANGLADESH

There are several agencies working to improve quality in primary education of Bangladesh. Each agency has worked under its own policies and projects. Intensive District Approach to Education for all project namely IDEAL project is one of those projects devoted to improving the quality of primary education in Bangladesh.

### Brief Explanation of IDEAL Project

IDEAL project itself was created by UNICEF-Bangladesh, but it is being implemented by Directorate of Primary Education, Primary and Mass Education Division, Ministry of Education of Bangladesh under the Primary Education Development Project (PEDP), which is the overall framework of the primary education sub-sector program in Bangladesh (J. Jennings, personal communication, February 8, 2004, IER, 2002). It was started in 1996 with 2 Upazilas out of 460 Upazilas, or state districts in Bangla, of Jhenaidah district with the technical and financial assistance of UNICEF-Bangladesh (IER). Today some other foreign aid agencies such as the World University Services of Canada, Swedish International Development Agency, Australian AID, Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank are also providing financial support for implementation of the project (IER). JICA has supported to inquiry formative study on the impact of IDEAL project since 2002 and so does Dhaka Ahsania Mission since 2003 (UNICEF, 2003).

By the year 2003, the project was extended to 36,997 schools in 36 districts (260 Upazilas) (UNICEF, 2003). There are 64 districts in Bangladesh; the IDEAL project has been spread to more than half of the districts in this country (Y. Ogino, personal communication, February 9, 2004). Therefore, about 9.6 million primary school students out of 18 million students are studying under this project (UNICEF). IDEAL project had been planned to continue expanding its activities to schools of remaining districts (Y. Ogino). But, since 2003, the government of Bangladesh and donors including UNICEF have agreed to implement their activities under the unified project called Primary Education Development Programme II (PEDPII) beginning in 2004 (UNICEF, Y. Ogino).

The IDEAL project set four major components to achieve its goal; they are (1) local-level planning, management, and monitoring, (2) school quality, (3) social mobilization and communication, and (4) monitoring of learning achievement (IER). This paper will concentrate on the second component that is school quality. Under this component, there are several sub-components and activities.

#### Major Activities of the IDEAL Project for Improving School Quality

IDEAL project is the first big project, which mainly promotes the quality of primary school (IER, 2002). The project believes that the quality of education increases when the school environment and the teaching-learning methods are improved (IER). The project created its own teaching-learning method, namely, Multiple Ways of Teaching Learning (MWTL) to make the teaching-learning methods more child-centered, participatory and joyful for the children (IER). MWTL is based on the theory of Multiple Intelligences introduced by Professor Howard Gardner of the Harvard University (IER). Theory of Multiple Intelligences is defined in the figure 1.

Figure 1.  
*Theory of Multiple Intelligences.*

The theory of Multiple Intelligences identifies the following eight intelligences, through which a person knows and learns;

- Verbal/Linguistic (Thinks and learns through written and spoken words)
- Logical/ Mathematical (Thinks deductively; deals with numbers; and recognizes abstract patters)
- Visual/ Spatial (Thinks in and visualizes images and pictures)
- Musical/ Rhythmic (Learns through rhyme, rhythm and repetition)
- Body/ Kinaesthetic (Learns easily through body movement, games and athletics)
- Naturalist (Sensitive to the natural world; recognizes connections and patterns within the plant and animal kingdoms)
- Interpersonal/ Social (Learners easily in groups; can develop relationships with others easily)
- Intrapersonal/ Intutive (Likes to work alone)

*Note.* From *A formative study on the impact of the IDEAL project. Volume I.* (p.1-13) by Institute of Education and Research, August 20 2002, Dhaka: Author.

The IDEAL project set several activities to improve the quality of primary school based on this theory (IER, 2002). This paper discusses about eight of those activities. Those activities are innovation and development of interactive teaching-learning, training in MWTL, classroom reorganization, school management and academic supervision, subjects, teacher support kits and school support kits, and safe learning. Also, for some of these activities, it discusses about the gap between what is described as the IDEAL project methodology and the actual situation observed by the author's recent visit of two IDEAL schools.

#### *Innovation and Development of Interactive Teaching-Learning*

The introduction of MWTL to primary schools in Bangladesh began with an experimental implementation of MI techniques in five selected formal primary schools (IER, 2002). The different teaching-learning techniques based on MI theory were recognized to encourage children reach the attainable subject-wise and grade-wise competencies of the present

curriculum and textbooks (IER). Based on seventeen sample lesson plan booklets covering five major subjects, namely, Bengali, mathematics, English, science and social studies, were made by the teachers of the five experimental schools and the selected instructors of Primary Training Institutes (IER). Then, those teaching-learning techniques and sample lesson plans have been used since 1999 in the 5-day and 3-day Training Manuals (IER).

### *Training in MWTL*

Teacher training in MWTL is a very important component of the IDEAL project, because MWTL cannot be brought to the classes without teachers who are well trained in this method (IER, 2002). MWTL is completely different from the traditional ways of teaching, which the teachers have learned under. As a result, many teachers were at first skeptical of this new method especially, experienced teachers, who had taught with traditional ways for long time (Sarker Rowshon Ara, personal communication, March 13, 2004). But, the IDEAL project was appealing and many teachers have tried understanding the importance of MWTL since training first began (Sarker). Now, many teachers working under IDEAL schools understand the importance of MWTL and teach students with this method (Sarker).

### *Classroom Reorganization*

To enhance learning for children, it is essential to have a classroom environment that it is a comfortable and pleasant place for the purpose (IER, 2002). There are two unique ways of classroom organization used in the IDEAL project, the reorganization of seating arrangement and the decoration of classroom (IER).

### *Reorganization of Seating Arrangement*

The traditional seating arrangement of school in Bangladesh is rows of tables and benches (IER, 2002). However, this seating arrangement is not appropriate to MWTL, because it is difficult for teacher and students to move around (IER). Also it reinforces a teacher-centered approach due to the physical and mental distance between teacher and students (IER). Thus, the traditional seating arrangement is changed to mats on the floor, which allows students to sit in a U-shape or a semi-circle, or to form smaller groups for applying MWTL methods more easily (IER).

A recent visit to IDEAL schools showed that there are not many IDEAL schools that put mats on the floor to let students to allow this flexibility in seating arrangements. Although most IDEAL schools might still use rows of tables and benches, but the seating is well arranged so that teacher and students can walk around and contact easily. During the visit, the author found one class having a group discussion.

### *Decoration of Classrooms*

Pictures are not only attractive for children, but they can easily learn many new things from pictures as well (IER, 2002). So the IDEAL project encouraged the decoration of classrooms with letters, numbers, pictures, and the children's own work (IER). This makes children feel happy to come to school and also encourage them to do their work because they have chance to exhibit their own work in the classroom (IER).

A recent visit to IDEAL schools showed that many pictures, of various subjects such as Bengali, social studies, English and health education, are drawn or put on the wall. But, there was no student's work although the teacher had collected them for display.

### *School Management and Academic Supervision*

A manual for training in school management and academic supervision has been developed addressing the management aspects of different IDEAL components including MWTL (IER, 2002). The head teachers of government primary schools and registered non-government primary schools of the IDEAL districts have been and are being trained in school management and academic supervision (IER).

### *Subjects*

As mentioned that before, the present primary schools in Bangladesh do not have music and PE as classes, but the primary schools working under IDEAL project do (Sarker Rowshon Ara, personal communication, March 13, 2004). One IDEAL school in Gazipur, namely Chapulia Model Government Primary School, has both a music and a PE class twice a week (M. Uddin, personal communication, March 13, 2004). In music class, students sing Bengali song, and in PE class, they play games or kabaddi, Bangladeshi national sport (Virtual Bangladesh, 2003, Sarker).

### *Teacher Support Kits and School Support Kits*

As mentioned in the problems of the learning environment, there is almost no teaching aids or manipulative materials in the primary schools although sport, reading materials, and first aid materials have been provided to each school (IER, 2002). However, the teachers themselves make the teaching aids asking elder students' help in accordance with the samples and the guidebook supplied in the kits (IER, 2002). Also, foreign aid agencies such as JICA provide a lot

of teaching aids to IDEAL schools. Thus, many teacher and school support kits are available to IDEAL schools today (IER).

A recent visit to IDEAL schools showed various teacher and school support kits such as big rulers and soccer ball in the schools. However, most of them were kept nicely packed and did not seem to be used.

### *Safe Learning Environment*

To enhance the Safe Learning Environment (SLE) for the primary school, two activities are undertaken in IDEAL project. These are a 2-day training program for teachers in SLE and the training for trainers, which just began in 2001 (IER, 2002). By leaning from those activities, teachers come to teach about personal hygiene, health, food and nutrition, safety and security, rights and gender-related issues to their students (IER). Then those students grow the life skills needed to maintain physical and mental health (IER). Also it is possible that those students can transfer their knowledge to their families, the community around them and the future generation (IER).

A recent visit to IDEAL schools reflected the results of this training as there are many pictures appealing about health drawn on the wall in the schools. For example, a picture telling to wash hands was drawn on the wall in front of a bathroom.

### STATISTICAL RESULTS OF IDEAL PROJECT ACTIVITIES

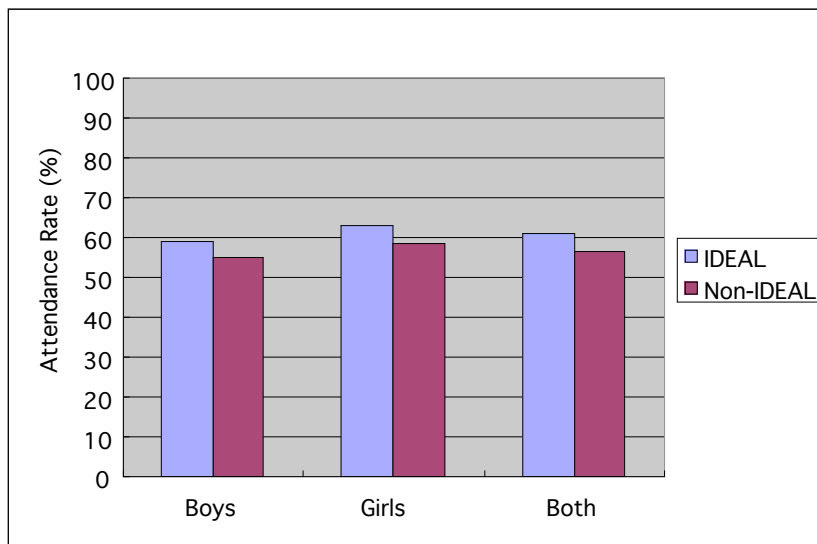
About 7 years have passed since the IDEAL project started in 1996 (IER, 2002). The project itself will be completed in July in 2004 and UNICEF will work on new project, which will incorporate only the most effective activities of IDEAL project, under PEDPII (Y. Ogino,

personal communication, February 9, 2004). Now the IDEAL project needs to be examined to see which activities should be continued PEDPII (Y. Ogino). Getting various sections of statistics of IDEAL project and comparing them with others is a good way to see the results of the project. (Y. Ogino). It is true that statistics are not really accurate, especially, in the developing country (Y. Ogino). However, gathering people's impressions to find out which activities should be continued is not enough evidence (Y. Ogino). Even if the numbers are not really accurate, they can lend empirical support to what would otherwise be unsubstantiated opinions (Y. Ogino). The results can be known through the comparisons of IDEAL and Non-IDEAL schools (M. Kobayashi, personal communication, December 17, 2003). The results are based on the comparisons of IDEAL schools and Non-IDEAL schools (IER). IDEAL schools indicate the schools, which has worked with IDEAL project. And Non-IDEAL schools indicate the schools, which have not worked with IDEAL project, but they have worked with other programs from other foreign aid agencies (Y. Ogino). For example, World Bank and Asian Development Bank have been giving loans to primary schools in all six divisions of Bangladesh (Y. Ogino). So even if it is called Non-IDEAL schools, they still work with at least one program or aid organization (Y. Ogino). Also, Non-IDEAL schools were carefully chosen not to show huge difference on the statistics when it was compared with IDEAL schools (Y. Ogino). This paper will discuss about the results of three statistics, the overall attendance rate, the completion rate and the learning achievement rate.

## Overall Attendance Rate Overall Attendance Rates of Student

Figure 2.

*Overall Attendance Rates of Students.*



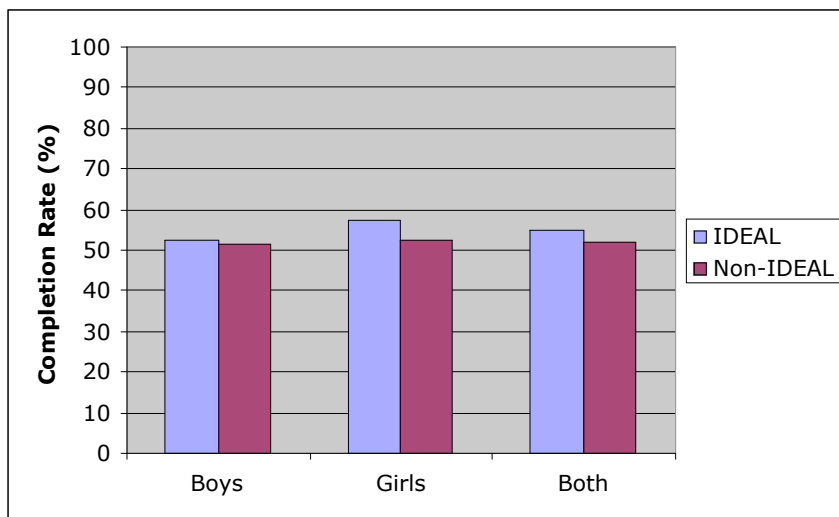
*Note.* Graph created by author from *A formative study on the impact of the IDEAL project. Volume I.* (p.4-3) by Institute of Education and Research, August 20 2002, Dhaka: Author.

As shown above, more students in IDEAL schools attend school than students in Non-IDEAL schools.

### Completion Rate

Completion rate was calculated in this survey through a comparison of students enrolled in grade one in 1996 with the number of students taking the annual examination of grade 5 in the year 2000.

Figure 3.  
*Completion Rate for Primary Education.*



*Note.* Graph created by author from *A formative study on the impact of the IDEAL project. Volume I.* (p.4-6) by Institute of Education and Research, August 20 2002, Dhaka: Author.

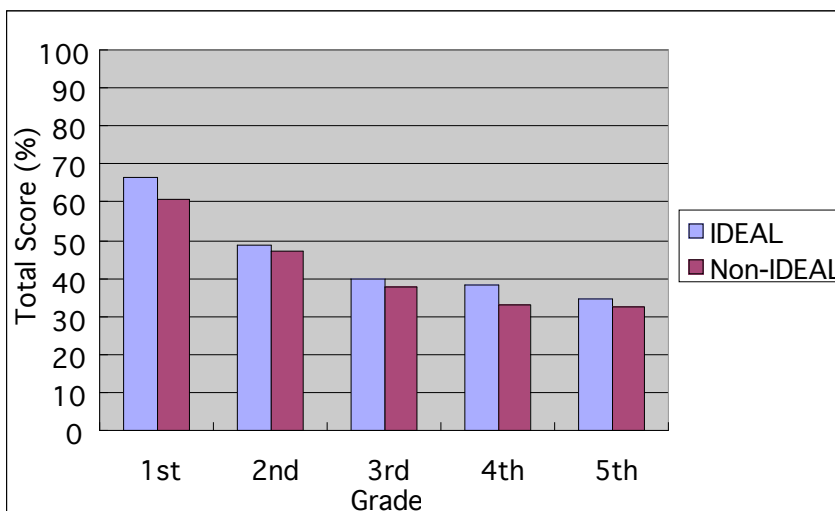
The difference between completion rates for boys of IDEAL and Non-IDEAL schools was not significant, but it was for girls. But no matter of genders, completion rate of IDEAL schools is better than that of Non-IDEAL schools.

### Learning Achievement Rate

To get the results of learning achievement rate in IDEAL and Non-IDEAL schools, students took the same achievement tests (Bangla, math, science, social studies, English) given by the government of Bangladesh. There are various kinds of question requiring both memorization and critical thinking, so these tests are equitable for students in both schools (J. Jennings, personal communication, February 8, 2004).

#### *Distribution of Students (Grade 1-5 combined) by Percentage of Total Scores (All subjects combined)*

Figure 4.  
*Total Score of Achievement Test (Grade 1 – 5 & all subjects combined).*

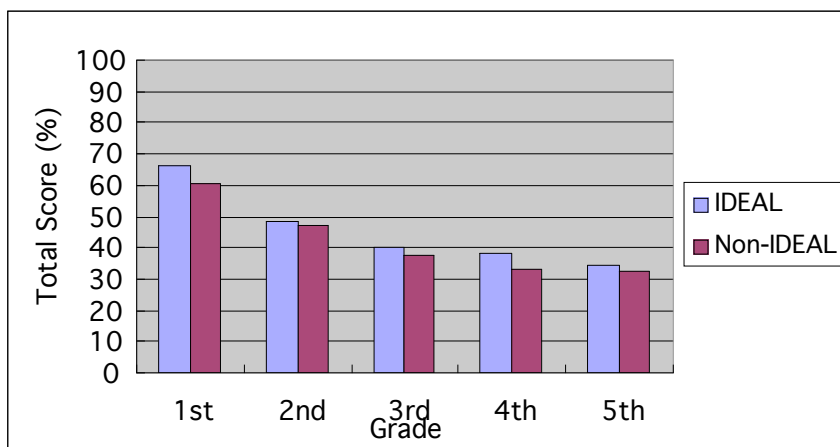


*Note.* Graph created by author from *A formative study on the impact of the IDEAL project. Volume I.* (p.4-10) by Institute of Education and Research, August 20 2002, Dhaka: Author.

As shown above, the overall achievement level of students in IDEAL schools was better than that of Non-IDEAL schools.

### Grade-wise Achievement Score

Figure 5.  
Grade-wise Total Score of Achievement Test.



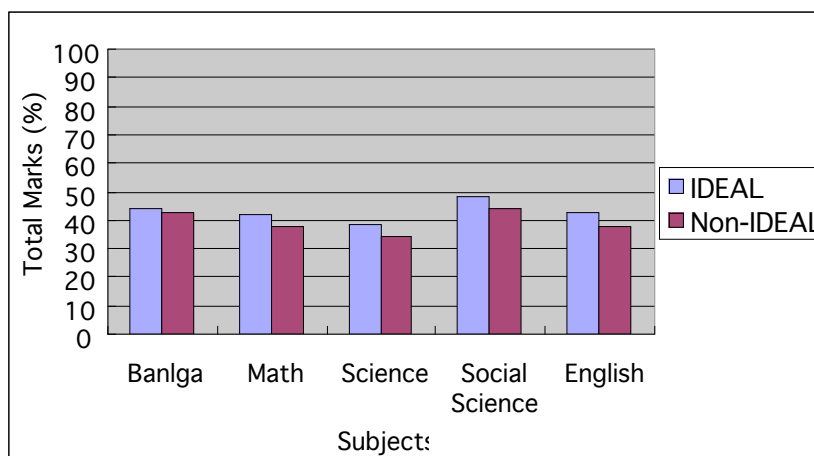
Note. Graph created by author from *A formative study on the impact of the IDEAL project. Volume I.* (p.4-11) by Institute of Education and Research, August 20 2002, Dhaka: Author.

As shown above, all rates of achievement scores in IDEAL schools are higher than those in Non-IDEAL schools, the biggest discrepancies occurring in grades one and four.

### Subject-wise Achievement Score Averages of Total Marks

Obtained All Students (Grades 1-5 combined) in Five Subjects (Out of 100 marks)

Figure 6.  
Averages of Total Marks Obtained All Students (Grades 1-5 combined) in Five Subjects.



Note. Graph created by author from *A formative study on the impact of the IDEAL project. Volume I.* (p.4-13) by Institute of Education and Research, August 20 2002, Dhaka: Author.

As shown on figure 6, the scores of all subjects in IDEAL schools are higher than those in Non-IDEAL schools.

#### Summary of Statistical Results of IDEAL Project Activities

Through comparing several statistical results of IDEAL schools and Non-IDEAL schools, it is noted that IDEAL schools recorded better results than Non-IDEAL schools. More students attended IDEAL schools than Non-IDEAL schools. More students in IDEAL schools could complete their 5-year primary school education than Non-IDEAL schools. More students in IDEAL schools could achieve passing scores than Non-IDEAL schools. Although some of the differences from these results were not so significant, there were still some differences and most of the results of IDEAL schools were better than those of Non-IDEAL schools, in spite of the similarities in aid and program development support. Therefore, IDEAL project had better effects on students and it worked well at the primary school in Bangladesh.

#### ASSESSMENT OF IDEAL PROJECT

The IDEAL project has made many sub-projects and activities to improve the quality of education since 1996 (IER, 2002). Some of the results of those sub-projects and activities have shown good effects, and the others still have room for improvement (IER). What now, let's look at the conclusion of the improvement of quality of primary education in Bangladesh under the IDEAL project.

The evidence suggests that IDEAL schools have made more improvements in the quality of the teaching-learning environment than Non-IDEAL schools (IER, 2002). Due to the introduction of MWTL, classroom has interaction between teacher and students and students

come to speak their opinions (IER). The overall result based on composite score of IDEAL schools was found that it was better than Non-IDEAL schools (IER). The results comparing average scores showed that quality of classroom teaching-learning was higher in the IDEAL schools than that in the Non-IDEAL schools (IER). It was found that there was huge gap in the extent of use of lesson plan and teaching aids between the IDEAL and Non-IDEAL schools (IER). Teachers in IDEAL schools came to use lesson plan and teaching aids more often than teachers in Non-IDEAL schools did (IER). It was noticed that the MWTL approach was the key element in improving the performance of the student, because almost all the top schools occupied with IDEAL schools working under the systems such as child-centered teaching motivating students, and use of teaching aids (IER). These systems were ones introduced by the IDEAL project (IER). It was found that the use of teaching aids and supply of necessary reading materials could help to motivate students to study (IER). In view of the good results mentioned above, the IDEAL project was likely to help improve the quality of classroom teaching learning.

However, it was also found that some negative aspects of quality of classroom teaching learning although many improvements were found. A large number of schools in IDEAL districts still do not start lessons on time, use lesson time effectively, or incorporate two-way communication between the teacher and students (IER, 2002). Also 60% of teachers in both IDEAL schools were still rushing to complete lessons in given time (IER). Some IDEAL schools still used traditional way of teaching such as teacher-centered, reading aloud only and limiting students' participation in large classroom (IER). Some teachers in those schools did not motivate students, use teaching aids or even the blackboards (IER). According to Mr. Mohammad Mohsin, Education Director at PLAN international, although the activity to decorate classroom was carried out, most of wall drawings were done by hired painters instead of student's work

(personal communication, February 26, 2004). He said it was really sad that this activity had not accomplished its original goal, which was to motivate students to enjoy studying by showing their works in the classroom (M. Moshin). Also, it is found that the schools with lower composite performance score had poor school environment (IER). Those schools do not have bathrooms, tube-wells, adequate furniture and other logistic support, too (IER). These problems must be improved immediately.

### CONCLUSION

The activities based on MWTL, which was created by the IDEAL project, are very effective methods for the improvement of quality in both teaching and learning in primary schools of Bangladesh. As shown in the tables, the progress of those activities is gradual, but it is likely to improve. Although only seven years have passed since the IDEAL project started, good results were recorded, indicating there is hope for further improvements should the project continue.

Early childhood and primary education specialist, Mrs. Deborah Llewellyn said it is not time to deal with improving quality of education, which IDEAL project has mainly worked for, because there are still not enough number of schools or sufficient facilities such as for sanitation (personal communication, February 12, 2004). It may be true that the primary education of Bangladesh should focus on increasing the number of school facilities instead of improving the quality. But systematic educational changes such as those proposed by the IDEAL project required time to implement and take root. These small changes evidenced from the efforts of this project should be seen as a successful beginning. I think it might be too late to deal with improving the quality of education after having enough school facilities; perhaps they should be

dealt with at the same time. If done simultaneously, perhaps the students currently in primary schools will be better prepared to contribute positively to the growth and development of their country when they reach adulthood. Bangladesh cannot afford to waste yet another generation of its children.

This paper only addressed the problems in quality of primary education, but there are many other problems in the educational system in Bangladesh in need of improvement as mentioned at the very beginning. But the results of the IDEAL project also proved that, while it is unrealistic to expect changes overnight, it is possible, with patience and sustained support, to reduce those problems.

Teacher-centered classroom and rote learning is not only used in Bangladesh, but also in many countries, especially in Asia. Japan, which is my country, was one of those countries using such methods. Today, that system is getting better, because many schools in Japan have introduced a child-centered approach such as MWTL. I was learning under a teacher-centered system until I came to AIS/D. Before I came to AIS/D, I just listened to what the teacher said, took a lot of notes, and memorized information from the textbooks. After I took the exams, which just required me to fill out what the teachers asked me to remember, I promptly forgot everything. So, during my time in Japanese schools, I was seldom asked to think critically or logically or to share my opinions or discuss the opinions of others. This is fine when one is a student, but it is not acceptable when one becomes a working member of society. For example, one may be required to create some unique ideas for one's company, or one may be required to speak out one's opinion logically in front of many people. Those skills cannot be accomplished within one or two days. To think critically or to speak out one's own opinion logically, it is necessary to practice again and again. School might be the place to do practice of those things.

MWTL, which IDEAL project carried out, encourage children to think critically and also to speak out their own opinion. It is a very good teaching learning method for children to prepare for their future.

Dr. Hussain, the retired professor of Dhaka University, said he would like the effective activities in the IDEAL project to be extended to the remaining Upazilas, which have not been covered yet (M. Hussain, personal communication, November 5, 2003). Also he wants the project to emphasize the need for the native Bangladeshi people to continue those activities by themselves without foreigner's aid before the ongoing financial aid is finally stopped (M. Hussain). I strongly agree with his opinions.

The IDEAL project has been an effective method for improving the quality of primary education in Bangladesh. Although there might be more effective methods for improvement than what exists at the moment, the IDEAL project is slowly, but effectively changing the primary school education in Bangladesh for the better. It is hoped that in the future additional or more effective methods will come from the government of Bangladesh, NGOs, and other foreign aid agencies, thereby further advancing the quality of education and thus empowering the future adults of Bangladesh.

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