

Evaluation of Policy and Practices in Primary Level Schools for English Language Writing Skills in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The data collection approach for this research is a mixed method to examine the policy and practices for English writing skills in primary-level schools in Bangladesh. The survey was conducted by questionnaires for 12 teachers and 14 students. The last few questions included open-ended questions about classroom practices, teaching methods, class adaptation, and learning. The questions focused on whether students could develop independent writing skills in real-life situations. This research contains qualitative data from secondary sources such as books, journals, and articles, as well as quantitative data as this research conducts surveys of teachers and students on the challenges, providing reliability in primary school writing skills. This study is essential as it helps recognize problems that cause weak writing skills. However, this study may only generalize to some of Bangladesh's schools or educational systems due to the need for more materials and survey participants.

Keywords: writing skills, primary school level, policy and practice, Bangladesh

English language teaching policies are a systematic approach to quality learning. Policies such as teacher training or curriculum organization must be better conducted, as they may cause severe hindrances to English language learning. In Bangladesh, teaching English in primary-level schools should maintain a strategy for primary bilingual learners to adapt and develop English language skills such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Bengali medium schools are Bengal-instructed institutions where English needs to be better exposed. Hence, it is vital to

recognize and utilize English language principles and policies in Bengali medium primary-level schools.

As per psycholinguistics, reading and writing are two primary skills for understanding language and completing the requirements to be literate. Adult language learners face difficulty learning reading and writing in English because they acquire language to localize (in precisely two areas of the brain: Broca's area, associated with speech production and articulation, and Wernicke's area, which is associated with comprehension) in the brain. Language learning takes time because of lateralization, i.e., the delay in language learning has impaired the right side of the brain. Therefore, teaching English at the primary level in the critical period of plasticity (when children acquire language) of human development can be advantageous with the required exposure and materials for language development.

National Education Policy (2012) in Bangladesh has revised the primary curriculum to develop English skills. National Curriculum Policy helps in a systemic approach to quality learning and teaching; it is a unified method for Bengali medium and government schools. It adds an advantage to the study as the same syllabus for most schools allows generalizing.

This study aims to explore policy implementation in primary-level schools to teach and develop writing skills.

Research Questions:

- How are teachers endorsing or implementing techniques for the learners' writing skills in primary-level schools?
- Are teachers following the curriculum policies on language teaching?
- Are curriculum policies competent enough to develop students' writing skills?
- Are students getting enough exposure to develop writing skills?

Review of Literature

Challenges of Teaching the English Language at the Primary Level Schools in Bangladesh by Hossain et al. (2015) concentrated on the teaching variable, which may cause hindrance to learning for young learners, as stated in the heading. The importance of developing communicative skills is taught in primary schools in Bangladesh. These communicative skills are comprehended by speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

In the interview results, the paper pointed out that the issues with English language practices could have been better. In students' interviews, skills such as listening were not practiced for their language enhancement, and other skills acquired for developing communication were under 60%. Teachers' interviews also showed that teaching training, aids, guides, and knowledge were below 60%. The classroom observation also noted that teachers' techniques, management, and knowledge were unsatisfactory.

Similarly, in Rahman & Sarker's (2019) Teachers' Classroom Practice to Develop Students' English Writing Analysis, the English language is the lingua franca of communication globally, where writing skill is the most communicative method used—this writing skill compromised over organizing, revising, and editing to enable the language barrier. Weak writing skills can hinder employment; students should be taught how to communicate or write at an early age. Inadequate writing skills can hinder employment and writing processes, such as translating thoughts from the native language to the English language. Young children's most common challenge is their low grammar, punctuation, and spelling skills. Effective writing at a young age helps to develop strong writing skills (Graham et al., 2012).

National Education Policy made the English language available from kindergarten to university level in Bangladesh, emphasizing English language learning as an international language. Teaching English at the primary level helps students develop competence in all four English language skills through meaningful and enjoyable activities (NCTB, 2012). Hence, in school writing, students are assisted by skills and examinations in Bangladesh's education system (Hasan et al., 2016). Students still need help to achieve basic competency and the fear of foreign languages. This research was conducted in a primary Government school in Dhaka City,

Bangladesh. The study collected qualitative data which looked into the classroom practices that develop English language writing skills at the primary level in Bangladesh. The sample included five teachers from the school, who were observed in their English language classes, and an in-depth interview was conducted.

The government school uses three writing skill approaches: Rule-based, genre, and creative writing. Writing task: fill in the blanks, match matching, illustration description of short, one-sentence, or one-word answers, and free writing activities. Writing activities are conducted in different ways, and these activities are conducted through free, guided, and controlled methods. The study revealed that most teachers used traditional methods by memorizing grammatical rules, commas, and paragraphs, unchecking copies, or giving proper feedback.

The results revealed that teachers concentrated on developing students' reading skills and levels and emphasized writing. As a controlled writing method was used, providing feedback was not done regularly. Guides and content books were provided to teachers. The infrastructure and the shortage of teaching aids caused a hamper on studies; the assessment provided in the classroom was mainly test-based or oral. Many variables are inadequate teachers' or students' social status, family support or attendance challenges in teaching, inappropriate English teaching, and lack of creativity, which creates barriers to language use.

Bitir & Duran's (2020) *Fourth Grade Primary School Students' Critical Writing Skill Levels* focused on five Turkish primary schools of fourth-grade students; the results of the evaluation showed that the students of class 4 had below average critical writing skills, which can be related to lack of critical writing inclusiveness in Turkish Language Curriculum and insufficient teachers' attention towards writing skills that can be related with insufficient knowledge or equipment to use the technique that develops writing skills. It was also observed that students had a low average dimension of inquiry correlated to presenting evidence and persuading and a low critical Writing. However, there was no difference between critical writing skills in female and male students. Factors like social status affect students with higher socioeconomic status as the environment affects language development.

Critical writing skills available to students, it is highly recommended that teachers have the knowledge and understanding; English Language Curriculums need to be improved, and materials and curriculum should include applications and instructions of critical writing to develop the full capability of all the language skills.

English Language Assessment in Bangladesh Today: Principles, practices, and Problems by Islam et al. (2021) examined the difference between the reality of principles in English language teaching and the practical application. English Language learning could have been more effective due to assessment methods and issues between curriculum goals and effectiveness. Bangladesh's education model is British-based and has three stages: primary, secondary, and tertiary. The education policy in Bangladesh follows goals, objectives, and access to the fundamental rights of all children. The policy also focused on overall education levels, updating the curriculum to achieve quality enhancement in teaching and learning.

The primary curriculum based on national education policy aims to acquire competence at a global level. This curriculum is essential for language skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing, but this policy does not contain any assessment guidelines for instructors. The traditional approach focusing on tests does not include communicative tasks that assess students' English abilities.

The assessment practiced by young learners could be more functional in a real-life context. The practice of large-scale tests hampers learning and promotes memorization of language structures and pieces to pass tests. This method also psychologically affected the student, causing low self-esteem towards using the language confidently. There are differences between curriculum, principles of assessment, and actual practices; alternative assessment methods and feedback are necessary. Teachers' expertise is crucial for learners as it focuses on transmitting knowledge and information.

In Policies and Strategies to Improve Education in Bangladesh, Mustary (2021) stated that policy can improve the performance of education in Bangladesh. The government plays a vital role

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Simran Wohra & Sukanto Roy

Evaluation of Policy and Practices in Primary Level Schools for English Language Writing Skills in Bangladesh

in formulating strategies that bring improvement. These policies should be implemented in schools. This study used mixed methods and accountability theory as these educational policies made by the government are accountable for the improvement of education today. According to reports from the World Bank, Bangladesh has collaborated with the World Bank in the educational sector, increased tutoring to reduce students' weaknesses, offered grants to students, and improved infrastructures. Programs such as Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Educational Programs have ensured that education levels are enhanced in schools. These programs are for the teachers to improve their activities and knowledge and provide quality teaching. Programs like PEDP and TQI-SEP are policies that play a significant role. They have been modernized and improvised. Nevertheless, many schools use outdated curriculum that causes the students not to get the modern education to adapt their knowledge to the changes occurring around the world. Employing policies can increase literacy levels, making children attend a school that impacts national education.

English, Education, and Globalization: A Bangladesh Perspective by Akteruzzaman & Islam (2017) presented the English language as an international element that is important and useful for the Bangladesh population. It also estimates the economic and cultural characteristics of the English language in Bangladesh. The statistics illustrated the incompetence of English in Bangladesh that requires improvement.

The outcome exhibited that current English language teaching practices need more quality and international standards. The learner focuses on the English language as a mandatory part of career development, but due to the incompetence in the development process due to inconsistency and faulty teaching system. Even university students need to take satisfactory or effective English language courses. As per the National Textbook of English (Higher Secondary Level) in Bangladesh, students must be able to learn six thousand new words before entering the university premises. The students do not use real-life communication and are frightened while using English. Hence, their reluctance in all English skills, especially speaking, is noticeable. Teachers largely follow methods heavily focused on grammar skills and reading skills. Students must be motivated to study independently.

The results showed that 53% of respondents believe they can only improve their lives by understanding English. The English language is the false sense of "knowledge" that arises from "coercion" and conformity to the state without feeling any animosity (Gramsci, 1980). Present Bangladesh uses a new dialect called “Banglish” that combines English and Bangla (Manzoor, 2006; Nordquist, 2016). Bangladesh uses English on a limited scale, such as in the government or official documents, where English is rarely used; as per the author, this creates a mindset for students to only study and enhance English for better grades. Regardless, there is no evidence for this type of mindset. Hence, they do not focus on bringing immediate changes in education policy. The author suggests that a more real-life-based and modern approach to the English language should be provided in classes as the English language opens a doorway to globalization for students.

Government Primary School Teacher Training Needs for Inclusive Education in Bangladesh by Siddik & Kawai (2020) scrutinized teachers’ training and practices in the classroom as it affects students’ education; it also suggested that training of Government Primary Schools (GPS) should provide in-service as it improvised with curriculum, techniques and quality teaching. The future of Bangladesh must have a fair education system for which improvement is essential.

This study found that teachers had no formal school background even if they completed one year of training to get a certificate with insufficient time. Teachers had limited knowledge, lacked awareness about inclusive education, and needed to understand the education system and curriculum. Students with particular needs should get inclusive education as few teachers are pessimistic that these disabilities are caused by bad conduct. GPS prepares teachers with alternative communication techniques.

Bangladesh's primary schools adhere to the national curriculum. The same textbooks are used in all government schools for special needs children because each student has individual talents and needs. Therefore, it is difficult for their teachers to use the same book. Local schools without qualified instructors require assistance from GPSs with teachers trained in inclusive education; the National Education Policy 2010, GPS instructors are necessary to integrate students

with special needs in their educational practices. As a result, GPS teachers must work together to educate all students. Classrooms. GPS instructors must be able to adapt the parents' perspective of typically developing children with all sorts of requirements.

Similarly, *The Write Aid for ELLs: The Strategies Bilingual Student Teachers Use to Help Their ELL Students Write Effectively* by Sunseri & Sunseri (2019) focused on the writing approaches teachers use for bilingual students. Teachers use students' native language to improve their English and promote the vocabulary they acquire while writing. Teachers' active participation helps to overcome students with learning difficulties, like displaying their ability and weakness in their work, which are possible by using their own "funds of knowledge" to support their students' writing achievement. The authors suggested including bilingual teachers to share their skills, tactics, and lived experiences to engage and support their students.

Furthermore, *Experiences of Primary School with Students with Reading and Writing Difficulties* by Akyoli et al. (2021) explored the issues of primary school teachers in recognizing and limiting reading and writing skills. This article also stated that teachers must know more about identifying students with reading or writing difficulties. Students are usually hesitant to put their ideas forward due to different situations, such as needing more confidence, and may consider a sense of failure. Teachers play a significant role of responsibility; hence, they must be adequately trained. Due to in-service training, academically successful teachers may feel competent in their professional roles. According to a study by Çoğaltay and Çetin (2020), classroom teachers' opinions have indicated that students with particular learning difficulties have low academic achievement and are backward in the educational field. Teachers face classroom time limitations and cannot focus on students with particular learning issues. Lack of training caused inadequate class control. A positive classroom is helpful where students can reassure themselves and talk about their problems. Students' mindset of competing with other students and class time expanding can help students.

Likewise, Gupta's (2019) *Principles and Practices of Teaching English Language Learners* portrayed various approaches and methods for educators to help English language learners

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Simran Wohra & Sukanto Roy

Evaluation of Policy and Practices in Primary Level Schools for English Language Writing Skills in Bangladesh

effectively acquire. This paper recapitulated the principles and practices for teachers of all levels and students with different learning difficulties. Hence, teachers can modify their method according to the learners' needs. The central concept of this article presented pedagogical techniques derived from a theoretical framework that has emerged from second language acquisition research. The author explained these seven concepts for ESL instructors: 1) Understand the student's goals for learning a second language. 2) Establish a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom 3) Develop Background Information 4) Supply Comprehensible Input via Vocabulary Development 5) Provide lots of chances for conversation and interaction 6) Employ various teaching modalities 7) Continued review and evaluation.

One must give ESL students their pace to adapt to learning after reading or introducing a specific text in the curriculum areas. ESL students require personalized goals for them and that they can comprehend. Students need to feel confident and safe to make mistakes in their classroom. Flashcards, virtual boards, jigsaw puzzles, and book circles of English vocabulary help students' practice. Teachers must evaluate students' abilities, including reading, writing, doing, talking, seeing, hearing, and interacting with their parents about their progress. The author suggested digital platforms to enable students to hinder English language learning. Teachers should have interaction abilities such as a better understanding of the instructions and the information by using "images, gestures, PowerPoint slides, podcasts, voice inflexion, intonation, and body language as non-verbal clues" (Gupta, 2019). Another tactic is reinforcing student understanding by giving written instructions after vocal instructions, with students to communicate their ideas. Teachers must offer different activities to make classes exciting or feel engaged; providing a low-stress learning environment and establishing a collaborative learning environment to consider ESL students' demands is vital.

English-in-education policy and planning in Bangladesh: A critical examination by Hamid & Erling (2016) described how Bangladesh has yet to concentrate on language-in-education policy research, considerably due to the scarcity of local expertise and a shortage of research allowance. This chapter analyzed English language policy and planning in Bangladesh to deliver a performance of the factors that have impacted policies, their enactment, and outcomes. Bangladesh

is a country where millions of people live in a less prominent land area than New York State. Hence, poverty is inevitable, yet progress has been displayed in recent years in having the highest literacy in the world. Moreover, Bangla is the national language. Bangladesh's education system can be divided into the stream cater, madrasa, Bengali medium, and English medium. Policymakers still need to incorporate the resource and personnel policies that affect the success of learning or teaching. Private tuition is also a part of degrading the educational system, students' self-motivation, and creating negligence towards educational institutions. There are significant issues that cause problems in English learning.

Comparably, Does Teacher's Educational Qualification Matter in Primary Classroom? Fawzia and Ahmed's (2016) paper illustrated that teachers with high qualifications and equally high salaries have many prospects of securing high achievement in their classrooms. The semi-structured interview showed that teachers with higher education used more enhancing techniques for classroom learning, and students were more engaged and responsive in their classes. Hence, primary school teachers should have a suitable education qualification as it helps recognize students' difficulties, and the ability to use different techniques helps the students understand and engage fully.

Moreover, *Language Wars: English Education Policy and Practice in Bangladesh* by Chowdhury et al. (2014) described education in Bangladesh as 'still sunk in theoretical or textbook education' as there is a gap in English education. The National Education Policy recognized English literacy as an instrument to construct a knowledge-based society. However, the English language in Bangladesh is still an issue as people face challenges communicating in that language, which can be improved by improving the educational system; as the author described, 'universal literacy' is needed for both Bengali and English. This will also help economically.

An Analysis and Evaluation of English Writing Skills of Class Five Students at Government Primary Schools in Dhaka City by Hasan et al. (2016) study examined Class Five students' English language writing skills at Government primary schools in Dhaka City. Their study revealed that about 35% of students got 0% in writing independently, which is the worst

situation as their communication skills were not developed within their primary years, which might cause career problems.

Besides, Teachers' Quality and Teachers' Education at Primary Education Sub-Sector in Bangladesh by Mullick & Sheesh's (2008) article suggested that schooling is partially a craft and partly a science, which signified sound teaching is a blend of artistic and scientific elements. Almost 74,000 teachers of Registered Non-Government Primary Schools (RNGPS) have received training from the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE, 2006); two examinations indicated that a considerable percentage (26-27%) still need to be trained. As Ehsan et al. (2004) suggested, the Certificate in Education (C-in-Ed) curriculum has many areas for improvement, notably its through-theoretical nature and symmetry with the primary school curriculum. Brief training might be helpful in the teachers' profession. Teachers' performance needed a transparent assessment for better recognition, status, and rewards.

Method

This study evaluated practices and policies for English language writing skills in primary-level Bengali medium or government schools in Bangladesh, the educational gap between guidelines established for language teaching and the practical (real-life) language teaching scenario.

Procedure

The primary and secondary data collection methods contained qualitative and quantitative data used in standard research methods under the literature. Both have equal advantages that helped the study by lessening the limitations and making the study more reliable. Hence, this study used a mixed data collection method.

The primary data is collected through a survey method via two online survey questionnaires; the first questionnaire has 12 questions based on how much teachers perceived the importance of writing skills development if they know the writing skill policy in English language teaching and practices in the classroom. The second questionnaire had ten survey questions for students based on their classroom experience and writing skills. The questionnaires were given based on the teachers' and students' understanding of the writing skills.

This survey contained open-ended and closed-ended questions that can be answered within the questionnaire, allowing quantitative data collection. The research tool for this survey is conducted online through Google questionnaire forms. It helped to extend or support the generalizability of the study. This survey contained close-ended questions that could be answered within the few options and some open-ended questions that could be answered by free writing provided in the questionnaire; this allowed the collection of quantitative and qualitative data.

The research tool for this survey is conducted online through Google questionnaire forms; the samples for this study were 12 Bangladeshi English teachers and 14 primary school students. This quantitative approach helps to extend or support the generalizability of the study. Quantitative data is also an advantage as it provides statistics and numbers that are easy to analyze. It is a

scientific method that gives less biased or uninfluenced data that is more reliable and generalizable. This survey contained open-ended questions, which added an advantage as the respondents expressed their thoughts.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data

As aforementioned, the survey contained 12 questions that were responded to by 12 teachers. Fourteen students responded to secondary survey questions. The last two questions in the teacher's survey and the last in the students' survey contained open-ended questions. The questions were intended to be directed toward classroom practices, teachings, class adaptation, and learning. This question was intended to see if the students are capable of learning independent writing skills adequate for real-life situations.

The first two questions looked into the name of the sample teaching school and their training for teaching; it is essential for any research as these factors are variables of different types of the education system. The data of the teachers' responses show that 83.3% of the teachers were provided with training before or after joining school, while 16% of respondents were not. The following two questions were about whether teachers were provided with sufficient teaching aids and their understanding of the subject, so their answers on questionnaires are reliable. 75% of the Teachers were provided with materials, guides, and teaching aids for developing language, and 25% of the respondents were not provided with any materials, guides, or teaching aids for developing language.

The subsequent five questions were crucial as they focused on curriculum policies of English and strategies for improving students' writing process. Teachers' classroom practices are up to the mark as 91.7% of the teachers consider writing skills essential to teach at the primary level, 100% of the teachers gave regular feedback based on their students' work, 100% of the teachers gave students' writing tasks that they can write based on their thoughts. 58.3% of the teachers did not think their students got enough exposure to writing skills through the national curriculum policy.

The first two questions in the students' survey looked into the name of the school and which class or standard are the samples. It is vital for any research as these factors are variables of different types of education systems. It also categorized which educational systems can be generalized in this research. Approximately 50% of the students are in the fourth standard, approximately 28.5% are in the fifth standard, approximately 14.3% are in the ninth standard, and approximately 7.1% are in the third. The following five questions were about their focus on English practices in classes and their willingness or interest in the subject. Most students have good marks, 85.7% of the students responded that they receive good grades (A+ to B), and 14.3% of the students responded that they receive regular fair grades (B to C-), they are not confident enough about their writing skills as about 42.9% of the students responded Reading as a best skill they have in English language, 35.7% of the students responded Writing as a best skill they have in English language, 14.3% of the students responded Listening as the best skill they have in English language, and 7.1% of the students responded Speaking as a best skill they have in English language in the online survey.

Qualitative Data

The last two questions in the teachers' survey and the last question in the students' survey collected qualitative data that helped identify the issues of classroom practices, problems, and opinions of the teachers and students. The responses not only help in identification but also help rectify and bring new suggestions into the policy and practices in the classroom.

The last two open-ended questions targeted the teachers to identify if they have noticed the challenges and techniques of English language writing skills. The open-ended answers from teachers are identified by dividing them into two. Firstly, teachers are held responsible for students' lack of attention as a challenge in the classroom: "Students are not attentive, unserious and uncooperative" and lack of exposure due to inadequate materials and underdeveloped curriculum policies, as one said, "Not enough materials for teaching English."

In the questionnaire for students, the last question is an open-ended question that targets the students to identify the challenges hampering English language writing skills. Students' open-

ended (qualitative) answers could be divided into three. Approximately 58.3% of the students responded that they face challenges with spelling and vocabulary, a few (approximately 33.3%) responded that they face challenges with grammar, and 8.3% of students stated that they have few problems while writing. About 64.3% of the students responded that they receive regular feedback, 21.4% of students responded that they do not receive regular feedback, and 14.3% of the students responded that they are unsure if they received regular feedback or not, which can also add to their issue of being unable to wholesome learning.

Discussion

It is safe to conclude that students cannot learn what was necessary within the primary level years or get satisfactory skills or knowledge that are sufficient and age-appropriate. As analyzed by teachers' responses, the educational system needs a proper curriculum policy. The lack of teaching aids, materials, and teachers' training causes a hamper in the education system. The teachers need to provide more exposure to the usage or experience with the language so that the student can use it in real-life settings; the lack of exposure causes a gap between the understanding and use of the language in real life. Instead, the students have a controlled environment to exercise their skills. This results in the inability to employ the language in real life or outside the classroom.

Identifying the problems in the National Curriculum Policy and changing them for a student's future is essential. The National Curriculum Policy does not focus on real-life communication skills and is not challenging or exciting enough to get students' attention. Teachers should be highly knowledgeable about handling the classroom or teaching by providing different techniques, as mentioned in Does Teacher's Educational Qualification Matter in Primary Classroom? (Fawzia & Ahmed, 2016). The incompetence later results in developing a sense of fear and failure, as aforementioned in Experiences of Primary School with Students with Reading and Writing Difficulties (Akyol et al., 2021).

The students lack independent writing skills. They faced difficulty expressing their ideas; this was also a result of an exclusively controlled environment. As per the qualitative analysis, students lacked practice using synonyms and vocabulary. They have difficulty with spelling and

grammar; the reason might be improper feedback and underdeveloped adoption due to lack of exposure.

Recommendations

Firstly, classrooms with more writing classes are needed for a developing brain. The more students practice, the more issues with writing will be resolved, and confidence will be boosted. Hence, increasing the number of writing classes will be helpful. Secondly, as per the survey, many said students needed more interest; this may be because of less exposure to the language textbook with less or no appeal. Therefore, adding more materials that provide exposure to the language may help in interest. Thirdly, teachers give feedback to students for improvement; subsequently, collecting feedback based on their understanding and problem may improve teaching. Fourthly, improvising English National Curriculum Policy Bangladesh may help improve the educational system, providing a more foolproof education system. Finally, more research should be conducted as it is still in an error procedure. Research will help identify weaknesses and strengthen the educational system.

Conclusion

As aforementioned, in writing and verbal form, critical writing involves cognition skills that help cognitive development; it is also vital for effective communication or self-expression and provides good opportunities. Writing skills should be an activity that students should learn with adaptive methods and techniques. The National Education Policy for teaching practical writing skills has created a curriculum to endorse training in a planned and programmed approach, essential to achieving writing skills. However, the results showed that teachers and students of primary school face a presence of challenges. As per the survey results, it can be concluded that even the respondents could identify policy and practice problems. Suggestions for further studies are to use diverse materials and samples for the respondents to make the study more generalizable and vital.

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