

Innovations and Models of Good Practice in Education in Bangladesh

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Introduction

Education is unearthing the absolute humanity, manipulating every individual's intense openings, bonding between individual and society, interconnecting amidst people and nature, diminishing inequality between the literate and illiterate, harmonizing one's inner self with what is functional, expanding and cultivating knowledge-based imagination and beauty consciousness, prosperity, and totality in life through application of knowledge. - Rabindranath Tagore

The aim of this paper has been to locate 'state of the art' thinking on 'innovation' and models of 'good practice' in education in countries characterised as low-income or fragile, and to pay particular attention to non-formal education in Bangladesh. The paper will also identify and critique the innovative approaches the SHARE programme has adopted with a view to assessing to what extent these are good practice. Practical and feasible ways forward will also be suggested including opportunities for SHARE teachers and supervisors to engage in participatory action research. It is worth stating, at the outset, that definitive ideas concerning definitions of innovation or good practice are elusive and open to varying perspectives. This is important.

Innovation in education

- in•no•vate - v. To begin something new: introduce.
- in•no•va•tion - n. 1. The act of innovating. 2. Something that is new or unusual³.
- '...the real essence of innovation is fresh thinking that leads to value creation...".Vijay Vaitheeswaran (2007)

Innovation has been defined as 'the process of making changes to something established by introducing something new'. It applies to "...radical or incremental changes to products, processes or services⁴.

Innovation is, therefore, both 'something new' and the 'act' or process of introducing change. Over the last thirty years or so education and schooling – not always the same thing – has witnessed a number of significant innovations, often in the areas of pedagogy and curriculum delivery, which have attempted to change the traditional by the introduction of 'something new'. Below are examples of some of these innovations I have experienced in a forty year teaching career.

¹ This monograph was prepared by an expert consultant to the SHARE Education Programme Technical Assistance Team, April 2014 and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union Delegation to Bangladesh.

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³ Webster's Dictionary II

⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Innovation>

Traditional	New
From:	To
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grammar-translation model 2. Face-to-face or lecture methods 3. Transmission or 'banking' model 4. Religious instruction 5. Summative tests or examinations 6. Mono-grade teaching 7. Content-based curriculum 8. 'Look and Say' method for teaching reading 9. Arithmetic 10. Blackboard 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communicative language Teaching 2. Distance Learning 3. Child-centered pedagogy 4. Multi-faith curriculum 5. Continuous assessment 6. Multi-grade teaching 7. Competency-based curriculum 8. Synthetic phonics 9. New Mathematics 10. PowerPoint

Models of good practice

A model of good practice in education has been defined as a 'method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark'⁵. What distinguishes innovation from good practice is therefore evidence, over time, that the introduction of something new has produced the desired results. What begins as an innovation, a new approach to teaching and learning or a new way of organising the classroom becomes good practice when it is established, accepted and then integrated into current practice. Such acceptance will of course be subject to monitoring and evaluation not only that the innovation has achieved its objective but that the benefits of change have exceeded the costs.

Not all innovations in education have become models of good practice. In fact the history of educational development is littered with 'good ideas at the time' which when introduced proved unsuccessful and were then jettisoned. As a teacher trainer of English as a Second Language in the 1980s I can recall the fanfare by which 'Teaching English by Video' was launched. After a year or so – during which time I received from an educational publisher a teaching course complete with a set of video resources – it became clear that the concept in practice was too difficult to operate particularly in countries in which several video formats existed or electricity supply was infrequent. More importantly no thought had been given to the training teachers would need in turning this innovation into good practice.

As Peters & Austin say, a passion for excellence means thinking big and starting small: excellence happens when high purpose and intense pragmatism meet (Peters & Austin, 1985). Good practice needs both: the desire to change by thinking of new and alternatives to existing practice and then the pragmatism and thoughtfulness in designing a programme of implementation which will result in good practice being established and sustainable.

The Management of Planned Change: from Innovation to Good Practice

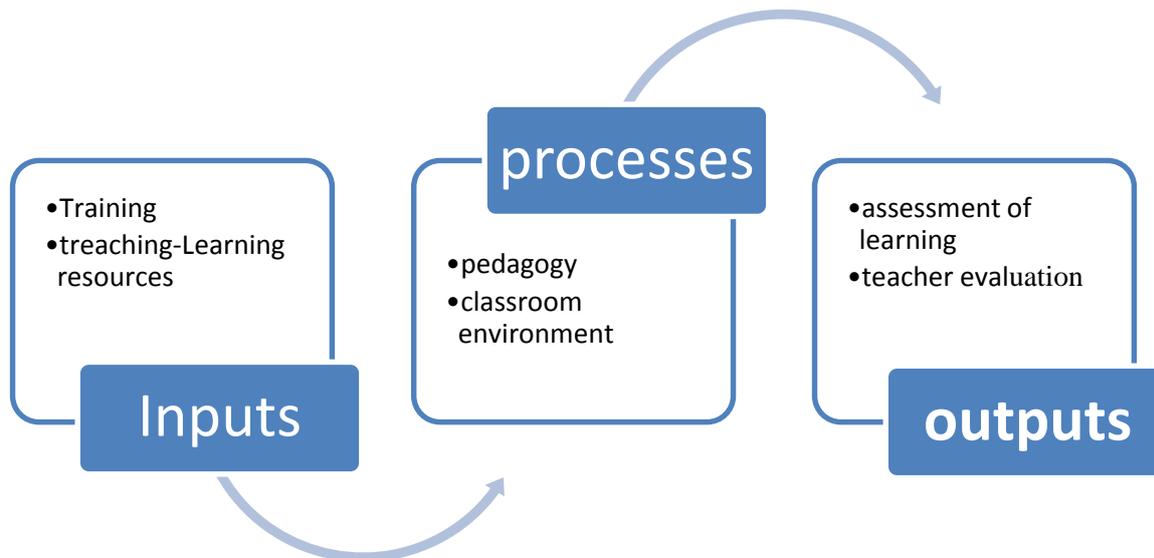
What constitutes good practice is complex and subject to a number of factors. There seem to be four.

First good practice is directly related to what occurs in two reciprocal educational *contexts*: firstly in the more focussed environment of the classroom and school; and secondly in the wider context of community in which

⁵ <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/in/best-practice.html#ixzz2yq0Owf4d>

the school is located. Both environments have a reciprocal relationship upon each other. A strong feature of the SHARE programme is its development of responsive and enduring school-community linkages.

Second good practice is concerned with the dynamic process of change which it is possible to view in a systemic way i.e. *inputs*, *processes* and *outputs* components that need to be understood in a holistic and inter-related manner. The SHARE Programme of activities can be viewed likewise:



Third good practice is concerned with *judgments, criteria* for measuring or assessing progress.

And fourth, good practice is also concerned with criteria which are related to the aims and objectives of the desired change. There seem to be four that relate to notions of quality⁶:

- First, good practice is concerned with *relevance*: to context, to needs (both ‘needs now’ and ‘needs later’) and to humanity. SHARE children, for example, have both educational and economic needs and so a relevant education will need to tread a fine line in balancing these needs.
- Second, good practice is concerned with *efficiency* in setting and meeting standards, in utilising resources effectively, and in improving standards. An important SHARE resource is training, particularly in-service refresher days, but this resource is limited and needs to be as efficiently used as possible.
- Third, good practice is concerned with *-something special* – creativity, imagination and innovation, activities which goes beyond the normal expectations of a school. During field visits to schools and education centres, I found evidence of teachers using their imagination and creativity whether it be in using their mobile phones to downplay music for a dance or in one SUSTAIN child club in Dhaka, utilising empty bottles for a mathematics activity.

⁶ See: Hawes, H & Stephens, D (1990) Questions of Quality: Primary Education and Development Longman. London; Stephens, D (1990) ‘Qualitative Factors in Education, Research and Development: A Position Paper’ in International Journal of Educational Development Vo. 10 No 4.

- Finally good practice is concerned with *inclusion, an educational experience that must be available to all children irrespective of gender, ability or wealth*. As we shall see all SHARE partners are committed to providing inclusive schooling whether it be mainstreaming disabled children into the classes or in the production of minority language resources.

Implementing an effective process of innovation to models of good and then better practice raises a number of critical questions at each phase:

Critical questions: Inputs:

- What are the aims of the innovation?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- What value would it add?
- What inputs will be required?
- Is it teacher led or different roles?
- Is it changing practice or supplementing it?

Critical questions: processes:

- What is the timeframe for introduction?
- What process factors are involved?
- Teaching and learning? Changes to classroom environment?
- Will the community be involved?
- How do we communicate change?
- Can we scale up from the pilot in an effective cascade approach?

Critical questions: outputs:

- How will outputs be monitored and evaluated?
- How will we assess learning of the children?
- How will we assess learning of the teachers?
- How will we measure impact on children’s learning and changes to teacher behaviour?
- How will we assess our learning?
- Can we transfer or replicate this good practice elsewhere: in different projects, other contexts?
- Have we communicated our findings to appropriate policy makers?

The SHARE programme aims are to provide quality basic education for the hardest to reach children and their parents and guardians, in 219 *upazillas*⁷ and *thanas* of 47 districts in 7 divisions of Bangladesh, using a variety of approaches that yield lessons about what works best and why, share best practice, and help build results-based-management capacity and culture, in coherent linkages with the formal primary education system and other non-formal education initiatives. Priorities for the programme include: (i) providing access to basic education of quality for those who would otherwise be excluded, building on proven good practice, (ii) maximizing the efficient use of resources, particularly through the adoption of holistic approaches; and (iii) the promotion and further development of a lessons-learning culture.

⁷ The districts of Bangladesh are divided into sub-districts called Upazila or Thana. Upazilas are similar to the county subdivisions found in some Western countries. Bangladesh, at present, has 500 upazilas and 509 administrative thanas for a total of 1009 sub-districts. The upazilas/thanas are the second lowest tier of regional administration in Bangladesh.

The SHARE programme has endeavoured to achieve its objectives by designing and implementing interventions that are innovative and examples of good practice. The following six have been identified⁸:

- Multi-grade approaches to teaching and learning
- Accelerated learning
- Teacher training at pre- and in-service levels
- Child-centred approaches to learning and teaching
- The design and implementation of minority language teaching materials
- Inclusive strategies for children with special educational needs

These innovations form the basis of established good practice. Each of the above interventions will briefly be described, assessed against international research evidence, and finally discussed in relation to lessons that can be learnt for the SHARE programme and more widely. Let's examine the first innovation, multi-grade teaching.

Multi-Grade teaching

Multi-grade teaching is a pedagogic approach that offers real opportunities to improve teaching and learning in different learning settings, particularly in small, scattered and remote rural schools, such as those served by Aloghar and UNIQUE II projects, where the geographic and socio-economic conditions limit the government's ability to provide sufficient education services. It aims to improve teaching and learning in different learning settings, particularly in small, scattered and remote rural schools, such as those served by Aloghar and UNIQUE II projects, where the geographic and socio-economic conditions limit the government's ability to provide sufficient education services.

Thousands of children around the world are taught in multi-grade schools. Commonplace among populations in remote areas, multi-grade schools see children grades taught in a single classroom, often by a lone teacher. For a small village community or a remote rural area, the advantages of *multi-grade teaching* are many. Grouping children of different grades together, with a single teacher, means it is possible to fund a small school where otherwise it would have been impractical. Children, who might otherwise be unable to travel to distant schools, are then given the opportunity of an education.

In multi-grade teaching, teachers are responsible, within a timetabled period, for instruction across two or more curriculum grades. In 'one-teacher' schools, the teacher is responsible for teaching across five or six grades of the curriculum. In two or three-teacher schools the teacher is responsible for teaching across two or more curriculum grades.

In mono-grade teaching, by contrast, teachers are responsible, within a timetabled period, for instruction of a single curriculum grade. In many mono-grade classes, teachers teach the same content at the same time to all children; in others, teachers group children according to their levels of achievement.

International evidence

The international evidence is generally positive. From research carried out in Scuola Nuova in Colombia and in Nueva Escuela Unitaria in Guatemala, for example, (Pryor, 2012), findings claim positive results for multigrade practices in rural areas, though they cite challenges, especially in up-scaling, a number of positive outcomes, such as improved student achievement and reduced drop out and repetition, are attributed to the holistic, bottom-up approach involving in-service teacher education, peer support, resources (especially teachers' manuals) and community involvement (Benveniste and McEwan, 2000, Colbert, 2009). Similarly, innovative classroom organisation, teaching practices and curriculum and learning materials development are reported in small

8. Draft Consultancy Report of David Stephens on Innovations and good practice in SHARE Education Programme, April 2014, Share Technical Assistance office.

multigrade rural schools in India offered by the Rishi Valley Institute for Educational Resources (RIVER) in Andhra Pradesh and by Bodh Shiksha Samiti in Rajasthan (Blum and Diwan, 2007). However, none of these studies met the inclusion criteria for in-depth review, suggesting that more robust studies of these potentially effective interventions are needed. Equally longer term tracer studies are needed to examine the outcomes of learners experiencing multi-grade in non-formal settings during their primary schooling (as in the SHARE programme) and then being mainstreamed into formal schooling after the primary school certificate.

From *good* to *better* practice

Field visits clearly show that two of the SHARE partner NGOs Aloghar and UNIQUE II have succeeded in implementing multi-grade teaching: the pedagogy and classroom organisation is adjusted to 'fit' the pupil, the focus is upon ability rather than age, the children are working co-operatively in groups (though this might be socially more than cognitively), and the relationship between the school and the community is well established.

The PSC success rates show that the *multi-grade approach* to teaching and learning within the SHARE programme is successful in terms of learning outcomes. A key contribution to this success is effective pedagogic training for teachers. UNIQUE II in 2013 held two rounds at regional level with tutors, technical officers, monitoring officers and area managers. 222 individuals participated (28 men and 194 women). During the year Aloghar organized 25 training courses in multi-grade teaching for 743 teachers (female 400, male 343).

Despite the above mentioned success It is important however not to underestimate the challenges in adopting a *multi-grade approach*.⁹ There would seem to be value coordinating further training on the *multi-grade approach* with a view to paying close attention to the relationship between training, particularly the refresher days curriculum organization in the selection of cognitive and social learning activities in the classroom, and a stronger focus upon generating and using evidence of pupil learning outcomes to further improve good practice.

Ways forward:

- Review the different ways multi-grade teaching is implemented by partners such as UINIQUE II and Aloghar
- Review the training of teachers through refresher days to build linkages between multi-grade teaching and assessment of learning, particularly in relation to informing decisions about when a learner moves between grades
- Develop a set of quality indicators for multi-grade teaching which might include inputs e.g. textbooks and training, processes e.g. teacher experiences; and outputs e.g. links between teaching strategies and acquisition of competencies. Such development could be the basis of a small-scale participatory action research project.

Accelerated Learning

An accelerated learning programme (ALP) promotes access to primary and secondary education for disadvantaged groups and older out-of-school youth. In an ALP, the required learning is completed in a shorter span of time and the goal is completion of primary education or integration into the formal system at an age appropriate level. The assumption is that older, more cognitively sophisticated children/youth will learn faster. Most AL programmes complete two grades in one year. The curriculum incorporates appropriate life skill subjects and may include vocational education, and/or micro enterprise activities. An ALP is frequently donor funded, short term in nature, and focused on access, retention, and completion.

⁹ At a UNESCO Multi-grade conference in 1998 in Bangkok five challenges were identified: teachers were not adequately trained, there was a scarcity of levels and types of learning resources, there was a lack of flexible curriculum organization, school facilities were often inadequate, and there was a lack of incentives for teachers to work in multi grade classes

SUSTAIN employs an *accelerated education model* which entails the traditional five years *accelerated* into 3 years with the initial two years covering 4 grades followed by a final 3rd year when the children cover grade 5 work ready for the leaving examination. This requires learners to work more intensively during the class time but the aim is to provide pupils with the 29 competencies by the end of grade 5, and for all pupils to participate in the PSC examination. Unlike formal primary schools where the teacher student ratio is around 1: 80/100 the ratio in SUSTAIN schools is 1:30 allowing for the syllabus to be covered more quickly and more effectively. It is important to stress at the outset that *accelerated learning* is not 'new' to many teachers who have the confidence and experience to vary the coverage and pace of learning to meet the needs and circumstances of their pupils.

What makes SUSTAIN different from regular formal education is its focus on bringing the school to the child i.e. adjustment of curriculum and teaching to 'fit' the needs of the child. Parents and community members play an important role in establishing and sustaining the school, the teachers are locally recruited, and there is a strong sense of community ownership.¹⁰ SUSTAIN are aware of the challenges in using this approach i.e. training is important, proper monitoring needs to be undertaken, absenteeism is of greater importance to the success of the approach, and those in the community involved in supporting the school need to be sensitised to the approach.

International evidence

Around the world—from the United States, Canada, and New Zealand to Colombia, Pakistan, and Uganda— USAID conducted a global review (when?) of accelerated learning programmes. In Afghanistan, accelerated learning is being used to attract both out-of-school students and overage youth into school after years of governmental neglect of the educational system. In Iraq, accelerated learning is being used to jumpstart children whose education was recently disrupted by political upheaval and war. In Malawi, continuous assessment and the use of child-centred learning materials have resulted in improved school performance for large numbers of children who were unable to read, write, and do basic mathematics. In India, accelerated learning programs have been used both to draw children from exploitative and abusive work situations and also to increase literacy levels for masses of children.

These programs, which show the widespread applicability and potential of accelerated learning principles and practices, share several common elements. All of the program designs reflect the principles common to accelerated learning programs in both industrialized and developing world contexts: concern for students' emotional and social needs; child-centered instruction; active, problem-and project-based learning; learning as personally meaningful acts; and performance-based assessment and feedback. Some accelerated learning programs are being implemented in formal school situations; other programs are implemented in schools established especially for them. Unlike most programs from the education literature, all are intended to reduce the time needed to complete a particular course of instruction.

Research-based examples document how accelerated learning practices such as participatory, child-centred teaching practices, teaching to different learning styles, physical activity, and regular feedback have led to increases in motivation and attention as well as gains in academic achievement. Children have benefited from accelerated learning principles and practices.

¹⁰ See Gee, K 'Making schools a reality in Bangladesh: A large-scale evaluation of a non-formal education program' paper presented at the American Education Research Association, May 1st 2003.

From *good* to *better* practice

It is important to stress at the outset that *accelerated learning* is not 'new' to many teachers who have the confidence and experience to vary the coverage and pace of learning to meet the needs and circumstances of their pupils. What makes SUSTAIN different from regular formal education is its focus on bringing the school to the child i.e. adjustment of curriculum and teaching to 'fit' the needs of the child. Parents and community members play an important role in establishing and sustaining the school, the teachers are locally recruited, and there is a strong sense of community ownership.¹¹ SUSTAIN are aware of the challenges in using this approach i.e. training is important, proper monitoring needs to be undertaken, absenteeism is of greater importance to the success of the approach, and those in the community involved in supporting the school need to be sensitised to the approach.

There are however advantages for both non-formal and formal schools looking to implementing this type of pedagogy and it is interesting to learn that the World Bank and Government are examining this approach in their Reaching Children Out of School Programme (ROSC 2). A focused evaluation SUSTAIN's Accelerated education model would be useful for ROSC 2 in their programme design.

Ways forward:

- Design a focused evaluation of SUSTAIN's *accelerated education model* with a particular view to identifying what is accelerated and how it is achieved within the classroom
- Review training for teachers with a particular focus upon the relationship between accelerated learning and coverage of all the required competencies.
- Develop a participatory action research project focusing upon identified needs, for example the selection of curriculum content in an accelerated syllabus in one of the core subjects.

Teacher training at pre- and in-service levels

At the heart of the SHARE programme is an ambition to improve teaching and learning by providing quality teacher training that is relevant, efficient, creative and of course sustainable. Research has identified three broad and overlapping categories of teacher professionalism (Davies, Harber and Schweisfurth, 2005:35-39) which tend to have the following characteristics:

1. *Unprofessional* – absenteeism, unplanned lessons, the teacher has more than one job, instances of sexual abuse, strong use of corporal punishment, isolated, hostility to, and distance from, children.
2. *Restricted professional* – teachers concerned with the mastery and exercise of technical skills in the classroom, a concern with basic competence, teacher-centred, tend to blame children for not learning, little CPD, unimaginative or routine teaching, occasional use of corporal and psychological punishment, rigid, individualised, instrumental. Rewards are often extrinsic such as salary.
3. *Extended professional* – uses autonomous and independent judgement to reflect on what they are doing, they don't just follow the rules but take active responsibility for themselves and their pupils, child-centred, variety of methods, collaborative, trusting, very little or no corporal punishment, part of CPD support system, adaptive and flexible. Reward here is intrinsic, such as a sense of 'giving something back' or a belief in education for social mobility.

¹¹ See Gee, K 'Making schools a reality in Bangladesh: A large-scale evaluation of a non-formal education program' paper presented at AERA, May 1st 2003

Though SHARE teachers are paid and do receive some training at the initial stage and via on-going refresher days, it is reasonable to characterise most as restricted professionals. What can enable teachers to become extended professionals is the quality of this training.

International evidence

Recent research into global trends in teacher education (Pryor, 2012) indicate that teachers' positive attitudes towards their training and their students is important, but it is when teachers see pedagogy as a kind of communication with students that their teaching practices become meaningful, leading to positive outcomes for their students. Three strategies have been identified from a number of studies that prioritised communication with students and were inclusive in nature.

Those three strategies are: teachers giving feedback and paying sustained and inclusive attention to all students; creating an environment where students feel safe; and teachers drawing on students' backgrounds in their pedagogic discourse.

These strategies lead to teachers using six practices in a communicative way, identified from one or more study and associated with positive outcomes:

- (i) demonstration, explanation drawing on sound pedagogical content knowledge;
- (ii) flexible use of whole-class, group and pair work where students discuss a shared task;
- (iii) frequent and relevant use of learning materials beyond the textbook;
- (iv) open and closed questioning, expanding responses, encouraging student questioning;
- (v) use of local languages and code switching;
- (vi) planning and varying lesson sequences.

From *good* to *better* practice

All the SHARE partners are engaged in various forms of initial and refresher training. The SHIKHON ("Learning") Programme, for example, is providing cost-effective, quality, non-formal primary education (NFPE) to 155,000 out-of-school children. The SHIKHON programme aims to deliver 'quality education through adopting active teaching and learning methods and working hard to create a joyful learning environment, while following the curriculum and using the text books of the National Curriculum and Text Book Board of Bangladesh.

All four partner projects have laid great stress on the establishment of an effective pre-service training programme reinforced by regular monthly and bi-monthly refresher courses. Field visits provide evidence that some of the above are in evidence in project lessons, particularly the flexible use of whole-class groupings with multi-grade approaches, and the use of local language and minority language in the teaching and learning. There is room for improvement, however, particularly in the use of learning materials beyond the textbook, and the planning and varying of the sequence of lessons. Greater emphasis too needs to be placed on the informal assessment of learning within the sequence of lesson activities.

Between December 2012 and May 2013 UNIQUE II held 195 refresher training sessions; developed 36,322 sets of local materials, and was planning to produce a training publication documenting good practices. There are however opportunities now to review the initial and monthly refresher training to focus more upon classroom-based training and the development of a *community of practice*. One practical way forward would be to establish SHARE teachers 'clubs' modelled on the Indonesian *Active Learning Through Professional Support*

*Project*¹² in which teachers met regularly (5 or 6 in a group), each taking a turn in teaching a lesson observed by the others. Discussion would then follow around identified challenges and suggested alternative approaches.

SHIKHON have developed very effective teachers' guides which can be followed easily and with confidence by new recruits with a minimum of training. Such guides provide a template which could be implemented across the programme and which can therefore provide a common basis for monitoring and evaluation. In discussion with the two teachers observed, and SHIKHON colleagues at the Save the Children office in Dhaka, it was recognised that a balance needs to be maintained between a rigid framework of lesson planning and more flexibility for the confident teacher who wants to gain greater ownership of the process and in doing so become a more independent practitioner. SHIKON has an opportunity to showcase its training and guidance with a view to an overall aim to support increasingly independent teachers.

Ways forward:

- Pay Particular attention be paid to assessment for learning in future training programmes'
- In the light of the international research reported above, examine ways in which teachers communicate with their pupils.
- Develop strategies for mixing teacher and student-centred approaches, as well as the mixing of whole class, group, pair and individual-focused activities. Such a development might form the focus of a participatory action research project.

Child-centred approaches to learning and teaching

A common feature of the four SHARE projects is their commitment to a child-centred approaches to teaching and learning The Child Centred Approach to education is known by various names and can be referred to as child centred pedagogy, child centred education, child centred teaching, child centred learning, student centred teaching or student centred learning. There is, despite a plethora of usages a common ideological basis, however not without disputes and disagreements.

Child-centred education is a long-established approach to teaching and learning which puts the learner at the centre of his or her learning. It is characterized by the teacher acting more as a facilitator to children working in groups with a variety of sequential interactive learning supported by a variety of classroom materials. Children are encouraged to be independent, to help each other and take on leadership and advocacy roles.

The child-centred approach to education focuses on the needs of the learners, rather than the teachers. Consequently this approach requires a different design of the curriculum, a separate approach to course content and an understanding of the interconnections between courses , and just as teaching is different in a child-centred context, so too is the structure of a classroom. Teachers in a child-centred classroom act as 'facilitators'. They assist students in learning without providing direct instruction but by providing a supportive learning structure. The teacher's ultimate role is to help provide guidance and order within the class while allowing each student to explore his or her own potential. So as to facilitate all students' skills and interests, educators can distribute students differently. For example, some child-centred schools divide students into 'learning communities' and/or use multi-age groupings.

International evidence

In a recent survey of research on child-centred schooling (Schweisfurth, 2013, p.146) Schweisfurth has reviewed international evidence and concludes that child-centred schooling is good practice when it meets seven standards or benchmarks. These are:

¹² See <https://www.gov.uk/.../active-learning-through-professional-support-alps>

- (i) Lessons are engaging to pupils, motivating them to learn (bearing in mind that different approaches might work in different contexts).
- (ii) Atmosphere and conduct reflect mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Conduct such as punishment and the nature of relationships do not violate rights (bearing in mind that relationships might still be relatively formal and distant).
- (iii) Learning challenges build on learners' existing knowledge (bearing in mind that this existing knowledge might be seen collectively rather than individualistically).
- (iv) Dialogue (not only transmission) is used in teaching and learning (bearing in mind that the tone of dialogue and who it is between may vary).
- (v) Curriculum is relevant to learners' lives and perceived future needs, in a language accessible to them (mother tongue except where practically impossible) (bearing in mind that there will be tensions between global, national and local understandings of relevance).
- (vi) Curriculum is based on skills and attitude outcomes as well as content. These should include skills of critical and creative thinking (bearing in mind that culture-based communication conventions are likely to make the 'flavour' of this very different in different places).
- (vii) Assessment follows up these principles by testing skills and by allowing for individual differences.

From good to better practice

There are a number of partner initiatives that exemplify good practice. UNIQUE II, for example, has been Organizing Children Learning Centres (CLC), delivering community - based pre-primary education, replicating a multi-grade teaching approach and organising Learning Camps for low performing school students. So far the project has established 4923 centers as of December 2013 of a total target of 7563 centers.

The project also intends launching a School Improvement Programme for targeted primary schools, developing and using locally contextualised learning materials, and promoting the use of mother language in early learning. During the 6 year project period a total number of 297467 children should be provided with non formal primary education, pre-school education and Camp activity. UNIQUE II reports that it is working in 26 districts and 84 *upazilas* through establishing 4230 Children Learning Centre (CLC), 787 Pre-Schools and 1200 Camps. Community management and support committees have been established to ensure linkages between parents and guardians are maintained and strengthened.

SHIKON and Save the Children have a reputation for the development of programmes that encourage *active* learning. During field visits to SHIKHON and SUSTAIN schools in urban and rural settings observed teachers followed well-structured and effectively sequenced lesson plans which built upon the child's prior learning. The focus was on both the cognitive and social aspects of learning with opportunities for the child, alone or in groups, to carry the learning forward independently of the teacher. There is evidence that the structured teacher guides are effective in promoting active child-centred learning with the teacher's role changing from instructor to facilitator. The establishment of peer training sessions also presents an opportunity for teachers to share good practice.

The SHARE programme contains much that is child-centred from children's clubs and child advocacy activities to the use of peer teaching within the multi-grade classrooms. What needs developing is a focus upon children's cognitive development i.e. learning activities that stretch children in terms of their thinking.

But there is also a need for better recording of a child's individual learning outcomes which can bring together all the various aspects into one profile.

Ways forward:

- Children organised into groups is not necessarily child-centred. Thought needs to be given to providing teachers and supervisors with training in classroom strategies that enable children to work independently of the teacher. Another possible participatory action research project.
- There is a commitment with SHARE programme to increasing opportunities for children's advocacy. Practical ways forward need to be considered which can link such advocacy with learning. The international NGO Child-to-Child are experienced in this area of empowerment.
- It is important SHARE disseminates its achievements. A number of prizes for children's work might be a way forward.

The design and implementation of minority language teaching materials

An important aspect of quality is, as said, the provision of teaching and learning that is relevant not only to a child's needs and interests but also to his or hers home or community language. Since the pioneering work of language researchers (e.g. Bamgbose¹³) in the 1960s and '70s it is now accepted good practice that learning for at least the first three years at school in the first language will not only lay the foundation for learning a second or foreign language but will establish a strong cultural identity.

International evidence

It has to be said that evidence of good practice in this area is in stark contrast to the global move towards the use of English and other dominant languages in many schools around the world. However, there is research evidence (Pryor, 2012) of a degree of success in localising the curriculum and adapting centralised curricula to local realities and ideas of knowledge in Mozambique (Alderuccio, 2010, Dhorsan and Chachuaio, 2008), Afghanistan (Jones, 2007) and Cambodia (Middleborg, 2005). Across these different country contexts, good community links and/or local teachers were common positive factors. More equivocal findings come from: Bhutan, where teachers were concerned that localisation meant that students missed out on international perspectives (Childs et al., 2012); Malawi, where efforts to localise the curriculum failed either to overcome the strictures of the national curriculum or to integrate local knowledge successfully (MacJessie-Mbewe, 2004); India, where it has been questioned whether indigenous knowledge can in fact survive incorporation into the educational system (Sarangapani et al., 2013); and Zimbabwe, where teachers were reported to dismiss indigenous knowledge and privilege only knowledge that came from textbooks (Shizha 2007). Thus the evidence on successful innovations in localising curriculum is at best mixed.

From good to better practice:

The Aloghar (Lighthouse) project has established education centres for marginalized and disadvantaged children with a particular focus upon the ethnic minority children of the most remote areas of 27 districts of the country which includes Rajshahi and the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The focus is on providing a conducive learning environment, with teachers recruited from the community able to communicate in the local language. During the year four MLE materials were developed and distributed to the Aloghar education centers benefitting 42% of students and 63% of teachers from the *Adivasi* community.

SHIKON is also drawing on Save the Children's experience in MLE work and developing Mother tongue based multilingual primary education program for the ethnic children in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Training for local teachers in how best to use these materials will be essential for the continuing success in attracting children who

¹³ *Mother Tongue Education: The West African Experience* (ed.), London: Hodder and Stoughton, and Paris: UNESCO Press, 1976.

speak a minority language. It is also important that these minority language materials are monitored and evaluated and that these meet the national standards set by the government.

In discussion with Aloghar staff it is evidence that plans are well established for the design and distribution of multi-lingual educational materials. Opportunities exist now to ensure that the teaching-learning materials give emphasis to the relationship between the content of the materials and the expected or intended learning outcomes. One way forward would be to build in a piloting of draft materials with a selected group of SHARE teachers. The teachers' guides also need to be written to include explicit guidance on how to write achievable learning outcomes.

Ways forward:

- A major question that needs to be addressed is the scope of provision of MLE materials i.e. are they to be restricted to supplementary texts or is there an opportunity to produce MLE texts in target core curriculum areas such as science and mathematics?
- Minority language materials need to be monitored and evaluated so that they meet the national standards set by the government.
- Opportunities exist to develop a small-scale participatory action research project looking at the relationship between MLE materials and evidence of children's learning.

Inclusive strategies for children with special educational needs

The 'Salamanca Statement' adopted at the 'World Conference on Special Educational Needs: Access and Quality' called upon all governments and urged them to: Adopt as a matter of law or policy the principles of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise (UNESCO, 1994, Statement, p. ix).

UNESCO defines Inclusive education as education that should be viewed in terms of including traditionally excluded or marginalized groups or making the invisible visible. The most marginalized groups are often invisible in society: disabled children, girls, children in remote villages, and the very poor. These invisible groups are often excluded from mainstream education policy and access. Of the 57 million children out of school worldwide, approximately a third has a disability.

Sebba and Ainscow (1996: 9) have offered a definition of inclusion: 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.

International evidence

The move towards an inclusive approach to education varies considerably between regions. According to Xu (2012), countries such as China have gone through three stages of process, namely spontaneity, experiment, and development. In almost all states, systems continue to offer a range of placement options for children with special learning needs from full inclusion to placement within segregated special schools (Forlin, 2012).

Inclusion, nevertheless, is still considered to be a largely Western concept (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002). History of special education and the inclusion movement clearly indicates that the idea of inclusion originated in western countries (Miles, 2007) and was exported to countries of the East following a similar trajectory. The need to educate children with disabilities was first recognised by missionaries and they founded many schools for children with disabilities. A number of scholars, albeit few (e.g., Miles, 2007), have argued that countries of the east started educating children with disabilities before such attempts were made in countries of the west.

In Asian countries while supporting the philosophy of inclusion, many teachers challenge the feasibility of implementation (Forlin, 2008). Various issues are raised that act against an inclusive approach in these regions such as an exam oriented curriculum, didactic teaching practices, extensive homework expectations, and a school elite-ness due to an hierarchical banding system (a system whereby secondary schools are ranked into three levels that cater for students with high, medium, and lower academic abilities). Even in developing countries where access to regular schooling has improved for many learners, a range of barriers continue to hinder full inclusion.

From *good* to *better* practice

SHARE partners evidence good practice with Aloghar, for example, continuing with its training of 60% of 1,339 teachers in ways to involve children with special needs into the regular classroom. SHIKHON have developed after school support and enrichment activities in the form of a SHIKHON club which will target lower performing children in grade 3, identified in collaboration with teachers. Common across the four partner projects are issues of pedagogy (multi-grade teaching, accelerated learning), training and learner outcomes, and the inclusive involvement of children with special educational needs.

Training for local teachers in how best to use these materials will be essential for the continuing success in attracting children who speak a minority language. It is also important that these minority language materials are monitored and evaluated.

Aloghar is giving priority to this group of children, and there is an opportunity for SHARE partners to learn from Aloghar's work in this area. Common across the four partner projects are issues of pedagogy (multi-grade teaching, accelerated learning), training and learner outcomes, and the inclusive involvement of children with special educational needs. There may well be merit in convening a national conference to highlight strategies for including *all* children in the various aspects of project design and implementation from training and resource inputs to learner outcomes and evaluation.

Ways forward:

- Develop a SHARE inventory of focused educational special needs and the strategies adapted to meet them
- Review training in special needs for new teachers, focusing upon classroom strategies for integration through group and pair work.
- Design a small participatory action research project, for example, assessing community advocacy in the area of special needs education.

Conclusions

The SHARE programme in general and the work of the four partners in particular, provide evidence of innovation and good practice. There is also evidence of effective communication and dissemination of these good practices within and across partner programmes.

An innovative aspect of the SHARE programme is its Technical Assistance (TA) component. This component has been embedded in SHARE education programme and is tasked with the strategic role of managing knowledge and knowledge products, building capacity, establishing sustainable patterns of co-ordination, and providing opportunities for innovations and good practices within the various

activities that are shared across the partners and Government organizations who share the overall objectives of the programme. A real opportunity exists now to not only learn from good and better practice within the SHARE education programme but for these lessons of good practice to be communicated and disseminated to a wider audience, most notably the formal education sector of Bangladesh.

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