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Citation	北海道大学大学院教育学研究科紀要, 87, 207-218
Issue Date	2002-12
DOI	https://doi.org/10.14943/b.edu.87.207
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/28875
Type	departmental bulletin paper
File Information	87_P207-218.pdf



Why It's Difficult to Change Parent's Consciousness toward Children's Educational Attainment in Bangladesh?

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[Abstract] This paper aims to explore the difficulties of raising parent's consciousness toward children's educational attainment at the primary level in Bangladesh. Data from the 2001 sample survey have 60 schooling and non-schooling 6-11 years old children and their parents and teachers, who were selected from 2 schools (urban & rural) and its catchments areas. Findings reveal that, some children are going to school and some are not going, even though both categories of children's parental socio-economic and cultural behavior is same and they are living in the same community, where the GO/NGOs has executed the same level facilities for the children and parents. It was generally found that, children are not going to school due to parental poverty and illiteracy but because of existing parental problem, children's educational role is different and it indicate the degree of parental care. This paper conclude that, parental consciousness is an important factor to reduce children's educational problem in Bangladesh.

[Key words] poor children; educational attainment; parent's consciousness; Bangladesh.

Introduction

Children's educational poor attainment at the primary level is a common phenomenon in Bangladesh where the children give up their studies from different classes before completing the primary school cycle and become involved in different work in order to help their parents. It is also a multi-causes problem but most of the children give up their studies due to lack of parental encouragement. Obviously, this situation is very harmful for children's physical and mental development and is a hindrance in the primary education program. In order to break this practice, the government and non-government organizations have come forward and are working seriously to encourage the children for schooling. But in fact, the situation still exists (**Janakantho-12/09/2002**). The **HNC-1999** report reveals,

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increasing the access to education of children coming from disadvantaged groups has not improved much. Children coming from socio-economically worse-off families enroll in school less in numbers, attend school less frequently, drop out more often and perform worse in achievement tests. **B.C.R-1999**, reveals that, the high drop out rate has been a serious concern, among others, in improving the condition of basic education. The **ARIES-1999**, report illustrates that, a large number of children have been identified in a grave situation in Bangladesh. The main cause of this problem is, parents need children's help to reduce their financial problem. The parents often do not realize the importance of children's education and traditionally they prefer children's work as socialization process rather than education. As a result, in spite of enrollment in school, the children could not finish their studies. Generally, a parent (who is interested to education) never relies on their immature children's help and they must encourage the children for schooling. Needless to say, many poor children are performing their studies in spite of their parental economic problem. I focus on the lack of parents consciousness as an important cause of children's poor attainment into primary school. Although government and NGOs are attempting to change it, but it is quite difficult. This study is intends to explore changing difficulties of parent's consciousness, which discourages children's educational attainment.

The image of parents

In the ideal family, parents care for their children, send them to school and do not rely on child's work or income. As pointed out by **Wallerstiein and Smith (1991:226)**, the image of the family is an integral part of a develop mentalist notion, which assumes that multiple societies exist in the world, evolve and in the direction of progress. In Bangladesh at present, the supposedly superior (upper and middle class) family where parents can afford the successful education of their children, both as an investment for differed economic returns and as a means to produce status, is mostly middle class. This study focuses on poor parents who feel disinterest of child's education. Generally, the parents want children's help due to reduce family burden. **NSS report-1996** reveals that, 67% children do not go to school due to parental economic hardship. **Ahmed and Quasem-1991** said, children of poor families are the deprived ones. Most of the poor children do not go to school but join the labor force at an early age because existing schools cannot satisfy their needs and costs of education are too high. As a result parents are unable to cope with this task. **Mid Cain (1977)** showed that by the time the sons of agriculturalists reached the age of 12, they worked enough to earn their own keep and by the age of 15, they could support other family members as well. Parents reaped a net benefit from their sons work from the latter age until they marriage. Sons were also a security in old age. In order to make them a skillful labor, the parents withdraw their children from primary school in early age and involve into their own occupation as apprentice period. **T. Blanchet (1996)** said, some parents believe that their responsibility to provide for their sons is more or less over at the age of 10 or 11, the sons remain under their authority and whatever they earn belongs to

the parents. On the other hand, daughter is the burden of parents and they are born to be marriage off and it means parents must provide a dowry. Poor parents want to have their daughter's marriage a very early age because it is less dowries. In this case, they withdraw their daughter from primary school and force her into domestic service as a helping hand of mother as well as apprentice period for marriage. In addition, parents want their son's to marry early due to receiving something from the bride side and this situation also discourages the son's education. Here we observe that, parental disinterest is the main obstacle of children's education.

In order to change the mentality of parents, Go and NGOs programs dealing their performance seriously, they believe poverty and illiteracy is the main cause of parental disinterest of child education. In respect to this they provided poverty alleviation and adult literacy program for the parents. At this stage several department of government are working actively. The main departments are as: **education, social welfare, co-operative, and BRDB** etc. On the other hand many NGOs also provided the same program for the betterment of parents, the main NGOs are as: **Grameen Bank, BRAC, ASA, PROSHIKA, NEEJERA KORI** etc. Side by side Go and NGOs also provided **home visit and mothers gathering** programs for the improvement of parents mentality.

Situation of children's educational attainment in Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Government is committed in different international forums (**Thailand-1990, America-1990, India-1993, Indonesia-1995 and Pakistan-1997**) to providing a basic education for all of its children by the year-2000. The main target was to increase the enrollment of children in primary schools from 60 to 95 percent. **HNC (1999:34)** report reveals that 77% of children enrolled in the primary school and 29.6% of enrolled children complete their basic education. **Daily Ittefaq (17/7/2002:1)** reveals that, the number of students has been reduced at the primary schools in Bangladesh and the school teachers write 50%-60% false students name on the student registers in order to keep their institution and job. If this data is reliable, we can assume that a large number of children are out of school and being deprived of education. In the long run, they are adding to the number of illiterate people and increasing illiteracy problem in Bangladesh. Obviously, this situation is very harmful for children as well as the nation. As we know, childhood is an important time for physical and mental development as well as making productive citizens for the nation. But the state intervention has not implemented their programs properly and a huge number of children are being deprived of education. Of course, parental poverty and negligence is the main cause of this problem but some other causes are also related to this problem. Such as: **Amartya Sen (2000)** said, the weakness of primary educational programs, discourage the children for schooling. **T. Blanchet (1999)** said, Government schools have long been notorious for their lack of supervision and for the absenteeism of their teachers, and teachers commonly give bribes to avoid being penalized or to obtain other favors from their superiors.

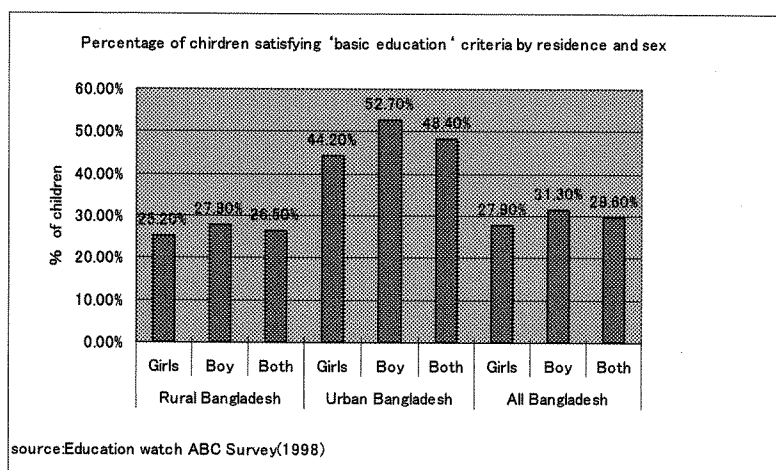


Figure-1

In order to encourage the children for schooling, Government executed **food for education, scholarship, and infrastructure development** programs. Under these programs, all poor children can receive 12/15 kg wheat/rice or 20 Taka per month and all the children can enjoy the good environment of school. Almost all public schools infrastructure is little developing comparatively former (1972) position, its provides children's play ground, furniture in the class rooms, water and sanitation etc.

Methodology

It is assumed that parent's consciousness could be an effective instrument to reduce the poor educational attainment of children at the primary level, but it is very difficult. In order to explore the difficulties of parent's consciousness, I focused my research on two schools and its catchments areas in Bangladesh. One school is Rural and the another is Urban areas and located 5 km distance from each other. I surveyed the sample areas, observed the participants, and I collected information with the help of local people using questionnaire sheet and direct interview. I contacted with the school catchments area's schooling and non-schooling children and their parents and school's teachers. The research was possible and participants were willing to allow me to interview with them due to Bangladesh nationals.

Participants

Total number of school's teachers is a 10 and 5 teacher from each school. Most of them have been working for at least 3 years and their educational qualification is S.S.C to B.A class, 6 of them are males and 4 are females. Of the sixty children, 8-11 years old, 16 children never go to school and 44 children gave up their studies from different classes of primary school before completing grade-5 and 20 grade-5 schooling children. Total number of father count is 49 and total number mother is 56. They are almost illiterate and

35-70 years old. I could not interview 11 fathers and 4 mothers due to their death and separation case. Of course, all of those parents are in lower classes and their main occupation is agriculture, fishing, day labor, rickshaw puller, housewife and maidservant.

Findings

Children's educational attainment and school facilities

The parents used to send their children to school with the hope that their children would be educated. But after one or two years many parents withdraw their children from school. Although, various causes exist behind this crisis and it hinders children's educational attainment. In order to explore this situation, I select two schools and present a comparison between urban and rural school. The children give up their studies from different classes, table-1 shows that School-A, the total number of enrolled children was 132 in 1st grade, but when they reach 5th grade, the total number of children is 88. As per shows that 44 children dropout from the School-A, before completing primary school cycle. On the other hand the same situation exists in School-B, 1st grade student was 127 and 5th grade student is 70. It means 57 children give up their studies before completing primary school study. Table-1 also shows, both the schools provide various facilities for the children. At these facility's, children can receive free textbook, scholarship, good educational environment, playground etc. Notice that, food for education program does not exists at these schools. Table-1 also shows, rural school's dropout are higher than urban but school facilities are almost same.

Expression of children

In order to investigate the cause of dropout, I collected two categories of children's information as schooling and non-schooling who are from same community's and the same

Table-1 Children's educational attainment of sample schools and its facilities

Category of the school	Academic year	Grade	Number of student	Dropout children	Existing school facilities
A (Urban)	2001	5th	88	13	1. Text book 2. Scholarship 3. Good environment 4. Supervision and home visit
	2000	4th	101	11	
	1999	3rd	112	11	
	1998	2nd	123	9	
	1997	1st	132	—	
	Total	—	—	44	
B (Rural)	2001	5th	70	15	1. Text book 2. Scholarship 3. Good environment 4. Supervision and home visit
	2000	4th	85	13	
	1999	3rd	98	11	
	1998	2nd	109	18	
	1997	1st	127	—	
	Total	—	—	57	

Table-2 Expression of children

Non-schooling children		Schooling children	
Cause of dropout	No. Of children	Cause of continue of study	No. Of children
Help the parents	18	Strict parents	8
Don't like study	3	Interested of study	4
No fine dress	4	Good company	3
No food	2	Getting for incentive	5
No textbook	5	——	
School is far distance	4	——	
Teachers negligence	4		
Total	40		20

family's status. Table-2 shows that, 24 children can't go to school due to parental poverty and negligence, 3 children don't like study and 13 children can't go to school due to educational weakness. On the other hand, In spite of parental poverty and others problems 20 children go to school where their parent is very strict and interested in children's study. The children also mix with good company and their parents also strictly to select the peer group, some other children go to school in the hope of getting incentive. This situation also indicates the parental strict behavior and high aspiration can encourage the children in schooling and it has no relation to parental poverty and illiteracy.

Situation of receiving incentives by children

In order to encourage the children's enrollment and reduce the dropout, the government executed incentives scheme, Under this program, all the poor children can receive incentives (wheat/rice and Taka). But the reality of situation does not represent the good result of incentives. In the sample areas, I ask the schooling and non-schooling children and their parents concerning their receiving incentives situation. Only 10 schooling children get scholarship 20 Taka per month. On the other hand, no non-schooling children could not get incentives while they were student of primary schools. The following table-3 also reveals the situation of incentives and assumes that, these facilities can't attract the children for schooling. In fact, 20 Taka per month is nothing and it can't change the economic situation of parents. We can understand, incentives can't attract the parents for sending their children to school; it depends on parental good willingness.

Table-3 Receiving situation of incentives by children

Incentives	No. Of children	Per month amount and things
Food for education	0	0
Scholarship	10	20 Taka
Not receive children	50	0
Total	60	20

Table-4 Idea of teachers

Idea of teachers	Number of teachers
Parental poverty	3
Parental illiteracy	1
Parental negligence	2
Parental low aspiration	2
Children's negligence	2
Total	10

Idea of teachers

Children's educational non-attainment is problem in primary education, but why the children give up their studies? In order to investigate it, I asked the teachers of sample schools. The teachers are spontaneously responding that, they are government employee and pursuing their duties regularly in the classroom. Attracting the children for schooling and discouraging for dropout are not so important to them. At this stage, some teachers also express that, parental poverty, illiteracy, negligence, low aspiration and children's negligence are the major cause of high dropout of children. Of course, children are the assets of parents, Where the parental role is to drive the children and observe the teachers duty. It was found that PTA system is absent in the sample schools and parents never communicate with teachers. If the parents want their children's education, they must take care of the children and observe the teachers activities but it doesn't intervene.

Attitude of parents

In order to investigate the root cause of children's non-attainment of primary school's

Table-5 Attitude of parents

Non-schooling children's parents		Schooling children's parents	
Cause of not sending to school	No. Of parents	Cause of sending to school	No. Of parents
Children's help in work	27	Education is important	20
Education is luxury and it is not for poor	17	Good job	10
Unable to afford children's dress	5	Increase social prestige	3
Children's works is important	4	Increase knowledge and old age security	3
Children is too young	6	Future generation will be good	4
School is far distance	6	—	
Total	65	Total	40

study, I ask some non-schooling and schooling children's parents, who are poor and illiterate. Parents live at in the same community and have the same social status. Table-5 shows, the non-schooling children's parents often do not realize the importance of children's education, they need children's help and keep in mind education is not for the poor. Some of the parents are not able to afford the children's need and some parents are afraid of the security of children. On the other hand, schooling children's parents keep in mind high aspirations for their children. This comparison of parent's mentality reveals the situation of consciousness of parents. Conscious parents must encourage their children in schooling and not oppose their children's education.

Level of education of parents

The total number of parents is 105. Unfortunately all the parents are illiterate, they have never gone to school due to parental poverty and early marriage. However, 65 parents was send their children to school but later on they withdraw their children from school from different classes before reaching grade-5. We assume that, the parents withdraw their children from primary school due to illiteracy but in fact, 40 parents continue their children's study and all the children are now grade-5 student in spite of illiterate. Here we observe the same qualities in parents but different mentality regarding their children's education which explains that, illiteracy is not a factor of poor educational attainment of parents, but indicate the sentiment of parents discourages the children's education. It can be said, the entical factor is lack of consciousness of parents.

Occupation and monthly income of parents

Both schooling and non-schooling children's parents are living in integral part of the same community where I have collected the data. The parents are almost all involved in agriculture, day labor, fisherman, rickshaw puller, housewife, maidservant etc. During field observation I found 29 non-schooling children's fathers and 20 schooling children's fathers are involved in same occupations and their monthly income is same. On the other hand, 30 non-schooling children's mothers and 20 schooling children's mothers are involved in same occupations and they don't earn anything. In the case of 6 non-schooling children's mothers, they work as to maid servant but schooling children's mothers are not working as to maid servant. At this stage, the mother earn something but they don't send their children to school, where as some mothers send their children to school but they have no

Table-6 Level of education of parents

Non-schooling children's parents		Schooling children's parents	
Status of education	Number of parents	Status of education	Number of parents
Literate	0	Literate	0
Illiterate	65	Illiterate	40
Total	65	Total	40

Table-7 Occupation and monthly income of parents

Non-schooling children's parents			Schooling children's parents		
Occupation	Income in Tk.	No. Of parents	Occupation	Income	No. Of parents
Farmer	1000-1500	8	Farmer	1000-1500	5
Day labor	900-1200	11	Day labor	900-1200	5
Fisherman	3000-3500	4	Fisherman	3000-3500	5
Rickshaw puller	1500-2000	6	Rickshaw puller	1500-2000	5
House wife	0	30	House wife	0	20
Maid servant	300-500	6	—	—	—
Total	—	65	Total	—	40

earning system. However, the two types of parent's life style are almost same but some are encouraging their children for schooling and some are not doing it. This situation also indicates that parental income or occupation is not the deciding factor in the hindrance of children's educational attainment. In spite of low income and involvement in various occupation, parents can encourage their children for schooling.

Receiving help tendency of parents from GO/NGOs

Needless to say, GO/NGOs are working seriously to improve the condition of parents. In the sample areas, I have found 45 non-schooling children's parents and 25 schooling children's parents have taken help from NGOs and the rest of both parents do not take help from any agencies. It was observed that the parents have taken help from NGOs but they don't take help from GO. It is very interesting matter that, GO/NGOs performance do not affect the children's educational attainment and parental encouragement for completion the grade-5 of children's education. Table-8 shows that, 45 parents receive NGOs help but they withdraw the children from school before reach grade-5. On the other hand, 15 parents do not take help from NGOs but their children are continuing their studies in grade-5. This information also shows the performance of GO/NGOs has not paid attention to children's educational attainment and parental performance for child education do not rely on GO/NGOs help but it depends on parental willingness.

Table-8 Receiving help tendency of parents from GO/NGOs

Non-schooling children's parents			Schooling children's parents		
Tendency	No. Parents	Name of Go/NGOs	Tendency	No. Parents	Name of Go/NGOs
Positive	45	Grameen Bank, BRAC, ASA, Proshika	Positive	25	Grameen Bank, BRAC, ASA, Proshika
Negative	20		Negative	15	
Total	65		Total	40	

Table-9 Aspiration of parents

Non-schooling children's parents		Schooling children's parents	
Aspiration	No. Of parents	Aspiration	No. Of parents
Farmer	13	Govt. job	5
Day labor	20	Teacher	25
Small business	18	Business	6
Fisherman	4	Doctor	3
Building workers	5	Engineer	1
Rickshaw maker	2	———	———
Early marriage for daughter	3	———	———
Total	65	Total	40

Aspiration of parents

It is a general nature and tendency of all parents, they want their children's welfare by any means and Bangladeshi poor parents are not an exception. It was stated that, some of the parents are interested in their children's education and some are not interested in this, even though they are same socio-economic class and cultural behavioral persons. Table-9 shows, parental aspiration is an important factor to completion of grade-5. In the case of non-schooling children's parents, basically want their children's welfare by another way as based on their own occupation. They believe that, it is the right way for children, they don't understand the value of education and want to foster traditional culture and norms. On the other hand, the schooling children's parent keeps their mind on high ambition, and drive their children to become of great man and take care their children appropriately in spite of poverty and other obstacles. This situation reveals, parental high aspiration is an important factor to continue the child education. If the parents don't have this hope, it is difficult to realize child education.

Concluding remark

Existing government report (BBS-1996) reveals the positive situation of child education in Bangladesh, but the real situation could not support it. During field observation I found that (Two schools) a huge number of children are out of school and deprived of education and this problem is rising by lack of parents consciousness. However, I visited 2 separate schools as urban and rural place in 2001. During that time, I found at school-A, 44 children give up their studies in different classes. On the other hand, the same scenario exists in School-B, where the drop out is 57. In order to investigate the root cause of this situation I directly interviewed with children, school's teachers and parents. Table-2 shows, 27 children can't go to school due to parental problem and 9 children can't go to school due to educational system's problem, 4 children can't go to school due to far distance.

Moreover, many children are going to school from the same community in spite of far distance and others problems. I discussed this with the schooling children and their parents, they responded that children are going to school due to parental strictness. The educational system's problem is a state activity and to minimize it is very difficult but why the parents are not realizing their children's education as a socialization process? But same category's another parents are realizing it in spite of state problem. Of course, this situation indicates the negligence of parental role. On the other hand, table-4 shows, 10 teachers express their feelings concerning children's educational poor attainment. It reveals that parental disinterest in child education is the major cause of it.

This study also shows the parental attitude, where the parents admit their weakness. Table-5 shows, parents want their children's help and they are not able to fulfill their needs and they could not perform the strictness behavior upon their children. In order to investigate the parental weakness, this study explored the socio-economic and cultural behavior of parents. Of course, illiteracy could be a hindrance to child education but why some others illiterate parents are encouraging their children's education? It means parental illiteracy could not interfere with the children's education; it is lack of good willingness of parents. Table-7 shows, parental poverty is another obstacle in child education but the same incomes parents are performing their children's education, where the primary education is free of cost.

Table-8 shows, some parents receive the help of NGOs, in spite of improving their economic condition. In spite of these facilities, why the parents are not sending their children to school? Table-8 also shows, in spite of parental economic problem and not received the NGOs help; some parents are sending their children to school. It means parental poverty did not interfere the children's educational attainment.

Table-9 shows, parental high aspiration can encourage the children's education whether rich or poor. It was found that, some of the poor parents keep their narrow thinking and traditional culture. Obviously, it is the hindrance of children's education. For example, parents are used to early marriage of children and they don't realize its bad impact on children's life.

From the above discussion we can understand the situation of children's life and education and their parental role. In spite of parental poverty and illiteracy, some children are going to school and some are not going. As shown in this article, this situation is made worse by negligence of parents. Unfortunately, Bangladeshi poor and illiterate parents are deprived of receiving proper guidance from any agencies, consequently they are not able to perform their accurate role for their children and children are deprived of education. In this circumstance, it is essential to execute an extensive and sustainable parents encouragement program provided by children's educational attainment otherwise a large number of children will grown up as illiterate people in Bangladesh.

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