

Policy Practice Gap in Implementing Quality Primary Education in Bangladesh: A View from the Education Rights Perspective

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Abstract

Bangladesh made considerable advancements in primary education, aligning with SDG-4 and promoting child-centered learning; however, a policy-practice gap persisted in the provision of quality primary education. This study investigated the gaps between curriculum policy and classroom practice in implementing quality primary education in Bangladesh. The study used both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through structured surveys, interviews, and observation of teachers, guardians, and students across three unions under Laksam Upazilla, Comilla District, with a sample size of 100 respondents from each union. Secondary data were gathered from annual reports, questionnaire surveys, and other published sources. Tabular analysis, using descriptive statistics such as averages and percentages, was applied to the quantitative data. Teachers reported moderate satisfaction with resources, teaching safety, and principal feedback, while administrative and financial support were rated low. Students showed average levels of interest, effort, and motivation toward schooling. The findings revealed that gaps in teacher preparedness, resource adequacy, and curriculum implementation continued to hinder the delivery of quality primary education. The study concluded that addressing the policy-practice gap required a multi-faceted approach, including stronger monitoring and supervision mechanisms, adequate teacher training, and curriculum modernization to close the divide between policy intent and classroom reality in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Policy Gap, Primary Education, Quality Factors, Role of Teachers.

1. Introduction

The government of Bangladesh has prioritized basic education since the country's independence in 1971, making significant progress in improving access to elementary education since its commitment to the 1990 Education for All goals (Banu et al., 2018). The government implemented several measures, including free textbook distribution, school nutrition programs, infrastructure improvement, and a policy reserving fifty percent of teaching positions for female instructors to promote gender parity (BBS, 2005). Bangladesh's Primary Education (Compulsory) Act of 1990 mandated public education and required the enrollment and attendance of students aged 10 and above, with subsequent strategies oriented toward EFA and MDG objectives. However, Bangladesh allocated only 2.4 percent of GDP to education, among the lowest globally, with families bearing much of the cost of basic



education, despite the country's outstanding recent economic development (World Bank, 2012).

Primary education's quality depended on administration, national curricula, teacher preparation, and classroom teaching-learning environments, with the classroom environment often considered a key factor influencing educational outcomes. Effective head teacher roles were also closely linked to high-quality learning and instruction (Ali, 2011). Despite near-universal enrollment, with over 90% of elementary school-age children enrolled and gender parity attained, only half of children completed the primary cycle, and these gains were not matched by improvements in educational quality (Duyar, 2010). Close to 30% of the country's 164 million population lived below the poverty line, earning less than US\$1 a day, and persisting rural-urban and socioeconomic differences continued to affect access to and participation in primary education. According to Chowdhury et al. (2001), over 40% of children failed to complete basic education despite reaching school age, while difficulties adjusting to school, attributed variously to neurological or glandular factors (Salk, 1995) or to a child's mistrust of family life (Yavuzer, 2000), further affected learning outcomes.

A considerable policy-practice gap continued to hinder the provision of quality primary education, evident across dimensions such as policy and infrastructure, teacher preparedness, attitudes and awareness, accessibility, and systemic difficulties that impeded optimal learning outcomes (Angrist & Dercon, 2024; Banu et al., 2018; Sarker & Unzum, 2023). A key contributor to this disparity was the lack of consistent policy implementation; while the National Education Policy 2010 established common goals for elementary education, its actual implementation remained inconsistent (Arefin, 2022; Monia, 2020). The key objective of this study was therefore to examine the gaps between curriculum policy and classroom practice in implementing quality primary education in Bangladesh.

2. Literature Review

Prior research on school facilities and educational quality revealed both areas of convergence and unresolved contradictions. Several studies agreed that facility conditions exerted only a limited influence on student learning, yet identified facilities as one of the few variables over which school authorities held total control, and accordingly recommended that lawmakers and school authorities work tirelessly to assure facility quality (Buckley et al., 2004; Kowalski, 2002). This position was contested by Picus et al. (2005), who argued that because building, maintaining, and renovating facilities was quite expensive, it could be more economical to allocate that spending elsewhere. This absence of agreement across the research community impaired the ability of policymakers, the legal system, and practical educators to make informed choices, underscoring the need for a clearer grasp of the impacts of facility conditions on teaching and learning delivery before the cost-effectiveness of facility investments could be meaningfully assessed.

A second cluster of studies focused on teacher and classroom conditions. Lowe (1990) found that climate control, acoustics, and the availability and caliber of classroom furniture and equipment were the most significant elements influencing instructors' teaching, a finding corroborated by Corcoran (1988), who linked poor working conditions to low morale, reduced effort and effectiveness in the classroom, teacher absenteeism, and decreased job satisfaction. Consistent with these findings, Stevenson (2001) reported that educators were drawn to schools with contemporary learning spaces rather than dilapidated, overcrowded ones.

A third set of studies established a direct link between facility conditions and student achievement. Earthman (2002) found that, even when the socioeconomic situation of students

was controlled for, an achievement gap of between 5 and 17 percentile points consistently existed between children in standard buildings and those in poor buildings. Building on this, Schneider (2002) identified six primary facility conditions with the greatest impact on academic achievement, encompassing both structural and aesthetic components.

Taken together, these studies revealed a contradiction between the recommendation to prioritize facility investment and questions raised about its cost-effectiveness relative to other spending, while offering limited nationally representative evidence linking facility conditions to instructional delivery. This gap justified the present study's use of survey data from a nationally representative sample of principals.

3. Methods

The primary and secondary sources of data would be the main focus of the study. The study would conduct in three union; 2 No. Mudaffargonj, 3No. Mudaffargonj, and Kalikapur Union under LaksamUpazilla, Comilla District. The study's expected sample size is 100 from each of the three unions. Thus, the minimum sample size for each union would be 30-35. Primary data gathering would primarily include citizens of the union as respondents. As a result, 100 residents, including at least 35 teachers and guardians from each union, would be chosen as primary respondents for the questionnaire survey. A total of 100 individuals from these unions would be chosen using a basic random selection method. Furthermore, data would be collected at the local level from four primary schools across three unions. Those schools are Rajapur Govt. Primary School, Sreeang Govt. Primary School, Kalikapur Govt. Primary School, Poranpur Primary School. For this research, data from primary and secondary sources would be consulted. Structured surveys, interviews, and observation would be the methods used to gather primary data and information. Secondary data for this study would be gathered from books, project records, yearly financial reports, different reports, and journals. Tabular analysis would be largely used for this investigation. To assess the quantitative data, simple descriptive statistics like average and percentage would be employed. The presentation of the qualitative data complies with the study's goal. The limitations of the study are to collect data from various school teachers, encounter some time constraints and a fear of school authorities. When we gather data from the guardian, encounter both time and habitation difficulties.

3.1. Analytical Framework of the Study

The satisfaction/quality rating ranged from one (excellent) to four (very little). This variable was reverse-coded to see if there is a positive relationship between facility conditions and instructional delivery. The domain with ten facility conditions was used to evaluate the quality of school facilities. The dependent variable was the total score for perceived facility conditions that interfered with instruction delivery. A four-point scale, with 1 denoting "not at all" and 4 denoting "major extent," was also used to quantify interference with the school's capacity to offer teaching. The instructional level, school size and location (city, suburb, or urban), poverty (free or reduced lunch), and the proportion of minority students were the control factors, often known as covariates or extraneous variables. The study design did not impose a priority assumption on the relative influence of independent variables and correlates on the delivery of education because of the divergent opinions in the literature about the impact of facility conditions (Duyar, 2010).

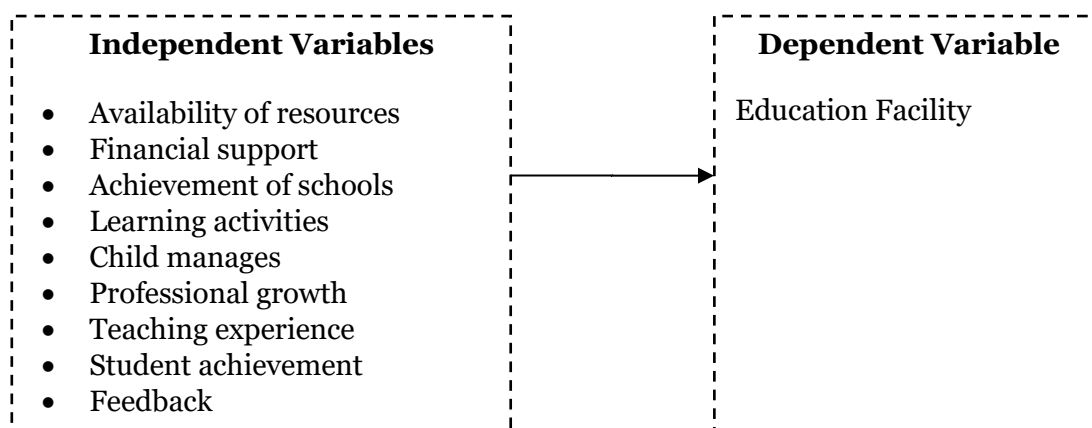


Figure 1. Analytical Framework

Source: Developed by the author based on Ibrahim Duyar, (2010)

4. Results and Discussion

There are several things that elementary school instructors need to be aware of. The research questions utilized in this study have been progressively revealed, together with the statistical conditions that now apply to the questions.

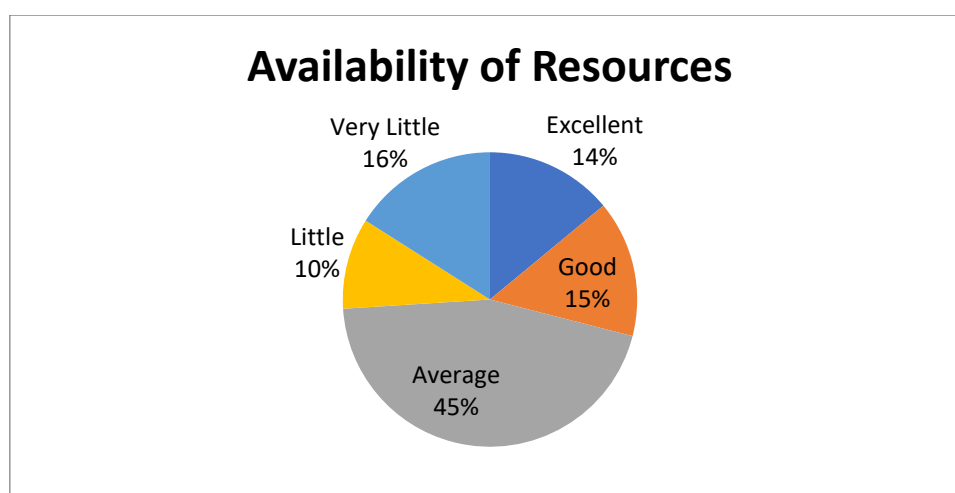


Figure 2. Availability of Resources

Source: Processed data (2023)

Figure 2 depicts the availability of resources. This question concerned the availability of resources. The graph demonstrates that the majority of the teachers (45%) received somewhat sufficient resources to instruct the students. And 15% of teachers are extremely happy with their ample resources. Here, 16% of respondents stated very little. They claim there are not enough resources to teach.

Table 1. The Level of Safety of Teaching (Views the Teacher)

Criteria	Percentage
Excellent	50%
Good	40%
Average	10%
Little	0%
Very Little	0%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 1 illustrates the level of instructional safety (as perceived by the teacher). This question concerned the safety of teaching. Respondents from both government and non-government (registered) primary schools were asked to provide feedback on the safety of teaching. 50% of respondents believe they are highly safe in their career as teachers, while 40% believe they are also very safe. A small percentage of respondents felt safe in their work; the majority were non-government elementary school teachers.

Table 2. Parents Pressure to Change their Children's Grade (Views the Teacher)

Criteria	Percentage
Extremely often	35%
Very often	50%
Somewhat often	10%
Not so often	5%
Not at all often	0%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 2 shows the parents pressure to change their children's grade (Views the Teacher). Parent's pressure is one of the determinants of attitudes towards primary education. By taking feedback from the teacher show that the parent's pressure is very much satisfactory. A substantial number of parents care about their children's education. On the subject of parental pressure, 50% of respondents answered very frequently, while 35% answered really frequently. Only 5% are not concerned about their child. But overall, the results are really outstanding.

Table 3. The Feedback of Principal and Teachers (Views the Teacher)

Criteria	Percentage
Excellent	35%
Good	40%
Average	10%
Little	10%
Very Little	5%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 3 displays the feedback from the principal and instructors. Respondent opinions indicate that communication between principals and teachers is good in this sector, reflecting a high level of educational administration. 40% of respondents rated the principal's feedback as good, and 35% rated it excellent. Only 5% said very little and did not agree with others, but the overall situation indicates that the feedback is satisfactory.

Table 4. Administration Support (Views the Teacher)

Criteria	Percentage
Excellent	5%
Good	10%
Average	30%
Little	35%
Very Little	20%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 4 demonstrates administration support (Views of the Teacher). In the question of administrative assistance, respondents' opinions indicate that administration and school management are not particularly cooperative with teachers about the quality of education management. About 35% believed it was too little. The other 20% are dissatisfied with the

administrative support. Overall, 30% of respondents responded averagely because the help was practically adequate. The all-over scenario is not appeasement. The government and local management should look into these.

Table 5. Parents Support (Views the Teacher)

Criteria	Percentage
Excellent	15%
Good	35%
Average	30%
Little	15%
Very Little	5%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 5 illustrates the parents' support (Views of the Teacher). This question was on the parental support for their children. The study found that parents generally support teachers in improving their children's education quality. 35% of respondents stated positive, while others were very interested in assistance. Here, the primary school management system successfully collaborated with the guardians.

Table 6. The Level of Support (Views the Teacher)

Criteria	Percentage
Excellent	10%
Good	35%
Average	30%
Little	15%
Very Little	10%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 6 shows the student support (Views the Teacher). In order to deliver high-quality instruction, teachers and staff receive adequate support and inspiration. 35% of respondents said they have enough support regarding student support. 30% think they have a moderate number of supports.

Table 7. The Level of Achievement of School (Views the Teacher)

Criteria	Percentage
Excellent	25%
Good	30%
Average	20%
Little	15%
Very Little	10%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The table 7 shows the level of achievement of the school. It is apparent that student accomplishment is not very high. Some schools are average (around 20%). However, the majority of schools are outside of government laws and regulations. The schools should be under government control.

Table 8. The Level of Collaboration (Views the Teacher)

Criteria	Percentage
Extremely well	50%
Very well	40%
Somewhat well	10%
Not so well	0%
Not at all well	0%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Here the table 8 shows the level of collaboration. The teacher has excellent behavior control. Teachers at every institution work closely together. 50% believe that their involvement in cluster meetings contributes to their pleasure in providing teaching.

Table 9. Teaching Experience (Views the Teacher)

Criteria	Percentage
Excellent	5%
Good	20%
Average	25%
Little	30%
Very Little	20%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 9 depicts the teaching experience (Views of the Teacher). The inquiry concerned the teacher's teaching experience. The results demonstrate that instructors' satisfaction levels are average (25% and 30%). Students who work at government schools are highly delighted with their experiences.

Table 10. Financial Assistance (Views the Teacher)

Criteria	Percentage
Excellent	10%
Good	10%
Average	15%
Little	45%
Very Little	20%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 10 illustrates the financial support (per the teacher's perspective). According to the respondent's perspective, the majority of teachers (45%) are pleased with their financial assistance. Teacher satisfaction is the most important aspect in quality education management.

Table 11. Interest to School (Views of the Student)

Criteria	Percentage
Very Little	10%
Little	27%
Average	20%
Good	36%
Excellent	7%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 11 indicates that the majority of pupils showed average to excellent interest in attending school, with only 37% reporting little or very little interest. However, the presence

of a notable proportion with low interest suggests that, with a little work, more students can show enthusiasm for attending school. Class and education management should find school administration more appealing.

Table 12. Students Efforts (Views of the Student)

Criteria	Percentage
Very Little	10%
Little	27%
Average	20%
Good	36%
Excellent	7%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 12 indicates the students' efforts (according to the student). The data analysis results indicate students invest modest effort. Only 36% of students are eager to work hard on their studies. 27% say it requires a little effort. The primary education administration authority strives to make the school more attractive to students.

Table 13. Activities of Student (Views of the Student)

Criteria	Percentage
Very Little	7%
Little	30%
Average	46%
Good	10%
Excellent	7%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 13 depicts the students' activities. The data shows that most students (30%-46%) accomplish their home activities with reasonable ease, while a small percentage (7%-10%) show little interest. Overall, the picture is good for rural areas.

Table 14. Level of Interested to Read Funny Books (Views of the Student)

Criteria	Percentage
Very Little	3%
Little	17%
Average	40%
Good	23%
Excellent	17%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

As Table 14 illustrates, children's interest in funny books ranged from moderate to strong, with 40% rating it average, a positive sign for their future reading habits.

Table 15. Children's Emotion (Views of the Student)

Criteria	Percentage
Very Little	20%
Little	10%
Average	33%
Good	20%
Excellent	17%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 15 illustrates the children's emotions (student views). Respondent comments reveal that students are quite good at managing their own emotions. It is critical to control emotions in a school and educational setting. Teachers should consult on this subject.

Table 16. Learning Activities (Views of the Student)

Criteria	Percentage
Very Little	6%
Little	27%
Average	27%
Good	30%
Excellent	10%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

As Table 16 shows, many students are introverts unwilling to share information with teachers and parents, harming educational quality. Additionally, 27% find students only occasionally mindful of learning, accounting for lapses in sincerity.

Table 17. Motivation in Class (Views of the Student)

Criteria	Percentage
Very Little	4%
Little	16%
Average	26%
Good	20%
Excellent	34%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

As Table 17 demonstrates, 34% of students are very motivated and 26% moderately inspired by teachers. Hence, administration and instructors ought to encourage the children, since such motivation aids emotional well-being and academic achievement.

Table 18. Feedback of Students (Views of the Student)

Criteria	Percentage
Very Little	17%
Little	33%
Average	20%
Good	23%
Excellent	7%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

As shown in Table 18, student feedback includes very poor responses: 33% of respondents offered scant commentary on input quality, and 17% were dissatisfied. The administration and guardians ought to attend to these comments.

Table 19. Learning Activities (Views of the Student)

Criteria	Percentage
Very Little	13%
Little	10%
Average	44%
Good	20%
Excellent	13%

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 19 depicts the learning activities (student perspectives). We all know that children like to be self-sufficient and do things their own way. The research also showed that they always prefer to operate individually. In terms of learning activities, 44% reported an average. The majority have exhibited an interest in their own reliance. The school administration and instructors should assign home assignments to expand their knowledge.

4.1. Summary of the Findings

The local organization doesn't put much effort into standardizing the quality of education. Many children go to school, but their knowledge is still limited since there aren't enough qualified teachers, effective curricula, or current teaching techniques. As a result, their primary education system is still inadequate, and its effects are becoming more apparent even in higher education. In order to preserve the caliber of education management systems, the government authority does not have a schedule for educating local authorities. The majority of teachers claimed that their schools had enough resources, but they are all antiquated and nontechnical. On the other hand, students frequently find attending to be uncomfortable; this is a significant problem if both the attendance rate and the dropout rate increase. Additionally, the curriculum and syllabus management system are always evolving, which makes it challenging for educators and learners to adapt to the new system. Furthermore, the education management organization does not provide sufficient training. Additionally, a lot of children have trouble understanding fundamental ideas in science, math, and English. They could not understand simple mathematical calculations when they were accepted into universities. At the elementary level, children are even less exposed to the foundations of science and technology. Their elementary school foundation was never solid, which accounts for the majority of the gaps.

5. Conclusion

Primary school is the initial source of knowledge for all youngsters. Primary education is essential for building a country of educated citizens. If restricted quality management is the foundational stage, the country's educational trajectory will follow suit. If their learning foundation is not robust from an early age, they will struggle to fill gaps in the following stage of education, let alone in professional life. In the long run, it reduces their competitiveness in the labor market. However, digital learning, robotics, and coding have already been used at the elementary level in India. Children in China are encouraged to participate in scientific research, inquiry, and creative thinking from a young age. The moment has come for Bangladesh to update and modernize its primary school curriculum.

Based on the study's findings, the researcher recommends that the District Education Office provide ongoing training to support the adoption of new systems. And school instructors meet with parents since primary school pupils rely heavily on their parents. Specific criteria and norms should be established for the local education management authority, which oversees local management and has qualifications in education, social work, and dignity. Guardians should prioritize their children's desires and apply pressure based on their wants. In order to get the students interested in attending class, teachers need to make their lessons funnier and more fascinating. So, the management authorities should keep in mind that children are the next generation of humans, so please keep the standard of education high while focusing on their minds and create an engaging and high-quality learning environment for them. Addressing the policy-practice gap requires a multi-faceted approach. Strengthening the implementation environment necessitates robust monitoring and supervision mechanisms at various administrative levels. Government should be offered

handsome the salaries of primary teachers, so that talented individuals are motivated to join the profession; ensure that teacher pedagogical training satisfies international norms. To close the gap, update the curriculum to encourage creativity, science, and technology to enhance productivity, and reduces inequality. This involves ensuring proper oversight of instructional facilities, teacher performance, and adherence to educational policies. The successful implementation of policies also requires balancing fidelity to an intervention's core components with thoughtful adaptation to local contexts.

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