

Practices of Social Inclusion in the Secondary School Classrooms: A Look into Selective Schools from Dhaka City

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Abstract

This research sought to examine the real practices of social inclusion within selected secondary schools in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This study adopted the ‘sociological response’ and ‘curricular approach’ as the theoretical framework for inclusive education. This study considered classroom practices as a ‘mesosystem’ while the students were considered members of an ‘ecological system’. Qualitative methodology was used to collect in-depth data from three secondary schools and the data was interpreted according to different themes of school policy and class practices of social inclusion. To some extent schools are practicing inclusive education which promotes social inclusion in the school culture. Schools have a responsibility to ensure effective practices of inclusive education within the school premises as well as in the classrooms. These findings seem to suggest that social science teachers will need ongoing training and guidance to ensure inclusive practices which are not maintained with respect to classroom management, teaching and learning, interaction and assessment of students in order to contribute to student learning and development in the long run.

Keywords

Classroom Practices, Social Inclusion, Secondary School

I. Introduction

In the Constitution of the people’s republic of Bangladesh it is stated that the State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of “relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs” (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2010, Article 17.b). The state also “shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race caste, sex or place of birth” (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2010, Article 28.1). From the constitutional provision the necessity of inclusive education has emerged as “inclusive education is concerned with removing all barriers to learning and with the participation of all learners vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization” (UNESCO, 1998 as cited in Puri & Abraham, 2007, p. 25). So “inclusion must be about the inclusion of all” (Clough & Corbett, 2002, p. xiii). In this regard, National Education Policy (2010) emphasis is to “remove socio-economic discrimination irrespective of race, religion and creed and to eradicate gender disparity; to develop non-communalism, friendliness, global fraternity, fellow-feeling and respect for human rights” (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2010, p. 1). Also it is imperative “to create unhindered and equal opportunities of education for all as per learners’ talents and aptitudes, irrespective of geographical, social and economical situations to establish a society that is free from discrimination” (MoE, 2010, p. 1).

Inclusive education is “a strategy approach designed to facilitate learning success for all children” (UNESCO, 1998 as cited in Puri & Abraham, 2007, p. 25) and to “take special measures for the development of education of the backward classes of the country” (MoE, 2010, p. 3). Because, “it addresses the common goals of

decreasing and overcoming all exclusion from the human right to education” (UNESCO, 1998 as cited in Puri & Abraham, 2007, p. 25). In other words, the aim of inclusive education is to establish social inclusion as well as “eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability” (Vitello & Mithaug, 1998 as cited in Ainscow, 2004, p. 2).

Social inclusion “involves social learning processes within a given workplace that influence people’s actions and, indeed, the thinking that informs these actions” (Ainscow, 2004, p. 5). However, “there is also an imperative to consider how far social inclusion is actually developing” (Bartkett & Burton, 2007, p. 233). Booth (1987) was concerned to examine:

the way in which schools can respond to and reflect the diversity of their pupils... how both an integration principle and a comprehensive principle can be elucidated by being linked to a principle of equality of value. In schools which operate according to such principles, attempts are made to reduce devaluation of pupils according to their sex, background, colour, economics or class position, ability, disability or attainment. (pp. viii-ix)

Daniels (1996) work on social inclusion focused on understanding the relationships between organizational structures and process, pedagogical process and individual functioning. Which “aim at effecting a positive change of learners’ attitudes through the acquisition of knowledge, skills and human values” (MoE, 2010, p. 62) through the education system. Along with other stakeholders (both organizational and individual), the institution itself and teachers are key role players for facilitating inclusive practices. The following definition offered by Sebba and Ainscow (1996) highlights the role of the institution and its educators in inclusive practices by suggesting that:

Inclusion describes the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering its curricular organization and provision. Through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all pupils from the local community who wish to attend and, in so doing, reduces the need to exclude pupils. (p. 9)

“Regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.” (UNESCO, 1994, Salamanca Statement, Art. 2). Regular or general schools can respond to ‘social inclusion’ through its policies and practices. Schools, as organizations, should have some policies to address inclusivity and practitioners need to work to establish these practices in the school as well as in the classroom. The focus of this study was on inclusive classroom practices. It could be suggested that these practices reflect the whole scenario of policies and practices within the school system. Observations of classroom activities also create opportunities to explore gaps between the policies and practices and the reasons behind it.

II. Theoretical Framework

Among the ‘five key perspectives’ of the theory of inclusive education presented by Clough and Corbett (2002), the ‘sociological response’ and ‘curricular approaches’ were used as the theoretical frameworks of this study. The ‘sociological response’ sees children as the outcome of social processes and focuses on the analysis of schools and society and the ‘curricular approach’ offers practical advice to teachers in classrooms. Classroom practice was considered as an element of the ‘mesosystem’ of the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner for this study. “Bronfenbrenner’s model emphasized that the developing person is embedded in a series of environmental systems that interact with one another and the person which influences development” (Shaffer, 2005, p. 84).

From the sociological response perspective “inclusive is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end, and that end is creating an inclusive society... This is well beyond an issue of disablement; it is about the removal of all forms of oppression...” (Barton, in interview, 1998 cited in Clough & Corbett, 2002, p. 16). On the other hand, curricular approaches contribute in the development of curriculum and teaching approaches and help to foster a more inclusive school culture (Clough & Corbett, 2002).

Thus, social inclusion is a process as well as an outcome of inclusive education. Through the practices or processes of social inclusion within the classroom, inclusive education may be ensured. The goal of inclusive education is to encourage inclusive behaviours in the learners in the present and in the future.

III. Conceptual Framework on Classroom Practices for Social Inclusion

In this study ‘classroom practices for social inclusion’ is a reflection of inclusive practices by the teacher in order to encourage within students a sense of belongingness within the classroom as well as supporting equitable participation and achievement by all students regardless of their identity and ability. As mentioned previously, the role of the teacher is crucial in the classroom for practicing social inclusion. Sakarneh (2004) reviewed research conducted by Westwood (1995), Stanovich and Jordan (1998), Englert (1983), Shanoski and Hranitz (1992), Hattie (2002), and Larrivee (1985) and discovered that an effective teacher in an inclusive classroom was also a good classroom manager who monitor the classroom and the students’ behaviour, correct student responses in a short period of time, give students positive feedback, take care of the students, support individual differences, use different teaching strategies, motivate students, respect students and have a high level of presentation skill.

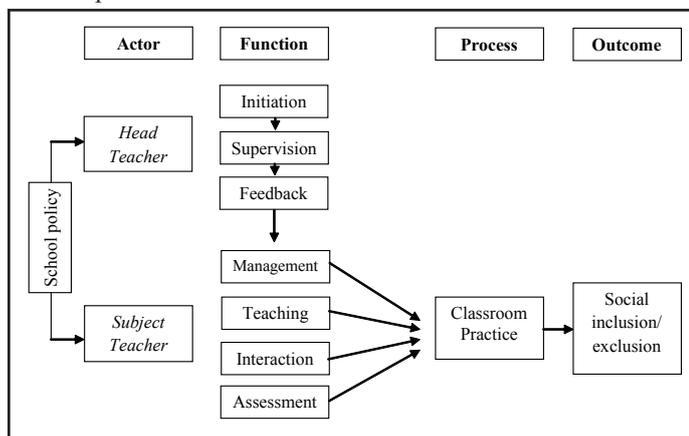


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework on Classroom Practices for Social Inclusion

This seems to suggest that classroom practices for social inclusion is a combination of classroom management, teaching/learning methods and techniques, interaction (teacher-student and student-student) and assessment methods which “enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment, rather than a problem” (UNESCO, 2003, p. 7).

As practices of social inclusion “involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 13).

School policy in terms of social inclusion refers to the policies which contribute to “removing barriers and bringing all children together in school irrespective of their physical and mental abilities, or social and economic status, and securing their participation in learning activities leads to the initiation of the process of inclusive education” (Jha, 2002, pp. 15-16). Inclusive schools “must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities” (UNESCO, 1994, Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, pp. 11-12).

Gaps or deficits found within these policies and educators who fail to initiate inclusive learning spaces are at risk of creating exclusive not inclusive environments within the institution.

IV. Research Question and Objectives of the Study

The constitution (2010) and education policy (2010) of Bangladesh states that education should contribute to meeting the needs of society, removing socio-economic discrimination and creating respect for human rights. Secondary schools have a great responsibility to practice social inclusion through its activities in order to achieve these objectives. The research question for this study was ‘How secondary schools are practicing social inclusion in the classroom for contributing to and building the social behaviour of the students’? The objectives of the research were:

- To know school policy and practice regarding inclusive education; and
- To determine the extent to which social inclusion is being practiced in the classrooms.

V. Method

A. Research Method and Genre

As “qualitative, interpretive research is useful for describing and answer questions about participants and contexts... events, beliefs, or practices” (Gay & Airasian, 2003, p. 163), the study followed qualitative methods to understand the practices of social inclusion in the classroom as well as in the school context. The phenomenological approach gave us the opportunity to understand the lived experience of the participants and a deeper meaning of their experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

B. Research Site and Source of Information

In Bangladesh there are different types of secondary educational institutions i.e. General Secondary Schools, English Medium Secondary Schools, Technical and Vocational Schools and Dakhil Madrasha. Among those schools, we purposely selected three general secondary schools (which follow a similar curriculum) from Dhaka city confirming the variation of sources of funding

(Government, Private and MPO enlisted) and gender of the students (Girl's, Boy's and coeducation). Three social science classrooms of class eight, seven and six were selected from each of those schools. Dhaka is the capital of Bangladesh where a variety of people coming from different regions of the country come to live and where the secondary schools of this city have an opportunity to enrol pupils from many different sections of the population. As 'curricular approaches' for inclusive education focus on the framing of problems in the whole context, a systematic recognition of the experience of participants and the empirical monitoring and documentation of learning events and also the professional roles associated with inclusive education (Clough & Corbett, 2002), we considered a total of three head teachers, three social science teachers and three social science classrooms from each secondary schools as sources of information. For confirming the participation of all students before group selection (science, business studies or humanities) at class nine we selected class six to eight. This also gave us an opportunity to ensure the participation of students from all backgrounds. The general objectives of social science a secondary level curriculum have been given more focus on social inclusion than other subjects in this level. For this purpose we selected social science classrooms and teachers of those students as sources of information.

C. Data Collection, Ethical Consideration and Data Analysis

Giving the emphasis on school culture and classroom practices for the social inclusion theoretical frameworks underpinning this study it was important to recognize the individual experiences of participants, to observe the teaching learning process and the social processes to find any issues within the whole contextual learning environment (Clough & Corbett, 2002 and Shaffer, 2005). We used open-ended interviews to collect data from three head teachers and nine social science teachers from different grades (class six to eight) from three schools. During each interview we gave the interviewee a generous amount of freedom in his or her responses by encouraging them to explore at depth each question. We also conducted observational research within each classroom in order to observe the classroom activities of the social science teachers with whom we interviewed. Observations usually consisted of "detailed notation of behaviours, events and the contexts surrounding the events and behaviours" (Best & Kahn, 2005, p. 254). We spent a total of fifteen days exploring the perception and practices of each of the participants.

Through this study we tried to find out the perspective of school teachers from the practice point of view and the issues and challenges that they faced within the educational context. At first we explained the objectives of the research and rationale behind selecting them to be interviewed and observed within the classroom setting. We also discussed with the participants how our research findings would be shared with them. Participation in this study was completely voluntary and all participants had the right to withdraw themselves at any time from this study. We were sensitive to their personal vulnerability and agreed to keep their individual identities confidential.

For this study, 'ecological systems theory' along with 'the sociological response' and 'curricular approaches' of inclusive education gave us the opportunity to find out the different themes of social inclusion within classroom practices. After collecting data we organized the data according to the following themes, described the various relevant aspects of the study and then interpreted the data.

VI. Discussion

This section presents a discussion of the findings from the study regarding school policy and classroom practices with respect to inclusive practices within the educational system. When we were looking at school policies for social inclusion at the time of data collection, head teachers were discussing student merit, socio-economic, religion and cultural background for admission issues, co-curricular activities, and equity and equality factors for student participation at school as well as classroom activities. This section presents the classroom practices by the social science teachers according to the conceptual framework of the study. Here we present the perceptions and experiences of the subject teachers as well as the head teachers in relation to the activities that were observed in the classrooms.

A. School policy

1. Merit of the Student

Students from different merits are enrolling in all types of General Secondary Schools at Dhaka city in Bangladesh. Before 2011, schools had an admission test system for student admission. Now schools are using the 'lottery system', which is a provision declared by the Ministry of Education, to ensure the inclusion of all students regardless of their merit. Though the head teacher of a school views it from a different perspective. According to head teachers, this system does not allow them to admit only meritorious students which creates a major problem when dealing with student diversity by subject teachers. Many of those students are first generation learners and many subject teachers do not get sufficient time to meet the learning needs of all students. But according to Dixon and Verenikina (2007) "inclusive schools try to provide a complete education to all students who are enrolled" (p. 193).

In these schools the average teacher-student ratio is 1:60 but the National Education Policy (2010) suggested that for admitting students the teacher-student ratio needs to be considered and schools should not admit students violating the suggested standard ratio (1:30). Other head teachers found the lottery system as an opportunity for them to include diverse students. While researching social inclusion in secondary schools in Bangladesh Islam and Rashid (2012) found that most students had a positive attitude about their schools. According to couple of head teachers, in the Junior School Certificate (JSC) and Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination their school would not be able to do as well as what they had done before the lottery system was introduced. Head teachers and other teachers are responsible for having to explain why students are not doing well to the school governing body and the parents. The result of these public examinations creates a huge amount of tension in their professional life.

2. Socio-economic Class

Students from different economic and social classes have the scope for enrolling in different types (government, private and MPO enlisted) of secondary schools in Dhaka city. In the government secondary schools most of the students come from high or middle income families. The parents of those students are mainly government officers, a few of them are from low income families. Tuition fees for government schools are lower than private schools where most of the students come from high income families. In the private school there are no provisions for waiving tuition fees whereas government and MPO enlisted schools have some provisions in this area. Government schools consider the application of those students who are from low income families

and are facing problems with continued studies and the MPO enlisted schools grant some tuition fee waivers to those students from low income families who do well in final examinations. The National Education Policy (2010) suggested “to make efforts to mitigate discriminations among various secondary educational institutions and among various socio-economic, ethnic and socially backward groups” (p. 13) and to increase the stipend for poor and meritorious students in secondary level. The structure of the tuition fee and other fees as well as facilities for the students, regarding the private cost of education, is structured according to the parent’s financial capacity. However, the intention to include all students in secondary schools, regardless of socio-economic background in Dhaka, is not being implemented in the true sense.

3. Religion and Cultural Background

Students from all religions (Islam, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist) and cultural (Bangalese and ethnic communities) backgrounds living in Bangladesh are getting the same opportunity for admission in different types of secondary schools though some of the quota is being reserved for a generation of freedom fighters within government schools. Ratios of whole populations are being reflected in the students of the schools regarding religion i.e. most of the students are Muslim whereas Hindu students are in second position. We found few Christian and Buddhist students in these schools and this is reflective of the whole population of Bangladesh. We found very few ethnic students in the secondary schools. Head teachers stated that there are no separate policies regarding religion and cultural background when admitting students into secondary schools and that they looked at all of the admission seekers through the same lance. One of the head teachers told us that they rarely received applications from ethnic students for admission as the number of ethnic people is few in Dhaka city. Also, that they tended to come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and that their families could provide few facilities to support them getting a secondary education. The World Conference also realized this situation when it argued that a school should “...accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, linguistic or other conditions” (UNESCO, 1994, p. 6).

Article 28(3) of the Constitution of Bangladesh also suggested not discriminating any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth to get admission to any educational institution (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2010). In this regard, school policy is inclusive and school administration also follows the policy of inclusion without looking at the background of the students. One of the head teachers mentioned that if there was more provisions and facilities for the underprivileged students then more involvement of ethnic communities could be possible and one of the aims of the National Education Policy (2010) is to create equal opportunities of education for all learners irrespective of their geographical and social situations in order to establish a discrimination free society.

4. Co-curricular Activities

Schools have some arrangements for students to participate in co-curricular activities. Through these activities students are getting the opportunity to experience social inclusion. According to Ainscow, inclusive education is “a social process which engages people in trying to make sense of their experience and helping one another to question their experience and their context to see how things can be moved forward” (Clough & Corbett, 2002, p. 41). In this regard, head teachers along with other teachers receive initiatives to include students in activities according to

their interests. These activities allow students to get involved and to share their experiences with other students. In the private school sector there are five (cultural, social, environmental, science and debating) clubs and each student is expected to be a member of any two of these clubs. But the students who are doing well academically are less inclined to participate because it demands more time at school which may hamper their academic result.

Government and MPO enlisted schools have annual programmes on cultural and sporting events for students. School authorities announce the date of these programmes and interested students can participate in those events but there is no regular activity on these issues and also these events are not mandatory for all students to participate in. The National Education Policy (2010) also did not make co-curricular activities mandatory for all students but instead asked that they be encouraged to take part in these extra-curricular activities i.e. sports, debate, reading, essay competition, publication of magazines etc. According to the head teachers, most of the students of these schools are not taking the opportunity to participate in co-curricular activities and their socialisation process is not similar compared with other students who are participating. We found playgrounds for the students in the three visited schools and the National Education Policy (2010) also suggested taking “necessary steps to create facilities of sports, games and physical exercises in all educational institutions for the healthy growth of the physical and mental qualities of the learners” (p. 3). School policies and practices for co-curricular activities are not the same for all general secondary schools in Dhaka city and those schools who have playgrounds and other facilities are not taking the necessary steps for making these activities mandatory for all the students. As a result students are not receiving the benefits of being involved in the social processes that can happen in co-curricular activities.

5. Equity and Equality

Schools also have some policies to ensure equality and to some extent equity for all students. National Curriculum (2012) gives emphasises the need to remove discrimination in terms of gender and other issues. In this regard, head teachers are playing an important role because “inclusive schooling is part of school change and effective school leadership programs” (Dixon & Verenikina, 2007, p. 193). To ensure gender equality in coeducation schools a quota system (girls and boys 50:50) has been developed for each class. One particular head teacher of a school told us that subject teachers are also instructed on how to show an unbiased attitude regarding a gender sensitive topic or matter and also behaviour. According to the head teachers of all visited schools, they often arrange meetings with other teachers to explore the requirements of those students with special (physical, mental and learning) needs and to find a way to meet those needs. They also mentioned that they visited the classroom to supervise inclusive practices within the classroom and to give necessary feedback to the teachers. Rouse (2006) suggested that developing effective inclusive teaching practices is not only about extending teachers’ knowledge, but it is also about encouraging them to do things differently and getting them to reconsider their attitudes and beliefs. The head teacher from one of the government schools said that most of the teachers of that school had training in inclusive education. Other head teachers told about the importance of training educators on inclusive practices as many of them did not have training in this area. The National Education Policy (2010) also suggested training teachers to make them better skilled at creating an equal opportunity learning environment for all students irrespective of their backgrounds.

In private secondary schools there is a provision to support students who, for various reasons, are not able to maintain the same learning pace as their classmates. While one head teacher spoke of the importance of 'learning supports for special needs children' but he also stated that other head teachers from other schools did not share this view. According to them, teachers are instructed to give special care to the comparatively weak students in regular class time. The process of cooperative learning with other students and keeping students in after regular class time was perceived as a form of punishment to the students. All of the head teachers told that as the majority of the students of their schools were adolescents, they were very concerned about the socialisation process of their students and of them achieving good behaviour. Whitney (2007) suggested that "schools should have policies, procedures and staff training in place that will both promote good behaviour and prevent bad behaviour" (p. 45). National Educational Policy (2010) also gives emphasis to caution the students and make them aware of the dangers of taking drugs or similar items (p. 3). To some extent head teachers face problems to meet needs of all students e.g. we found one guardian who requested head teacher for changing shift of the school because of his son's (student) health issue. The head teacher was not able to do any favour and showed his unbiased attitudes to all students who had the same problems acknowledging his limitations. Here, the head teacher showed the equal attitude to all of the students but the practice of equity was not reflected.

B. Classroom Practices

1. Classroom Management

In the classrooms two to three students were sitting in each bench and average 60 students were in the visited classrooms. Though teacher and blackboard were visible to all students, we found some students who were shorter than others were sitting in the back benches. "In a well-designed classroom, the teacher can see all the students and they can all see the teacher. The students can also see presentations and displays such as agendas, behavioural expectations, strategy posters, and information on the board. Everyone can move about freely" (Manitoba education, 2011, p. 17). Head teachers mentioned about their direction to the subject teachers for effective classroom management through proper sitting arrangement and special care for the special need learners. They also told about their supervision during the regular class hours to observe the classroom management scenario. One social science teacher talked about a 'class monitor' from the students who can manage the whole class regarding seating arrangement. While other social science teachers mentioned that they take extra care during the teaching learning period for the comparatively weak students by encouraging them to ask questions and give answers.

On the other hand one head teacher told that managing a class consisting of sixty to seventy students is not an easy task. But all of the participants of the study told that their classroom management and support in this regard always ensure the full participation of all students in the classrooms, though in the classroom observation we did not find the full engagement of the students in teaching learning process. Islam and Rashid (2012) also found that "students, on average, are inclined towards agreeing that they are socially included in the classrooms, though there is significant variability in their perception. Some of the students in a classroom have a strong feeling of being included and integrated in the classroom; while some also strongly feel being excluded" (p. 37).

2. Teaching Methods

To ensure inclusion of all students head teachers as well as social science teachers emphasised on different teaching methods which are really engage students in the classroom activities. They also told about their lacking in training on teaching learning methods. According to Sakarneh (2004) in an inclusive classroom "teachers must be especially skilled in organization, management, appropriate teaching strategies and behavior management among other things" (p. 1). National Curriculum (2012) asked ensuring cooperative learning through different activities i.e. discussion, group works, story writing, drawing, debates, role play, practical work, question-answer, demonstration etc. In this regard teachers are crucial to cater for different student learning needs through the modification of the curriculum (Forlin, 2004).

National Curriculum (2012) also highlighted the role of teacher for applying appropriate teaching-learning methods, techniques and teaching aids. All of the social science teachers mentioned that they use group work method to ensure students' engagement in the classroom activities. One of them mentioned about question-answer techniques in this regard. But in the observed classroom we did not find any group work or other activities for engaging students. We found teachers are following the textbooks, asking the students to read from the textbook loudly and encouraging them to memorise those texts. Teachers were not trying to find out the students who are unable to learn according to their instructions and not helping the less advanced learners as well. But teachers thought that their teaching methods are fruitful to build-up social behaviour among the students and these are also meeting individual learning needs of the learners. But inclusive schools use variety of innovative practices to get children involved and participating in learning processes (Jha, 2002).

National Curriculum (2012) also suggested to think "as every individual is unique, so is every learner. Each learner has her/his own learning style. So learning becomes easy for learners if necessary cooperation is provided. However, this cooperation should address the individual need" (p.17). According to one head teacher, as the teacher student ratio is so high and the school resources (human and material) are very limited, teachers are constantly challenged to make learning activities flexible enough to engage each student. "The challenge confronting the inclusive school is that of developing a child-centred pedagogy capable of successfully educating all children" (UNESCO, 1994, p. 6). UNESCO (2003) also finds out that in the countries of the South, "the major constraint is the serious shortage of resources – lack of schools or inadequate facilities, lack of teachers and/or shortage of qualified staff, lack of learning materials and absence of support" (p.13). But "having preparation beforehand and applying appropriate method and technique, a teacher can achieve learning outcomes with less efforts and time" (NCTB, 2012, p. 17).

3. Teacher-Student and Student-Student Interaction

Social science teachers did not ensure proper interaction for the whole class. Topics of the observed classrooms were 'election', 'child right' and 'social problems in Bangladesh' where effective interactions are expected in the National Curriculum (2012). All of the teachers followed the lecture method to conduct their classes. But for achieving learning outcomes class teacher's active cooperation is the most important factor (NCTB, 2012). 'Electing a class monitor through election process' is one of the teaching learning methods described in the National Curriculum (2012) for the topic 'election' but the teacher did not follow any of the mentioned teaching methods described in the curriculum.

But according to the teacher of that classroom, “I always conduct classes in such a way which ensure interaction among the students and with me”.

According to Boer, Pijl and Minnaert (2011), “teachers are seen as key persons to implement inclusive education” (p. 331). We found eye contacts of the teachers were good enough but the teachers did not engage each and every one to express their views. Only one social science teacher asked few students from the front benches to write the social problems of Bangladesh on the blackboard. But rest of the students were not able to express their views and experiences and also their curiosities for learning if they had any of those as they were not asked to participate. As none of the teachers involved students in group work or any other activities, students did not find any scope to share their views and experiences to their peers regarding the topic of those classes and also unable to get the benefits of peer-learning i.e. learning cooperation, socialisation and removing learning difficulties. But for inclusive education “the teacher–student relationship is extremely important and takes time and trust to build. Both parties must believe they are being treated with dignity and respect, and there must be a balance between the teacher’s role as classroom leader and his or her expression of interest in each student” (Manitoba education, 2011, p. 8).

Furthermore, “teacher’s positive attitude to learners is very important in education. The teacher-student relation should be such so that a student can easily discuss any family or personal problem with a teacher as she or he does about the classroom related issues without any hesitation. The teacher would suggest ways and help for the student as much as she or he can. There should not be any wall between a teacher and a student. This relation will be based on affection, respect and cordiality” (NCTB, 2012, p. 18).

4. Assessment

The classrooms we observed were almost same regarding formative assessment. Teachers followed question-answer to assess the learning progress of the students. Teachers asked questions for classroom assessment to the whole class or those students who seated in the front benches. Some of the students did not respond at all and teachers also did not identify them as excluded in the classroom. But National Curriculum (2012) suggested “introducing formative assessment to identify learners’ weak areas and taking remedial measures accordingly” (p. 10) and the effective teacher in the inclusive classroom ensures equity in assessment (Jha, 2002), provides positive feedback; and in general provides support for the students with and without disabilities (Larrivee, 1985 cited in Sakarneh, 2004). Social science teachers appreciated those students who answered correctly but did not arrange any special group work for non-participating students identifying their weakness through formative assessment. After getting the appreciation from the teachers participating students were happy and they seem encouraged to answer more questions in the classroom. As “positive reinforcement also helps to build positive relationships by modelling appropriate ways of interacting with others” (Manitoba education, 2011, p. 45) and this is a very important element of social inclusion. National Curriculum (2012) also finds out the positive aspects of formative assessment as “the affective aspects of learners especially their individual and social behaviour, values etc can be done in formative assessment for further corrections” (p. 26). But as there is no variation in the formative assessment practice except practicing question-answer technique in the social science classrooms, teachers also did not assess the affective aspects of the learners and there is no assessment of social inclusion and support for that.

VII. Recommendations and Conclusion

Secondary schools in Dhaka city are enrolling all students irrespective of their merit through their admission policy. Lottery system should be continued and monitored whether the students are enrolling irrespective of their merit or not. School administration should not only focus on the result of School Certificate examinations but also on the inclusion of students of all merit. Head teachers and subject teachers should have a room to say about the learning of the students according to their merits but they should not be worried to answer to the school governing body why the grades of all students are not excellent.

Although secondary education is not compulsory and free in Bangladesh, schools should adapt such a policy that ensures the enrolment of students from all social and economic background for removing discrimination among secondary educational institutions. In this regard tuition and other fees can be determined according to the income of the family of secondary level students.

As the population ratio of different religion (Islam, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist) and culture (Bangalese and ethnic communities) are not equal in Dhaka city, it is obvious that the student ratio regarding religion and cultural background of students might be unequal in the secondary schools. But to practice equity policy, schools can adapt a provision of quota system for admitting students from different religion and cultural background according to their proportion in the country.

Co-curricular activities in the school involve students in the process of social inclusion beyond the classroom activities and it has a positive impact on students’ learning. Schools should continue arranging different co-curricular activities for students’ participation and engagement according to their interest. Schools those have different clubs (cultural, social, environmental, science and debating) for involving students in co-curricular activities as mandatory approach according to the interest of students, they should continue their efforts and the schools which do not have this type of arrangement should adapt these activities. At the same time it should be ensured that co-curricular activities will not create any obstacle to their study and these activities will not have any pressure of being graded.

School administration should work for establishing a school culture which promotes social inclusion in the school policy and in the classroom practices. The policy of the school with coeducation for admitting boys and girls maintaining the equal ratio is a good example of gender balance and this type of unbiased attitude should be maintained at the time of teaching and involving students in other school activities. Students should have a scope to report to the head teacher and school governing body if there is any chance of discrimination as well as exclusion in the school practices or teachers’ attitude and activities. Schools those have several shifts can adapt a policy to address the health and family issues of the students and accommodate them to the appropriate shift after assessing their actual needs.

Schools should take proper initiatives to implement the suggestions of National Education Policy for admitting students and maintaining the teacher student ratio (1:30) for each class. Otherwise there might be a huge chance of exclusion of students in the classroom activities. Teachers need to be very careful regarding the sitting arrangement of the students according to their height, visual, listening and learning ability. For this purpose teachers can nominate a class representative (monitor) from the students to ensure proper sitting arrangement according to their guideline before the class starts. Teachers need to understand the importance of an inclusive classroom for enhancing students’ learning level and to establish

an inclusive society as well. Teachers should follow or find out such mechanisms which ensure social inclusion in the classroom. In this regard, proper training and motivational support should be provided to the teachers. Teachers should follow multiple ways of teaching learning and different methods i.e. discussion, group work, drawing, role play, debate, demonstration, question answer etc according to the relevance of lesson. To implement any successful inclusive lesson plan, teachers should take preparation beforehand. In this regard, teachers can get the suggestions from the National Curriculum to design their lessons. Subject teachers should encourage students to share their views to their peers and accept others views expressed in the classroom to foster inclusive practice in the classroom.

In the classroom teachers should identify the learning level of the students and at the time of formative assessment they should encourage slow learners to participate more in that process. Teachers should avoid the traditional practice of asking questions only to the front benchers or to the whole class. They should follow-up the students and their level of participation and pickup technically those who did not participate in the previous round. Teachers should continue appreciating those students who do well in the classroom and give positive feedback who try to participate for making all students understand that all of them are included in the classroom. Special group work should be arranged by the teacher to support slow learners after identifying their learning needs. Teachers should also adapt some strategies to assess students' affective aspects of learning and working together.

Teachers need to be trained to adapt diverse teaching and assessment methods to meet the learning needs of all students within the short and fixed class time. Schools can arrange workshop for the teachers on developing lesson plan and improvised teaching learning materials for inclusive education. Teachers should be trained for understanding student psychology and implementing inclusive behaviour in the classroom because teachers may not know which attitude and activity even a single word can exclude a student from the classroom as well as from the school.

Practice of social inclusion in the classroom and in the school system is about the change of whole school through incorporating the idea of 'inclusion' in the school policy, teacher development and classroom practices to remove all forms of discrimination and oppression and giving full opportunity to the students to explore themselves in the school environment. These practices will promote students' development for an inclusive society. As this study focused the school policy and classroom practices from the practitioners' perspective and observed only the classroom activities of several schools of Dhaka city, further study should be carried out in the field of social inclusion to find out the students' perception about social inclusion in the classrooms and schools from both urban and rural areas and ethnic as well as other small communities of Bangladesh.

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