8-29-2012

Educational Infrastructural Development in Bangladesh: A Comparative Rural and Urban Community Context Study of Government Primary Schools in Bangladesh

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Educational Infrastructural Development in Bangladesh: A Comparative Rural and Urban Community Context Study of Government Primary Schools in Bangladesh

By

Minhajul Meje
BA, Urban Studies, 2008

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts in Urban Studies at Fordham University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

New York

May, 2012
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PREFACE

Education is one of the pillars of society, regardless of it being developed or developing. Bangladesh, a country that has been independent for forty-one years has undergone major transformation in all sectors of society, however certain areas such as education needs further development, particularly in the primary public sector. My inspiration to conduct this study came from the participants I interviewed for my undergraduate thesis at Fordham University. They were all mid-aged female Bangladeshi citizens that lived in rural communities in Bangladesh. With the desire for better financial success they responded to housekeeping jobs post, little did they know that they were about to become victims of human labor trafficking. All the participants of that study attended public primary schools that were in detrimental conditions, causing them to lose interest in their education and give-up on aspiring to become educated professional with careers at a young age. Thus, I wanted to examine the conditions of the schools and how the school's physical infrastructure and classroom environment impact the students. The purpose of this study is to shed light on the existing conditions in Bangladesh’s primary schools and propose possible alternatives solutions to problematic conditions.

This study examines the physical infrastructural conditions of the schools in relationship to its community context. The study is conducted in public primary schools in both rural and urban community context. The cross community context study allowed me to filter issues that were experienced by both rural and urban communities. To conduct the
study, I used the observation and interview method in which, five instructional staff, five parents of students and ten students were interviewed. While the target interviews were twenty per school, due to various circumstances including monsoon weather conditions, I was unable to conduct the target interviews.

In my search for rural schools to conduct my study, Volunteer Association of Bangladesh (VAB), a non-profit organization that helps high school student from financially struggling family, assisted me in networking with the public primary schools in the rural communities. A VAB associate and I planned to visit four public primary schools in four different states to conduct the study. However, due to monsoon floods in two of the state, I was only able to visit two primary schools, one in Rajshahi and the other in Khulna. I traveled to both rural communities with a VAB associate. Each community was located six to seven hours bus route outside of Dhaka City. Since VAB works with students in rural communities, I conducted my study in the urban community independently.

I conducted my study of the urban community schools in Dhaka City. Before conducting the study, I met with Dhaka City District Teaching officer and submitted a proposal for the study. After a rigorous process, I was given permission to conduct the study and was assigned four schools to conduct my study. Upon arriving to each school, I had to present the permission letter to the principle (headmaster), which stated the school’s name for participating in the study. Without the permission letter, the schools were not allowed to take part in the study. Although I was assigned four schools I was only able to conduct my study in three of the four urban schools.
I stayed in Dhaka for three months to complete this research and within that time period; I came across various obstacles that stood in the way of me completing the study in time. One of the primary issues that I came across was with the bureaucratic administrative system in both the Ministry of Primary and Mass education and within the school. To obtain permission for conducting the study I had to first visit the Dhaka District Assistant Teaching Officer’s office four days in the monsoon heavy rain condition. While some days she wasn’t there, other days she was in a meeting, none of her staff was able to give me an exact time for an appointment to meet her. However, after finally meeting her, I have come to learn that the permission was given by the Dhaka City District Teaching Officer, however a recommendation letter is needed by the Assistant Teaching Officer for consideration.

The first day I went to the Dhaka District Teaching Officer’s office, I waited several hours to meet with him, however, later I was told by a staff member that he was not coming in that day. The second day I went to his office, I arrived an hour before official office hour. Although the office had opened an hour after, once again, none of the staff was sure to exactly when he was coming. Finally when he arrived, he gave me five minutes of his time, in which I quickly summarized my project and showed him the recommendation letter from the Assistant Teaching Officer, he signed the document and granted me his consent and I departed his office in less than ten minute. A ten minute process took over eight hours to complete. Another issue I had in conducting this study was the constant political rally. Traditionally, rallies are conducted peacefully, however in Bangladesh, whenever there is a rally or a strike, all private sectors close including public transportation
and car owners do not drive to avoid risking confronting the protestor. Due to the frequent lockdown from strikes, I had to constantly change interview scheduling, causing the interview period to be prolonged.

This research examines the physical infrastructural issues that exist in Bangladesh’s public primary schools. While, the possible solutions proposed in this study are short term, further studies are needed to evaluate and develop long term solutions to the existing issues in Bangladesh’s schools. This study aspires to show the need of further investigation which should be conducted in a large scale over an extended period of time. I hope this research shed proper light on the need for educational development in Bangladesh and that the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education in Bangladesh take further initiatives to better the primary education system and equip students with proper educational tools necessary to become a member of the new global community.

The journey and experience gained from conducting this research has been an exceptional experience and the most remarkable three months of my life. However, I would have not been able to complete this research without the valuable support of two members of the Fordham University community. Fist, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to Dr. Rosemary Wakeman, Director of the Urban Studies Master’s program at Fordham University, for her unconditional support and being a great mentor. Second, I would like to thank Ms. Stephie Mukherjee, Director of Fordham University Higher Education Program, for believing and supporting me from my first day at Fordham University during my Undergraduate years. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Aseel Sawalha, Associate Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Fordham University for her valuable comments during my
editing process of this thesis. Lastly, I would like to thank Ms. Tithi Ghosh, Adjunct Lecturer at Hunter College, for her unconditional support during this research and for being a great friend for over ten years.
Introduction

Peripheral communities pose challenges that governments are constantly attempting to resolve. The problems in these communities impact the people in the communities and its educational system; they are ongoing generational issues. While certain issues are prevalent in both urban and rural communities others are only present in one and not the other. The physical infrastructural of schools is a crucial component for academic success in rural and urban communities in Bangladesh. While many schools were built to provide basic primary education, the quality of the education is declining due to massive deterioration and inadequate physical infrastructure. These issues are simply hurting teachers' ability to produce quality education. The following empirical question was examined in this research: given the obstacles both urban and rural communities’ government primary schools are facing, are the physical infrastructural problems specific to the urban and rural environments the schools are in or are they a result of lack of support from the Ministry of Primary and Mass education? Since this research is embedded on the necessity of a proper structural facility to provide quality education, I aspire to find a positive relationship between adequate infrastructure and educational success.

The fundamental objective of this study is to examine the physical infrastructure of rural and urban community government primary school in the context of the obstacles that rose due to its infrastructure. This research identifies the teaching methodologies currently being used by schools in Bangladesh to address problematic physical infrastructures of the
school. The purpose of studying both rural and urban schools is to conduct a comparative study that will identify and examine structural successes and failures in the different communities. While the literature review show that similar studies were conducted in other countries, this research will shed light on the lack of proper educational infrastructure specifically in Bangladesh. In addition, this study examines the hindrances that prohibit communities from achieving educational improvement in a developing country that is in dire need of infrastructural development in their primary educational sector.

This research enabled me to collect data, observe and better understand the different parameters associated with the schools’ physical infrastructure and teaching strategies. I gained insight into the methods implemented by educational administrators to achieve success while conducting my research. The study is distinctive in the comparative analysis of both rural and urban schools. A comparative analysis approach allowed me to study the data collected side-by-side and identify possible trends and patterns of obstacles faced by teachers, parents and students alike in schools with physical infrastructural issues. There has not been sufficient research conducted of Bangladesh schools in urban communities in comparison to the schools in rural communities. In this study, I aimed to bridge the gap between the two environment by identifying their similar strengths, weaknesses and obstacles along with how they have overcome their obstacles.
CHAPTER 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

In conducting this study, a wide range of literature was examined to gain insight into peripheral communities and their education systems. Primary government school’s infrastructural research is relatively a new area of investigation in Bangladesh. Although, the Ministry of Education is supporting various development research programs, minimal data is published or available that examines the school infrastructure and the communities in which schools are located. Since limited data is available on comparative educational development in Bangladesh, reviewing and analyzing educational development literature that looks at American case studies provides a framework. This framework then helped develop methods of examining how Bangladesh’s education system is performing. Reviewing American case studies assisted in identifying the factors that make up a struggling community. In turn, we can understand and evaluate Bangladesh’s primary educational sector in both rural and urban communities. The American case studies also provide a rubric for understanding what academic success means, as American education is known for its successful academic outcomes.

Formation of a Developing Community

There are many factors that compose a peripheral community. These factors rise from a lack of a proper domestic, financial, environmental and educational foundation. When examining a poor or underdeveloped community’s educational system and student success rate, among the first factors that can be observed are racial disadvantages and
stratification. Daniel Levine in "Stratification, Segregation, and Children in the Inner-City School," (1972) elaborates on the obstacles that exist for peripheral communities’ students as they embark on their educational journey. Levine argues that historically it can be seen that certain ethnic communities are attract discrimination which disables them from climbing up the success ladder. He states,

"Even if they had been able to exercise the full range of choices open to the white middle-class, middle class Negroes would not have been able to provide a sufficiently effective model for the black child merely because they belong to a group which historically has kept quiet small by limiting the opportunity available to negroes and which, therefore, was recognized-and thereby discredited- as being dependent on the favors of more powerful white groups."¹

These forms of discriminations occur not only in job opportunities but also in government policies. Parental failure causes their children not to get their parents’ full support which leads many to become entrapped by the negative influences affecting not only them but their education.

However not all families are situated in these communities permanently. There are examples of many families who despite this struggle make their exit out of these communities. But once they climb their way out of these communities, they do not go back to help others nor do they stay as a role model for others. Levine describes this filtering affect, “as Negro families succeed, they tend to move out of these economically and social depressed areas to better neighborhoods where they and their children have the opportunities to lead a better life. They leave behind increasing problems of deprivation in the heart of our cities.”² Over time, discrimination and lack of role models in these

communities has filtered the community into becoming a “dumping ground” as Levine states. While parents struggle with financial issues, their children are left with little hope for a proper life and very few people to look up to.

Cities are growing every year in size and population. With the growth comes an array of problems which cannot be easily resolved. According to Levine, “the low income child, therefore, no longer lives, in a low-income tenement or block which occasionally brings him into personal contact with alternative social environment; instead the only universe which he knows at first hand is the world of the defeated and alienated.” The constant experience of defeat and alienation not only affects children in their personal lives but also their educational lives as well. With the communities growing, it not only increases the number of people living in poverty but also it affects the educational experiences children are having in these environments. In many instances this leads to overcrowded classrooms, violence in the streets amongst similar and different ethnic groups and much more. This is just another example of the obstacles children in peripheral communities have to face.

Another aspect that impacts American culture is media. Over the years the media has played a vital role in portraying lifestyles to a mass audience. In the past while parents strived to give their child a proper education and persuade them to work for a better future, they were aided by books, newspapers, magazine and other forms of media. The media influenced children to achieve despite their living condition, showing them hope for a

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3 Ibid, 22.
4 Ibid.
brighter future. However, Levine describes the media taking on a different approach as, “Today the message communicated to children by the mass media tells them to ‘buy now, pay later’ and to regard the satisfaction of worldly desires as the most glorious and personally fulfilling of all human pursuits.”5 Quite evidently it can be seen that media today is targeting the middle class communities who are not living below income level nor living meal to meal. Since the media today is geared towards the middle class, it causes the lower class to suffer as they feel segregated and are deprived from the same cultural support that the media provides for the middle class.

In some instances teachers have become frustrated with children from underdeveloped communities, perceiving them as having learning disabilities. The teachers fail to realize the conditions and environments the children come from. These views are understandable; however they are not justified. Levine argues that,

certainly we must recognize how destructive the inner-city environment often is for children who grow up and go to school there, but a logical and professional response based on this understanding is not to conclude that inner-city students are unable to learn, but rather to blend every effort to help change the psychological, sociological, and physical environment in which inner-city students function both inside and outside the school.6 This will require inner-city educators to approach these students with an effective curriculum. Also, teachers need to distinguish the fact that a child’s educational experience has an effect on their mental and emotional maturity; therefore, they should not withhold any available support to their students.

5 Ibid, 23.
6 Ibid, 29.
Another scholar who takes on examining the various factors in peripheral communities is Robert V. Bullough Jr. A professor at Young University, Utah, he has done extensive educational research in underdeveloped communities. In *Uncertain Lives: Children of Promise, Teachers of Hope* (2010), he examines 34 students in Mrs. Sorensen's class who attend Lafayette Elementary School. While every student is different, their struggles not just represent them, but millions of others whose stories are yet to be told. Bullough breaks down his explanation of the various factors that affect children in underdeveloped communities into six variables; living in poverty, single parent, parental drug use, abuse in the home, parents’ injury and death, and family instability.

The underling factor behind underdeveloped communities is that the people themselves are living in poverty. While living in poverty has different effects on individual family members, Bullough argues that it primarily affects children the most. Parents in this scenario typically have one main objective: how to survive and keep their family alive. However, there is a different impact on children; most children who are in primary or middle school have yet to figure out their lives. Since parents and grownups around them are the primary role models, when they see their own role model struggle to make ends meet, they themselves become hopeless towards their own future. From chores to taking care of young siblings, daily tasks come in the way of being able to study properly.

Quite often, families who live in poverty are constantly moving from one community to another. With job instability, parents often relocate to wherever they can find a job and affordable housing. This move not only affects them but affects their children as well as they have to enter a new environment and adapt once again. Sally, a student in
Mrs. Sorensen’s class, is one of many students who live in poverty. In three years Sally had entered three different schools. Her mother is struggling to maintain a proper job, causing her family to move often and, “just when Sally begins to feel settled and makes a friend or two, the family movies again, and Sally faces what to her is a horrendous challenge of making her way yet again in a strange place.” Sally is responsible for making dinner every day after school. This time consuming task interferes with homework time and she is often unable to complete her assignments. Neither parent is involved in her schooling, which often leads children to lose hope and become un-motivated about their education.

Children react to the absence of a father figure in surprising ways that affects their behavior in school. They have mixed feelings and often an unexplainable anger. Boys react differently than girls; boys often feel sad about not having a father figure and develop an anger towards not having a father, whereas girls have a deep sense of understanding with their mother and imitate her anger. Jeri, a student in Mrs. Sorensen’s class, lives with her mother. Her mother did not marry her father because she felt that he was not a good father figure as he used drugs. The mother’s decision impacted Jeri and it reflected on her school behavior. Jeri is often angry and disrespectful towards her teacher. Also, she often engages in physical fights in school during recess with other students. Due to her personal experience, Jeri likes to consider herself as “tough,” a characteristic she acquired from her mother. To help Jeri mitigate her anger, her teacher suggested that she serve as a conflict

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7 Bullough, Uncertain Lives Children of Promise, Teachers of Hope, 12.
8 Ibid, 29.
manager where she will be trained to help other students resolve their problems. By helping others, her teacher expects that she will be able to solve some of her own problems.

Parental drug use is another factor that affects children severely. In underdeveloped communities, many parents are involved in drug use in different ways. While some parents are in jail for either taking or selling illegal drugs, others use drugs in front of their kids with no consideration towards the influence it is having or will have on the child. In some cases, children watch their own parents go to jail or rehab for drug abuse. In these scenarios, the children themselves feel alone and feel that it is their responsibility to keep themselves alive. With violence and gang warfare, which is common in undeveloped and peripheral communities, smart children are forced to become gangsters or “wana be” in order to survive. Children who are raised by adults who use either alcohol or any form of illegal drugs eventually become immune to the presence of drugs in their lives. They no longer fear drugs; instead they accept as them a part of their own lives.

Parental drug use not only affects the parents but it also impact their children as well and in many cases leads to abuse at home. Along with the other factors that affect children living in peripheral communities, physical abuse at home is also another struggle many children face. Bullough states that, “abuse takes many forms, including sexual and physical, as well as domestic violence and emotional maltreatment.” Physical neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment, accounting for 60 percent of all reported

9 Ibid 57.
10 Ibid.
Abuse at home has a long term effect on children as they perceive themselves as less worthy. Often children who face abuse at home become introverts and are scared. This notion of fear builds in the children over time and impacts their cooperation and interest in their education.

While some children stay silent taking the abuse, others become enraged. Children who are sexually abused by a parent at home are predominantly the ones who stay quiet. On the other hand, children who are physically abused at home develop an anger and are often seen getting into trouble in school and outside of school. Also, Bullough convey that, children who are neglected by their parents are often seen in class being disruptive because they are trying to gain attention from their friends. In conclusion, both Levine and Bullough examine the different obstacles children and their families face in underdeveloped communities and these obstacles factor into their overall educational performance.

Teaching Methodologies in Developing Communities

It is important to take into consideration the culture of students’ we intend to study. Therefore it is important to understand the different cultural backgrounds students come from. Why Culture Counts: Teaching Children of Poverty by Donna Walker Tileston, Sandra K. Darling, (2008). The authors examine culturally diverse classrooms and suggests different methods that should be used to teach children from different cultural backgrounds.

Different cultures welcomes different behaviors, therefore according to the authors it is vital to understand the culture before engaging a teaching approach. In other words,
while certain encouragement might be praised in school, the same encouragement can present a conflict for the child at home. Also, while teachers typically encourage students to think independently and voice their opinion, in some cultures this very notion of individuality can be seen as disrespectful to others. Understanding the cultural background students come from is one of the key elements in successfully teaching and executing teaching methodologies with children in poverty.

According to the authors there are seven prime variables that educators should consider when teaching children in underdeveloped communities. It is important for the teacher to build a strong relationship with his or her student’s parents. By interacting with parents the teacher will have a better understanding of the type of values and culture the student follows. Also, instead of the traditional one-on-one conference with the parents, the teacher should conduct group discussions with multiple parents. “Mom and dad are more often comfortable talking in a group and focusing on a number of students rather than focusing exclusively on their own child.”  

This will allow the teacher to see common concerns parents are having and formulate a solution that is accepted parents as well.

In different cultures there are different approaches; for example, “in African American cultures, relationships are essential before learning can take place. Therefore, a teacher in an African American classroom must build a relationship with his or her student first and provide learning second.”  

By associating with parents, teachers can identify the proper approach they need to take. Also it is important for teachers to organize their

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13 Ibid, 9.
classrooms in a setting in which students can help each other. Since helping behavior is highly valued in many cultures, students’ involvement in the classroom will demonstrate an acceptance of that value.

In poor communities there is a lack of resources, therefore it is crucial to teach the children how to share. This simple quality of sharing not only affects the children in school but also in their own community as well. “Latino immigrant parents strongly value sharing personal property.”

When teachers are given a curriculum to complete, time is very keen and providing certain individual attention to students can come in the way of completing the curriculum. However, the “stories” that students tell often speaks the truth about various obstacles the student is facing. Therefore it is very imperative that educators manage their classroom time sufficiently.

The authors discuss seven key methodologies that are imperative in teaching kids in underdeveloped communities. The methodologies are the following: cooperative learning, group investigation, graphic representations, call and response strategy, wait time, visual imagery, and affirmation. Cooperative learning requires students to be placed into groups to insure their maximum learning. It not only enables students to seek a common goal but also to help one another. Group investigation requires students to systematically incorporate a specific methodology and in order to achieve proper results, they must observe, collect and organize data together. It helps students to strategize their investigation and approach but also become organized.

14 Ibid,34.
Graphic representation can be conducted in various formats for achieving multiple educational goals. The representation demonstrates the relationship between ideas through words or pictures and can be very beneficial to diverse learners. Call and response requires one student to be the “caller” and convey a message to their group. This strategy affirms individual autonomy to the caller while reinforcing memory skills to the responder. Also, all the students are given the turn to lead the group and become the caller. Wait time is a strategy that is known by most but not often used. When the teacher asks a question they should wait five seconds before asking for a response. Wait time provides individual time for the students to formulate their own individual response and is very successful amongst diverse learners.

Visual imagery is a crucial technique for immigrant students. Most immigrant students are fluent in their native language and English is their second language. This method provides the students a common connection between their old and new learning experience. Finally, affirmation is another strategy described by the authors as having a positive effect on students as “it allows students to relieve inner conflict and focus on their actions during the day, and it integrates personal collective values.” The ideas students are learning should be reinforced by affirmation.

Similar to the literature discussed above, Diane M. Barone in Narrowing the Literacy Gap: What Works in High-Poverty Schools (2006), discusses the methodologies used in high poverty schools. Although both Tileston & Darling and Barone have different approach, their goals are similar. In Howard Elementary School, Barone has examined the

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15 Ibid, 65.
following methods being implemented. In order to help all the students it was important to teach the whole class and not individual students. The teachers expected all work to be completed regardless of language barrier. At times this method created problems for students; however, it encouraged students to try their best.

Although teachers assembled their daily curriculum differently, certain activities were common. Independent reading was emphasized as one of the main necessities for students. It not only helps them build their vocabulary, but also gives them a sense of achievement. To aid students with reading it was necessary to have a word wall listing different activities to support spelling and extend word usage.

Students who live in high poverty communities come from various backgrounds. Often they face many difficulties that they are not able to express, therefore journal writing is important. Journal writing enables students to express their ideas and to focus, since students are often seen as distracted by outside school activities. However, it is important that the teacher select the journal entry topic. Another effective method according to Barone is grouping students and encouraging them to work together. Barone states that, “although many strategies were incorporated into their instruction, perhaps the most dominant was grouping students, so that they could target instructions to current level of literacy knowledge.”16 In summary, Barone perceives the following as the most important component in teaching kids in poverty: “what is most important in considering this long-term view of teaching at a high poverty school is that these teachers constantly tried to meet the learning needs of the students. They saw themselves as a student as they explored

16 Barone, Narrowing the literacy gap, 111.
together current best practices in literacy.”17 This notion of perceiving the students is the main method of teaching; thus, teach others the way you like to be taught.

*Reaching and Teaching Children Who Are Victims of Poverty* (1999) edited by Alice Duhon-Ross is a collaboration by various scholars. Similar to other scholars’, this collection placed great emphasis on the teachers taking the initiative to spend ample time in getting to know their students such as, “personal lives, background experience, life structure and culture.”18 In doing so, Rose M Duhon-Sell, Hallow C Shells, and Glendolyn Jean Louis, have established five factors that are needed to fulfill the needs of impoverished students. First, teachers must have proper knowledge of their students’ life experience. Second, the teachers should have knowledge on how to use current technology to enhance their teaching and learning process. Third, it is critical for teachers to identify their students’ desire, interest, learning style and academic strength. Fourth, teachers must have proper academic preparation encompassing a multicultural experience that will enable the teacher to provide a proper learning and teaching experience to their students. And finally, teachers must have knowledge of local community resource that are available to help their students and parents.19

Brenda Burrell provides multiple approaches for teaching children in poverty. One of the main approaches often perceived as beneficial, can also be damaging. Teachers do not necessarily have all the answers to questions students might ask. Therefore, it is

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17 Ibid, 111-112.
18 Duhon-Sell and Sells, “Reaching and Teaching Children who are Victims of Poverty,” 4.
19 Ibid.
important to allow the student to discover and research on their own. Also, it is important to connect the topic being taught to reality and various job professions. By doing so, it will show the student that what they are learning is not irrelevant.\textsuperscript{20} Before starting a new lesson, teachers must see if their students understand the lesson taught in the previous class and if they are ready for a new lesson. Often teachers teach new lessons weekly without clarifying older lessons, causing students to be confused and fall behind as the new lesson is being taught. Therefore, an oral review or writing pretest is necessary to clarify that the students are ready to learn something new.

Poverty has a great impact on children learning experience, especially when they constantly lack resources. In school, one of the most difficult tasks a child can be given is one that requires various resources and material. This explains the reasons why take-home assignments that require school supplies are often left without completion. After exploring this obstacle, Barbara Trzcinske suggests that, “the teacher may consider providing a work space within the classroom for all children to use that has the material necessary.”\textsuperscript{21} This method will particularly benefit kids who are victims of poverty and specifically children whose families cannot afford to buy the needed school supplies.

Parents from low-income families are often seen working multiple jobs and are unable to give their children time. Family time is rarely seen; with that in mind Trzcinske addresses another concern. Often teachers assign homework that requires assistance or supervision. However, since most parents are busy and unable to help their children, this

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{21} Trzcinske, “Respectful Education for All Children,” 65.
simple assignment can have an opposite effect causing the child to feel unappreciated and neglected. To overcome this obstacle, Barbara suggests that, “the teacher may consider providing a range of methods to complete an assignment to accommodate for lack of adult help.” Also, assignments that require trips to the library can be difficult because often adult supervision is needed, therefore the teacher should have the resources available in the classroom.

"Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students" by Jere E. Brophy discusses different teaching methods for kids in poverty. Brophy identifies several methods that are considered effective in helping poor children. Strong leadership is necessary to prioritize and achieve goals. The leadership should start from the top of the academic ladder with the principal. A safe and orderly learning environment is crucial for students. With high crime and violence rate in poor communities it is important that students feel safe and secure when they are in school.

In helping, it is imperative that teachers have a positive attitude towards their students and are able to express their expectations for the students. Also, once a student has achieved a specific goal or task, it is important to acknowledge the accomplishment publically. This will give the student a sense of achievement and influence others as well. While conducting these methods it is also important to carefully monitor student’s progress through tests and evaluations.

Ideally, the school should become a hub instead of just an academic institution. In these communities public place is not perceived as safe and secure. Therefore it is

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22 Ibid.
important for educators to involve the school in community affairs. For this to occur, it is important for teachers to reach out to parents and request their involvement in the school; once parents start to participate, a familial atmosphere gets created. Finally, Brophy emphasizes that it is very important for teachers to establish a specific belief and attitude in students regarding their education, “it is important that such students realize that schooling is not merely imposed on them but established and maintained for their benefit, and that the knowledge and skills they have learned in schools are empowering ‘tickets’ to success in our society.”

Children who live in poverty often become distracted by activities that take place outside of school. That is why it is important to remind them of the value of their education to keep them focused and consistent.

**School Infrastructure and Resource Relationship**

Academic research on educational development has proven to have mixed results depending on the country examined. Nonetheless, while the rural and urban communities in Bangladesh differ from other countries, their hurdles remain the same. Adequate school infrastructure is the primary backbone to success; in order for schools to provide a quality education they must have the amenities needed to produce that quality. In "School Infrastructure and Resource do Matter: Analysis of the Incidence of School Resources on the Performance of Latin American Students," by F. Javier Murillo and Marcella

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Roman(2011) present a comprehensive discussion of the existing relationship between school infrastructure and its resource, and how it impact educational success.

According to the literature examined by the authors, studies of school efficiency development in the United States, Europe and other countries have shown that school resource and facilities do not have a positive impact on students’ achievements. However, the authors believe that the relationship between school resource and facilities indeed do have a positive correlation. Nevertheless, the impact of one on another is often undermined and overlooked by government officials and scholars. The authors applied a multilevel model of data discovered by the Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (SERCE) conducted by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In the study 180,000 students in the 3rd and 6th grades of primary schools at 3,000 schools from 15 countries in Latin America was examined. The study of infrastructure in this article entailed basic amenities such as classroom furniture, adequate bathrooms, classroom teaching supplies, and other didactic materials. The results of the study showed the importance of both educational finance and classroom size structure as equally important part of the basic needs of the school for proper operation.

Murillo and Marcella’s research was based on data collected by SERCE between 2005 and 2009 in Latin America. A multilevel approach was utilized to focus on four levels

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24 Ibid, 29
25 Ibid.
26 Education Finance in Bangladesh is a very imperative; however, to avoid straying away from the original objective of this study, educational finance was not critically examined in this research.
of study: students, classroom, school, and country. Three groups of variables were used: productive variable, adjustment variables, and independent or explanatory variables. The productive variables in this study were student achievements in mathematics and language. The adjustment variable measured socioeconomic level of students’ family and finally, independent or explanatory variable referred to facilities and resources in the school.

The multilevel models and four variables show that, both school facilities and school resources, especially libraries and the number of computers in the school are factors associated to student’s success. According to the authors, “socioeconomic situations of the area where the school is located, and the country’s level of development, the fact of whether the school is provided with potable water electric supply, or sewage service generates significant difference in students’ performance.” Therefore, in order to produce and provide a quality education, schools must initiate a bottom-up approach with the basic necessary amenities.

Among the various avenues that can be taken to measure academic success, the most basic is examining school attendance records and test scores. This research argues that the lack of basic amenities can contribute to resulting in poor achievement. Another factor in this research is the necessity for proper didactic resources such as computers, library and playgrounds. In a similar study conducted by Velez et al. (1994), it was implied that there was indeed a positive relationship between access to didactic materials and student

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27 Ibid, 32
28 Ibid, 33.
29 Ibid, 37.
achievement. Thus, “the possibility of studying in educational centers with enough resources and the fact that these resources are suited to the needs of the school allows performance to be higher, always considering, of course, the socioeconomic cultural level of the students’ families, the place or the context where the school operates and the country.” This research concludes that studies conducted in developing countries have failed to address the importance and the impact of basic services on school performance due to lack of sufficient experimental variation.

The pace at which innovation in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has taken place today has changed traditional forms of teaching. Technology has bridged the wide gap between knowledge, culture and communication across the world. Today, the impact of technology is seen in classrooms as well as on teachers and students equally, and their access to a portal of knowledge.

In, "Understanding Structural and Cultural School Characteristics in Relation to Education changes: the Case of ICT Integration," Tondeur (2009) collectively built a study that examines a specific school characteristic that influence the type of educational changes being implemented: ICT integration. A survey of 527 teachers in 68 schools in Flanders (Belgium) was conducted that emphasized teacher perspectives on structural and cultural characteristic and their integration of ICT tools in classrooms.

The objective of their study was to investigate both structural school characteristics (infrastructure, planning and support) and cultural school characteristics (leadership, goal
oriented and innovativeness) and their contribution to ICT integration in the classroom.\textsuperscript{31} The relationship between ICT integration and school profiles was examined to identify the impact of the relationship. ICT integration can have mixed results depending on the type of school it is implemented in. Acknowledging the importance of integration, it is vital to keep in mind that ICT requires certain structural support. According to the authors, multiple studies reveal that ICT works in some school and does not in others due to school infrastructure and ICT related support.\textsuperscript{32} A similar study conducted by Bradley and Russell (1997) was examined and the results concluded that, “without adequate resources, there is little opportunity for teachers to integrate computers into their reading.”\textsuperscript{33} Thus, proper ICT integration is related to structural changes at the school level.

The article is centered on an empirical study of the relationship that exists between ICT integration, organizational and cultural school characteristics. Using the survey study method, sixty-eight primary schools in Flanders were chosen: one teacher from each grade with at least six teachers from each school.\textsuperscript{34} Questionnaires were developed to examine the following two parameters: “(1) the central dependent variable of ICT integration in the classroom and (2) dimensions of structural and cultural school characteristics.”\textsuperscript{35} The results of this study illustrate that the primary purpose of computers in the classroom was for the teacher’s use. On average, only 2.2 hours a week of the 6.7 hours weekly usage was

\textsuperscript{31} Tondeur et al., “Understanding structural and cultural school characteristics in relation to education changes: the case of ICT integration,” 223.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, 224.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 223.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, 227.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, 228.
utilized for class activities and for the remaining 4.5 hours a week, the computer was used for professional support.\textsuperscript{30} It can be concluded that although computers have been placed in the classroom, the amount of time spent on the computer for class activity is rather limited and deserves more consideration. Similar argument can be seen in MacGilchrist et al (1995). This study concluded that the way a school carries out its structural development is a reflection of its culture. This suggests that schools that have adopted innovative culture, better understands the necessary strategies for structural changes to foster ICT integration in education. Also, it is important to understand the role of structural characteristics in a school. For instance, if a school wants to integrate multiple innovations and does not have the structural capability to allow teachers to implement the innovation, then the structure will become a barrier preventing the school from progressing.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 230.
CHAPTER 2. PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

Primary education in Bangladesh was established decades ago, however, education only became compulsory in recent years. The primary level is divided into three sectors: public, private and NGO. The Primary Education (Compulsory) Act of 1990 under The Ministry of Primary Mass Education (MOPME) required primary education in Bangladesh by defining that, “Primary Education Institute means any governmental or non-governmental institute where provision for primary education has been made.” MOPME is responsible for providing “basic education, comprising formal free and compulsory primary and literacy and non-formal education.” The primary educational structure is divided into two categories: the formal sub-system which incorporates five years of schooling and the non-formal subsystem which is a two-three year education under a NGO operated school. BANBEIS (Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information & Statistics) identifies the two systems as the following: “Formal education is defined as, the institutionalized, hierarchically structured, chronologically graded education system starting from primary to post levels of education. Non-formal education is defined as any organized education activity outside the established formal system that is intended for specific objectives and to serve an

identifiable clientele.” Non-formal education was established to serve the needs of educationally disadvantage population.

The formal and non-formal education subsystems combined established eleven different types of primary educational institutions: government primary school, experimental school attached to PTI, registered non-government primary school, community school, satellite school, and high school attached to primary section, non-registered non-government primary school, kindergarten, ebtedayee madrasah, high madrasah attached, and NGO-run full primary school. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) 2008 reports, there are 82,218 primary schools of which 52 percent are private and 48 percent are public combining 16 million students and 365,925 teachers. While the development of primary education in Bangladesh has expanded in 2008, enrolment has declined in the year 2008 by 400,000 students compared to year 2000.40

The increase in the number of schools and the need of adequate funding for the schools to insure their longevity increases constantly. While the financial sources of the schools differ, their main objective remains the same, to provide sustainable and reachable education for all. The government’s budget for primary education in 2008 was 32.68 percent of the total education budget. Although the percentage of educational funding spent on primary education is greater compared to the amount allocated to other tiers such as Highs School, the increasing number of NGO operated schools suggests that

39 Ibid.
the government primary schools have suffered a setback and NGO schools have taken their place.  

Table 1: Government Financing Modal in Primary Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Education (Class 1-5)</th>
<th>Fully Government funded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Government Funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government School</td>
<td>Fully Government funded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered non-government school</td>
<td>Government funded up to a maximum of 5 teachers (for schools with more than 400 students) at 90% of the basic government teachers salary and limited allowance. Provides free stipends to 40% of rural students and free textbooks to all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Alia madrasahs</td>
<td>Fully government funded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent ebtayee madrasahs</td>
<td>Teachers receive a lump sum of Tk. 750 per month with no other benefits. Provides free stipends to 40% of rural students and free textbooks to all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized government madrasahs</td>
<td>Attached ebtayee sections of higher madrasas. Government funds teachers at 90% of the basic government teacher salary and limited allowance. Provides free textbooks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private schools</td>
<td>No direct government funding although those following national curriculum receives free textbooks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO Schools</td>
<td>No direct government support unless following the national kindergarten.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Private primary schools include non-registered non-government primary schools and kindergarten.  

Research Methodology

This research was conducted with an interpretive approach, and examined the symbolic meanings in school structure and community involvement. Two different methods were used to link and interpret data collected in this study. The observation method was the primary technique that was utilized to gather evidence and included field notes and voice recording of conversations with the participants. The school structure was examined through observing the durability of the structure and identifying visible damage that was impacting school operation, in addition to school amenities and the condition of the classroom furniture, students and teachers experience were also taken into account.

Community involvement in school is a key factor that collectively impacts both school and student. Thus, community involvement was observed to measure how much support schools receive from parents. I also inquired about parental information sessions being conducted. I observed a session to examine interaction between parents and school officials. Aiming to see positive support from parents and an interest in the quality of education their child was receiving, I was hesitant that my presence would limit or draw back participants’ from responding honestly. I feared that my presence as an outsider would have changed the way they acted, talked, and interacted. The Volunteer Association of Bangladesh (VAB), the organization I worked with, assisted in breaking traditional barriers of expression with the rural schools. However, with the urban schools, I interacted

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with the staff and students before interviewing them. This enabled me to gain their trust and conduct my study informally and friendly manor.

The secondary tool utilized in this research which was equally significant for this study was the interview method. Interviews were conducted with school officials, students, parents of the students and District Teaching Officer. First, interviews were conducted with school officials to identify the problems they encountered due to the state of the infrastructure and how they were utilizing their infrastructure to the best of their ability to maximize the quality of education they were providing. School officials were also asked to identify why the necessary changes to infrastructure had not been implemented. Secondly, Students were interviewed to examine their opinion on the infrastructure of their school and the changes they felt would help enhance their academic experience and increase their performance.

Thirdly, the parents of the students were interviewed to observe their viewpoint on the quality of education their child was receiving. Furthermore, they were asked what changes they would have liked to see in the school, which would help their child’s learning ability and school experience. Finally, a District Teaching Officer was interviewed; they were asked to address concerns expressed by teachers, parents and students without revealing any personal information. Thus, were their obstacles due to the context of the rural or urban environment they were in, and if so were the actions government representatives performed enhanced educational development in their community? The

43 The District Teaching Officer in Bangladesh is equivalent to the District Director of the Board of Education in American standards.
drawback to this method was asserting that parents, municipal education officers, teachers and students responded to the questions honestly and rationally. Often, the fear of speaking the truth limited a proper response, which may have caused discrepancies in the research. The District Teaching Office is very sensitive to the matters that were discussed, due to their political representation. Their response can result in unexpected political implications; therefore, getting them to acknowledge the issues at hand and discuss why they were occurring was a challenge with the interview method.

In order to have received the most accurate and valid response, confidentiality assurance to the participants response was essential. Once the participants were assured full confidentiality of their responses, and assured that the sole purpose and nature of the interview was for research study and their personal identification would be kept confidential, then I continued my interview. All of the participants were provided a confidentiality agreement which was approved by the Fordham University Institution Review Board. The agreement slip was translated in Bengali since only a minority of the teachers were literate in English. Participants’ signed and approved both copies. In addition, a formal description of the research, list of schools I intended to conduct the study in, and the questionnaires were provided to both the District Teaching officer and Dhaka City Teaching officer for approval. Without the approval the schools were not allowed to take part in the study. A copy of the approval slip from both officers was provided to the principle of every school before formally conducting the study.

The following research was conducted from a bottom-up technique with the inductive theory approach. By observing the school’s infrastructure and the community
they were situated in, I was able to identify certain patterns that existed in both urban and rural communities while identifying others that were not common to both. Since most study done in the past on educational development incorporated either the rural or urban community, this research is distinctive in compare in urban and rural schools. While F. J Murillo and Marcela Roman’s research suggested the necessity of an adequate infrastructure (basic amenities and didactic resources) for quality academic performance, they failed to address a crucial question, “what is the context of the community in which the school is in?”

Although, several academic research projects were conducted in Bangladesh with special attention to specific parameters, the urban and rural contrast and the impact of the environment on the school were hardly noticed. Initially this research questioned the basic school structure and not its additional amenities such as a school yard that is equally important, but significantly different. Daily lessons are taught in the classrooms, not in the playground. Therefore this research focused on the infrastructure of the building as a whole and not any specific area outside it.

After completing the study, the results show evidence that amenities such as the existence of a schoolyard and adequate, sanitary bathrooms, are equally important to the school and deserve to be treated with the same importance. Also, this research studied the inadequacy of classroom structure within the building and its amenities. This study identified obstacles schools were facing in both urban and rural communities. However the comparison of the different communities and the methods they were using to battle their obstacles was a key factor that differentiated this study from others conducted in the past.
CHAPTER 3. OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEWS

Table 2: Rural Community School Overview

Source: Collaboration of research data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RURAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL</th>
<th></th>
<th>BOTH:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: ~ Principal Female</td>
<td>~ Principal Male</td>
<td>~ Both schools share similar problems such as overcrowding in the classrooms due to insufficient classroom size with respect to the number of students per class, lack of enough bathrooms, students arriving to school hungry, inconvenient school time schedule and syllabus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ School is affected by monsoon weather.</td>
<td>~ In contrast, parents in school B were interested in the school’s academic success instead of its location.</td>
<td>~ Teachers and parents of both schools have suggested that the ministry should provide snacks in school, especially for students who come from financially struggling households.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Principle linked growing rate of students because parents from average middle class admitting their children into private and non-government organization (NGO) schools, thus, leaving room for parents of lower income families that face day-to-day survival to admit their child in public school.</td>
<td>~ No vacant space for expansion but received grants for further construction on the vacant schoolhouse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Students that attend school A live within close proximity, thus, the school is convenient for them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Has vacant space to expand but has not received grants for further construction.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 3: Urban Community School Overview

| URBAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL | A: ~ Principle Female ~ School is affected by monsoon weather. ~ The teachers discuss the influence of the political ruling government. | B: ~ Principle Female ~ School is affected by monsoon weather. ~ Child labor has caused many students to be absent from class and assist their parents in various odd jobs | C: ~ Principle Female ~ School is affected by monsoon weather. ~ In spite of this, urban school C has integrated their students into taking responsibilities for keeping the school clean ~Temporary solution was founded by school C’s approach of purchasing snacks for their students ~ Discusses corruption with the construction companies that received the tender for development work at the school | BOTH: ~ That the principals of all three schools had similar level of education in their own respected subjects ~ All three principals were female and a local member of the community. They did not stress concerns regarding their gender and how they are treated, an issue that was seen addressed by the female principals in the rural schools. ~ The classroom size remains to be a primary issue ~ The lack of a proper playground ~ Are two other issues that are present amongst all three urban schools: the schools’ maintenance and starving students ~ All three schools are struggling due to the lack of a proper full-time staff |

Source: Collaboration of research data.
Table 4: Rural and Urban Community School Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural vs. Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>~ Academic success is a factor that separates the two rural schools, yet it was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not mentioned as an impacting cause that separates the urban schools from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ Another factor that has impacted both communities and was stated by all the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>principals as significant is community involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA: “lack”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RB: “seen present”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC: “abundant”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ NGO affects RA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ In both rural and urban schools, the following issues are currently present:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of classrooms, lack of bathrooms, improper maintenance, inconvenient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school time, lengthy curriculum by which teachers are unable to finish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within the class time period, student-teacher ratio, and students having no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food to eat at school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Collaboration of research data.

**Rural and Urban Schools in Bangladesh**

The data collection process consisted of interviews conducted with teachers, parents and students of two rural schools and three urban schools in Bangladesh. The following paragraphs break down the important questions from the interviews and provide an analysis of the highlights of the interviews, arranged by audience. Copy of the questionnaires is provided in the appendix.

The rural and urban communities in Bangladesh differ significantly. For the purpose of this study, the schools located in Dhaka City were used to signify the urban community. In contrast, the rural schools were located in two different rural states. A map of Bangladesh is located in Appendix C. The first school was located in the state of Khulna.
while the second school was located in the state of Rajshahi. The urban schools that participated in this study were located in the central Dhaka City district. Although Dhaka is known as a megacity, not all of the state is entirely urban. The Dhaka City district area is predominantly urban, however the surrounding communities outside central Dhaka best resemble a rural community rather than an urban community.

The rural community in the states of Rajshahi and Khulna is geographically different compared to the urban community in Dhaka City. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2008 report, the population of the two states are as following; Khulna 1,388,425 and Rajshahi 775,495. The rural community inside the states in which the research was conducted was smaller in population and there were fewer numbers of schools per community. With less population to cater to, the residential neighborhood is spread out and the streets are comparably wider than the streets in Dhaka City. While street automotive traffic in rural communities is much less and is easier to navigate, public and private bus and train service within the community is also limited. However, there are battery operated rickshaws that travel on a meter rate and can be costly. As a result, students have to walk a long distance to reach school. Thus walking is the alternative option for students commuting to school who are from financially struggling families. Although only two rural communities were examined for the purpose of the research, it can be extrapolated that other rural communities in Bangladesh are similar in condition.

Dhaka can be best described as an over populated urban center. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2008 report, Dhaka has an estimated population of under 13 million. Despite the efforts of the transit authority to provide sufficient public
transportation, the current public transportation infrastructure is insufficient, causing the rise of private transportation as an alternative to public transportation.

The middle class residential communities are also overpopulated and are beyond dwelling capacity. Since residential rental income is one of the primary income sources for Dhaka City residents, much of the city consists of multi-story apartment buildings, and with the mass migration to the city from the rural communities, apartments do not stay vacant for long. Transportation is one of the primary obstacles in Dhaka City, with congested traffic, a ten minute commute to school on a rickshaw during off-peak hours can take up to forty-five minutes during peak-hours. In addition, since the neighborhoods are dense due to mass migration, there are multiple elementary schools in the same neighborhood, creating more accessibility for students.

Transportation plays a key role in Bangladesh. Some middle to lower middle class households in Dhaka City sends their kids to the nearest school in their community to save on transportation expense. In contrast, certain middle to upper middle class family households that is financially capable of owning a car, venture into areas outside their community for a good quality education. However rural communities have fewer cars and households that have a car are able to travel to educate their children in private schools outside their community. Therefore, households that do not have private cars are left with no choice but to have their children attend the school in their local community. While the schools examined in this research do not resemble all the primary government schools, interview results from this study show parents and instructional staff stating that similar situation is present in all primary government schools.
The urban and rural community contexts in Bangladesh are vital to understanding the purpose of this research. The character of the communities differs significantly, furthermore, in the upcoming data section, it will be seen that government public schools are facing similar obstacles in both urban and rural areas. Although certain issues exist due to the context of the community, their solution will require efforts from the schools, the Ministry of Mass Education and the community itself.

**Observation and Interviews: Rural Schools in Khulna**

Rural school (A) is located in the state of Khulna, which is six hours south of Dhaka City. Bus transportation was utilized to travel to Khulna. Although typical travel time without traffic is six hours by bus, my travel to Khulna took eight hours due to traffic. I stayed in the central city section of Khulna: the school was located a thirty minute rickshaw commute outside of the central city district. In the state of Khulna, the town that was visited is essentially a rural town with similar characteristics to the ones described above for a rural community. The rural school community and the rural town where I stayed had no significant differences except for the way they conduct their vehicular traffic, there were more vehicular traffic in the town I stayed in compared to the school community.

Located inside a rural community, far from the local commercial shops which were located in the main town, rural school (A) was one of the few primary government elementary schools in that community. While the school property on which the school was constructed is comparable to an American football field, only a tenth of the property was
used to construct the actual school. The remaining property is vacant and remains as the front yard for the school. Since there are no boundary walls enclosing the school property, the side street for rickshaws and pedestrian traffic can be used to outline the school property. In addition, there are trees parallel to the boundary of the school property on one side that can be seen as signifying the school property line. There are currently four hundred and thirty students enrolled in this school.

The school is constructed on the south end of the property in a rectangular shape. To the left of the school building there is a playground with a swing and a few benches constructed from cement. However, the swings have no seats leaving the benches as the only usable amenity in the school’s “playground.” 44 Adjacent to the school on the left side, parallel to the playground, there is a one story schoolhouse. Constructed from clay with a tin roof, the schoolhouse seats forty students side to side on the floor. When I visited the schoolhouse, it was shut down due to the monsoon rainy season, where water leaks through the windows. This has been one of the continuing obstacles the school has been facing for several years. In addition, the structure is constructed six inches from the ground, enabling flood water to enter the classroom during heavy rain.

The school building is a two story structure with classrooms on both floors, initially a bathroom were constructed only on the first floor, however, after the second floor classroom was constructed, additional bathroom was built on the second floor. The first floor classrooms are for grades one to three and the second floor classrooms are for grades

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44 This section of the school property was addressed as the playground by the school headmaster. However due to the lack of proper playground amenities, the facility is rarely used by students for extracurricular activities.
four and five. The first floor classrooms are smaller in size compared to the second floor classrooms. The first floor classrooms consist of wooden benches and tables that are damaged from years of use and lack of proper care. While the furniture is in need of replacement, however due to lack of funding, the principal is unable to purchase new furniture. The classroom walls are also in need of repainting; the walls have various images of hand drawn animals and fruits with their names underneath to help students identify and construct their cognitive skills. Once again, due to funding issues the principal is unable to purchase posters which typically have the images. Instead, teachers collectively join efforts to paint the images for the students.

Inside the classrooms there are three ceiling fans of which only one works and the others have been out of service for several years. There are two windows in every classroom; they are made from metal bar grills that open outward. During heavy rainy days, water leaks through the windows. Also the edges of the window mounts have deteriorated over years, leaving room for water to leak inside the classrooms. Given the conditions stated, it is clearly seen that the first floor classrooms are in desperate need of renovation. However, the classrooms on the second floor differ significantly compared to the first floor classrooms. The second floor classrooms are bigger in size and the classroom setup is different than the first floor classrooms by having benches placed in group clusters. The walls are in better condition with no images painted on them. Each classroom has four ceiling fans and all of them are in operating condition. In comparison to the first floor classrooms, the second floor classroom furniture is in much better condition. This can be a result of the second floor being constructed years after the first floor. Given the conditions
of both classrooms, it can be assessed that since the school lacks proper funding to provide necessary care of its infrastructure, the second floor classrooms will deteriorate if proper maintenance is not conducted on a regular basis.

**Instructional Staff**

In the first rural school (A), four teachers and the principal were interviewed, all of whom are female. Of the five participants, three holds a Master’s Degree while the other two have a Secondary School Certificate. All participants have been teaching at the school for a minimum of five years, including the principal. In addition, ten students and five parents were interviewed. When the teachers initially began their career, they noticed that the school was inadequately constructed to benefit the student body or its faculty and staff. There was no electricity and only one bathroom in the entire school. However, over the years, with various minimal grants from the district office, the school was renovated with additional classrooms and bathrooms on both the first and second floor. However, a common concern among all the teachers that they faced daily was their classroom size.

On average, 58 students encompass a classroom size. The classrooms have multiple long benches to seat the students and there is no computer or laptop in the school. With the lack of proper space to accommodate all the students properly, teachers have to cluster four to five students per bench, which is designed for maximum three-student capacity. The overcrowding affects the teachers’ ability to teach the lesson, not to mention the discomfort.

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45 A Secondary School Certificate is also known as a SSC degree which is awarded after the completion of a formal 10th grade education.
that it causes to the students. One teacher specifically stated that children of age five to ten are naturally hyper, and when they are clustered together with other students, it is normal that they misbehave behind the teachers’ back. This causes further distraction by their peers, the class in general and the teacher, all of which further hinders the education experience and absorption of knowledge. One teacher stated that, often students who are mischievous are seated with students who are studious without prior knowledge, causing the serious students not to learn properly because of their mischievous peers. This often results in parents discharging their child from the school and moving them in another school such as an NGO operated school, filtering out students who are not serious with their education to be left behind in the public primary school. Therefore, the physical attributes of the school needs further development to solve certain problems the school is facing.

Adjacent from the school, there is a schoolhouse constructed where kindergarten classes are held. It is poorly constructed with a tin roof. The tin material roof causes classroom temperatures to escalate significantly during the hot summers, often causing classes to be held under the shade of the tree parallel to the building. In addition to the hurdles the teachers face daily, most of the students come from families that are financially struggling and barely surviving on a day-to-day basis. Often times, most students come to school without breakfast and hunger interrupts their ability to concentrate, and in some cases they cannot remember the materials taught. Parents were briefed on the issue of sending their children to school without a proper breakfast; however, most parents are illiterate and lack proper nutritional understanding. The parents assured the teachers that
they will look into the matter. Sadly though, many have ignored the issue and continue to send their child to school without a proper breakfast.

The surrounding community that this school is in provides very minimal support for the school. Local residences spoke to the school principal about allowing them to harvest few types of fruits along the edge of the school property. In exchange, the school would receive a portion of the profits gained from selling the fruit. In spite of the principal’s cooperation, she reported that she has yet to see any donations. In addition, she has asked for fruit instead of a monetary donation, but the local residents remained uncooperative with the school. While the school has made numerous attempts to raise money for various additions and renovations, most attempts have failed.

In addition to the difficulties the school faces with the community, the forty-five minute per class session time is not sufficient for covering the syllabus provided by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. The consensus among the teachers was that the syllabus and guidelines provided by the ministry are too long to be taught in such a short amount of time. This result in teachers not being able to teach fully and having students rely on extra tutoring outside of school. The school leaves it up to the students to hire outside tutors. Keeping in mind the financial status of the students’ families, outside tutoring is rarely affordable for them, and so, many students forego that option. There are also no breaks between each class session which affects the stamina and motivation for both teachers and students. As well as tiring the students from non-stop learning, little time is available to the teacher to prepare an appropriate lesson plan before the class time. Often teachers complain that the back-to-back teaching decreases their ability to teach
thoroughly, especially the last two classes. Although teachers are allowed time for a break aside from their lunch break, the extensive syllabus and teaching guidelines provided to them by the ministry disables the teachers from taking small breaks throughout the day.

Another issue that the school faces is its school hours, from 8:45 AM-3:45 PM. Unlike private schools that start earlier in the day, the public schools starts at a later time, this causes students to be dismissed late in the day. This not only drains the student ability to concentrate and learn but also causes difficulties gaining access to extra tutoring. The time schedule filters the students who are academically achieving from those who are struggling in the community. Since students who attend the private schools have more time in the afternoon than public school students, they are able to either go to a private tutoring center or have an in-home tutor. According to the teachers, the lack of sufficient time after school to seek tutorial help prevents the students from progressing.

The process for renovating or making any changes in the school’s structure is very rigorous and time consuming. The principal of the school has to submit the proper documentation for the project to the District Teaching Officer’s office. The proposal is then examined and analyzed to see if the changes in the proposal are actually necessary. An assigned engineer from the district office then visits the school to examine the conditions and validity of the project. Once the proposal is accepted, a work order is issued publicly at a tender contract to a local construction company who is then given the task to renovate accordingly. The school was provided direct financial funds only on limited occasions,

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46 A tender contract is treated as an offer to do work for a certain amount of money by a construction company. It is similar to construction bidding, however in Bangladesh it is referred as “Tender.”
and the funds are controlled by the school’s board members. School board member consist of local municipal member, selected faculty, school principle, and selected volunteer parents of the students attending the school. Although giving the responsibility of the funds to the school board members protects the best interests of the school, in some cases it can work against the school’s interest. The principle addressed this issue stating that, often there are parents in the school board who are not educated themselves and instead of thinking of the best possible option for the children in the school, they think of their child first. This causes conflicts within the school board committee and often various proposals from teachers are not taken into consideration.

When the concerns addressed by the teachers were mentioned to the principle, there was minimal response. Since the school lacked funding for constructing an additional building, classrooms remained overcrowded. Similarly, the teachers interviewed in this study all stated that the principal lack the authority to make any changes. In many instances, the principal has supported the teachers’ suggestions for changes, however, she did not receive approval from the district office. The school staff viewed their situation as unchangeable, and thus accepted their hardship as part of their career. All the teachers collectively stated and agreed that the issues they face on a day-to-day basis, with the physical infrastructure of their school exist and will continue to exist not because of their rural community; instead they view their situation as a result of issues that derive from the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. Thus, before changes can be made to the school’s structure, the support service structure of the Ministry towards the schools must change first.
Family Structure

In this school, I interviewed five mothers of the students. With the exception of one parent who has a Bachelor degree, the remaining parents have minimal education, 8th grade being the highest tier of education for that group. The parent who has a higher education is different from the remaining because she is also a teacher in that school. However, she was not one of the participants in the instructional staff segment of this study. Thus her responses are from the perspective of a parent and not of a teacher. Four parents responded that their child was sent to that school because it was convenient for them. The remaining one parent responded that her child went to that school because she taught there. However if she had not been a teacher at that school then she would have sent her child to a different school.

The physical structure of the school and the problems that exist were obvious to most of the participants. The participant that responded with no acknowledgement of any issues with the school does not have a formal education themselves. The other four parents agreed that the physical construction of the school is very poor, with broken windows and benches that might break any day. But most feel that they have no other option. They are financially struggling and cannot afford to send their kids to a better school. Nonetheless they want their child to be educated, thus they have to overlook the issues with the school’s infrastructure.
While the parents expressed similar concerns, one parent mentioned a very practical issue which others did not. The mother explained the financial hardship that existed in her family, stating that most others students in that school are probably in a similar situation. She sends her child to school every day without any breakfast or snack. She recommends that maybe the school can provide students such as her own child who come from financially struggling families, with a light snack in the morning. : a fruit or a slice of bread. A concern which was also addressed by the teachers, the mother concluded her concerns with the comment that she understands that the school is low in budget thus providing a snack will not occur.47

All the parents in this school expressed their concerns to the school official regarding the school’s infrastructure; however, little actions were taken to address their concerns. While the parents were assured that the school will look into the matter and changes to the school will be made once the school have received funds, the parents are aware that there is not much the schools can do. They accept their situation as something that is unchangeable. They acknowledge that Bangladesh is a financially struggling country, thus the financial budget for education is minimal. Therefore the issues will continue to exist until substantial funds are allocated to the public education sector, which they think will take considerable time.

47 Although this issue addressed by the mother stands apart from the purpose of this study, nonetheless it is something quite vital to the overall study of improving educational development.
Students

The students in this study are in fifth grade ages 10-13 and the participant are five boys and five girls. The students interviewed for this study were aware of some of the various physical infrastructure problems that existed in their school; however, they did not view them as major issue. This could have been a result of their natural acceptance of the school environment since most had not been in a school that was properly constructed. However, certain responses deserve to be mentioned in this thesis as the students’ response showed that they were aware of their school’s state, but they were not aware how it impacted their overall education.

With the exception of two students whose parents had a Master’s Degree, the remaining eight students’ parents have studied up to high school. Due to a conflict of schedule with parents' working hours, the parents that had a Master's Degree were not interviewed in the previous section. All the students stated similar concerns. They all expressed a need for a library. A formal library or a small in-class library would give the students a chance to learn beyond the designated materials in their syllabus. They all collectively shared this concern as something that would benefit them significantly. Often, recess time is spent sitting on classroom benches and socializing with friends or going home to have lunch.

In addition, the length of the school day was also expressed as a concern. All students felt that their school day was too long, they are unable to absorb the materials taught during the later segment of their school day. One student stated that both they and the teacher are tired during the last hour of their school day. Thus the teacher is unable to
teach properly, and when they do teach, the students are unable to understand because they are too tired. Aside from the school time, lunch time is also an issue; students are given thirty a minute lunch break. Since most of the students live within five minutes walking distance of the school, the majority of the students go home for lunch. The time provided for lunch is not enough because in many instances they have to rush back to school leaving no time to socialize with their peers. Thus, they suggested that it would be convenient if lunch was provided at school or lunch time was extended to an hour.

The students’ responses briefly address some of the issues that exist in the school pertaining to its physical infrastructure. While the classrooms are overcrowded and some students did note that as a problem, the vast majority of the students enjoy being seated close to their friends. Since many students do not get time to socialize with their peers during lunch time, small talk during class session give them much joy. While overlooking the broken windows and benches, constructing a library room in the school was the only suggestion made by the students about their school.

**Rural School (B) in Rajshahi**

The second school is in the state of Rajshahi, which is located six to seven hour bus travel north-west of Dhaka. With a five minute walking distance to the main road that travels to Dhaka, the school is located in a residential community located within the central commercial district. While the properties south and east of the school consist of residential dwellings, located to the west of the school is a government primary high school. This school was built on a property that is one-eighth the size of the first rural school (A). The
square shaped property is separated from its community by a six feet boundary wall around
the school property. There is a metal gate at the front of the school which is used for both
entering and exiting the school. During school hours the gate is kept closed to avoid any
disturbance and for security purposes.

Upon entering the school, the first sight is the school yard with an estimated size
of around fifty feet by fifty feet. While the yard is small in size, it is very appealing as
different fruit trees outline two sides of the yard. Unlike the first school, the second does
not have a playground built inside the school yard. The school was built parallel to the
western boundary wall of the property; adjacent to the school building and parallel to the
northern boundary wall a Schoolhouse was constructed, however it is closed due to its
hazardous condition. The principal stated that initially the schoolhouse was first
constructed and later the school building was built. The schoolhouse structure was made
out of clay with a tin roof and the structure was divided into two attached rooms.

The two story building is similar in design to the first rural school. With the
principal’s office and lower grade classrooms on the first floor, the fourth and fifth grade
classrooms were located on the second floor. In addition, the classroom bench setups were
also similar to the first rural school. However, the classrooms were less decorative
compared to the first rural school classrooms, containing no images painted on the walls
and with few posters hung inside the classrooms. While both schools are of the same
design, the second rural school is structurally in better condition. The walls of the school
were not chipping, windows weren’t broken, and rain water was not leaking through the
windows. The school had recently received new benches for the students that are currently
piled in at the corner of the hallway as old furniture needs to be removed from the classrooms first. There are currently two bathrooms located at the south end of the building, one on each floor.

The schoolhouse located inside the school property was constructed from clay with a tin roof. During the monsoon season, rain leaks through the windows and into the room, often flooding the schoolhouse. Over the years, the walls have become damp, making the schoolhouse hazardous and unusable. The school has been approved for grants to construct a new school building on the schoolhouse property.

*Instructional Staff*

In the second rural school, four teachers were interviewed including the school principal. Of the four participants, three have a Master’s degree: the other participant who is the principle, has a Bachelor’s Degree. Due to a fear of jeopardizing their children’s education with their response, many parents refused to participate, thus only three parents participated in interviews in this school. As in the previous school, ten students from fifth grade were interviewed, five boys and five girls. The school was initially opened with a small two room schoolhouse, and few years later a fourteen room building was constructed adjacent to the small building. Over the years, the first building started to deteriorate and became hazardous.

One teacher interviewed in this school has been teaching at the school for over five years. When the teacher initially started their career at the school, the physical construction
of the school was not yet completed; classrooms had no furniture and all the classrooms were not constructed as initially planned. However, over the years with the help of various grants and generous donations from municipal government politicians, various repairs were done to make the school a safe and secure environment for the students.

Currently the primary issue at the school is its growing population and lack of space to properly host the students. In addition, the number of bathroom stalls in the school is not sufficient to serve the student body. All of the participants expressed serious concerns with over packed classrooms. There are sixty students in each class, affecting both the teaching and learning process. Aside from the large student body, the school has a shortage of teachers. There are currently fourteen teachers at the school and the school was supposed to receive seven additional teachers. However they have yet to receive any additional permanent staff. Instead the school is given part-time staff by the District office to assist with various classes. Often the part-time teachers are not able to adapt to the school environment or to the permanent teachers, causing conflicts among the fulltime and part time staff.

Aside from the massive student body, the second issue in the school is the size of the school property. Located right next to the primary school is a registered non-government high school which has acquired a significant amount of property. Thus the school cannot expand in land-size. The front lawn property within the boundary of the school is not large enough to have two hundred students stand for attendance. Thus lunch time is often spent in the classrooms due to the lack of outside activity space.
The school faculty members and parents have collectively expressed their concerns at the district office meetings. The large student population is a result of the school’s academic success, as stated by the principal. Over the years the students at the school has excelled substantially in both state exams and various inter-district academic competitions. The result has been that parents enroll their child in this particular school over others. With the combination of multiple requests by both parents and faculty and the school’s performance, the state office has offered to provide funds to construct a new building at the site of the first building, which has been closed for years. School staff member are looking forward to the additional building and receiving full-time staff members to decrease the workload of the current staff.

The academic success of the school is a result of steps taken by the school faculty to maximize their students' learning experience, and assure academic prosperity. The school has set-up its own tutoring center. Since the material designated by the Ministry is too extensive to cover in the daily classroom time, extra tutoring is essential. In rural communities there is very little access to tutorial center or private tutors. Thus the school established an extra tutoring center before the school day and after the school day. Before the school day starts, students in grades kindergarten to second grade are taught an extra two hours before starting their regular class. After the school day, students in grade three to five return back to school in the late afternoon for two extra hours of learning. A minimal fee is paid by the parents to cover the labor costs of the program. This helps both the parents and students; since most of the parents have a low education, homework help and other questions are answered by the teacher. Since the program is taught by the teachers of
the school, students are adapted to the teachers’ teaching style and are able to better understand the material.

The principal stated that the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education has recently given more importance to the primary education sector, encouraging all parents to send their kids to school instead of working to earn income. This had a positive impact by increasing enrollment rates. However further measures such as improving the school buildings or increasing the number of classrooms have not been followed. Thus, little importance is given to the actual development of schools, flooding classrooms with students. Faculty members and the principal have all expressed similar opinions stating that the development of school infrastructure issue is the responsibility of the Ministry of Primary Education. These conditions are present in both rural and urban communities. However, urban schools have greater support from the Ministry and have more access to resources.

Family Structure

In this school three parents were interviewed, all of whom have a Bachelor’s Degree. All the parents stated that they send their child to this school because of the school’s strong academic history. One of the parents had sent their eldest child to this school and they excelled very well and are currently attending a prestigious high school. While two of the parents live within close proximity to the school, the third lives further away. However she admitted her daughter to the school despite the long commute, stating that, “the travel is worthy of the education my daughter is receiving.”
While none of the parents identified any issues with the physical infrastructure of the school, one very obvious concern was addressed by all: the classroom size is too large and there are not enough classrooms in the building. If there were more classrooms and the student ratio in each class was decreased, then their child would be able to concentrate more during the lessons. While finding an in-home tutor or tutoring center is an issue in that community, the parents are grateful for the extra tutoring which the school provides. They have attended all the meetings previously held at the school and plan to continue supporting the school.

Parents collectively expressed their concern over the classroom size to both the principal and the district office. They were assured that a new building would be constructing in the upcoming fiscal year. Despite being assured that a new building would be constructed, parents remain worried about their child’s safety in the event of a fire or hazardous situation. Feeling fortunate that their child is able to attend this school, the parents acknowledge that it is the governments’ job to provide proper funds to their school, regardless of whatever community context the school is in. Therefore the issues that are present in this school (B) are similarly to those in other schools across the country in both urban and rural communities.

Students

In this school, ten students were interviewed from the fifth grade ages 9 to 10, five boys and give girls. Of the ten students, all come from households with at least one parent completing a Bachelor's Degree. The primary issue in this school was shared by both
parents and teachers, and the students all similarly stated their concerns regarding classroom space. When students were questioned about the type of infrastructural changes they think will benefit their school, all participants stated creating more classrooms.

In addition, aside from classrooms, four students expressed the need for more bathrooms. Aware of the development plans, which the principle has shared with the students, they hoped that the new building will incorporate more bathrooms. Aside from the lack of classrooms and bathrooms, the school yard is also a major problem for the students. It not only limits the activities they can do during recess, but also prevents them from having their own sports team and being able to participate in various intramural sports competitions. While there are solutions for the hurdles faced by both faculty and students in this school (B), certain issues can be resolved while others will continue. Since there is no vacant property outside the borders to develop and expand on, the school is limited to the type of developments that can occur.

**Observation and Interviews: Urban Schools in Dhaka**

Three schools located in an urban community in Dhaka were examined in this section. The same sets of interview questions used in the study of rural schools were used to examine urban schools. The initial goal of this study was to examine four schools, however, due to the monsoon weather conditions; one of the schools was not able to participate. Of the three schools, two were located in a middle-class community while the third school was located a diplomatic neighborhood.
Urban School (A) in Dhaka City

The first urban school is located in Dhaka City in a residential community. Surrounded by apartment buildings and with a mosque across the street, there is no vacant property outside the boundary walls for expansion. Located at the intersection of two corners, outside the school gates is a heavy traffic intersection. The school property is outlined by a five foot boundary wall cutting off the school from the rest of the community. Through the metal gates is the front yard, which is small in size and comparable to rural school (B) yard.

Unlike the two rural schools, this urban school building is an “L” shaped structure. With classes on all four floors the administrative office is located on the second floor. The first two floors are designated for kindergarten, first, second and third grade, while the third and fourth floor classrooms are for students in the fourth and fifth grade. The school building is constructed from cement with metal bar railings on the outer wall of the hallway. On the first floor, there are two classrooms that leak water during monsoon season and are only used seasonally. The room structure is similar among all the classes with benches facing the front of the class. They are in moderate condition. The classroom walls are painted with images to help students identify various objects. In addition, there are posters and artwork done by students hung up inside the classrooms. While this trend was common among the lower level grades, there were very few images on the walls of the fourth and fifth grade classrooms. Instead there were various math and science posters both in Bengali and English. In addition, there are bathrooms located on every floor. There are also four ceiling fans in each classroom, which are all in working condition.
In an interview, the principal stated that the school had requested and received funds for decorating the school. The classroom floors were clean with no garbage or scrap paper on the floor. The principal also stated that the school has hired a cleaning lady who takes care of maintaining the classrooms and the front yard of the school. While the front property is kept clean, it is rarely used by students as it is too small in size for the students to properly play some of the common sports in Bangladesh such as soccer and cricket. The school’s outer structure was painted years ago when the school was originally constructed as a two story building. However, the school has not been painted since. Only the walls of the first and second floors are painted the remaining floors have the gray color of the cement. The paint on the first two floors has peeled off.

Instructional Staff

In this school, five faculty members were interviewed: four teachers and one principal. Of the five members, two hold a Master’s Degree, one a Bachelor’s Degree and two an Associate's Degree. 48 The primary school was initially constructed as a two story building. As the number of students increased, the construction of more classroom space became a priority. After a tedious application process, the school finally received funds to construct two additional floors of classroom space. There are 814 students currently attending the school with an average class size of 60 students. There are fourteen classrooms and seven bathrooms in the school, as classroom space increased so did

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48 Although the degrees are not titles “Associate’s degree” in Bangladesh, however their level compares to an Associate’s degree according to American education standards.
enrollment rate. In addition there are exactly fourteen teachers for the fourteen classrooms with no additional teacher at the site. Although the school has gone through expansion and more classroom space was created than initially planned, classrooms are still over packed. One of the primary issues the school is facing is the large class size.

The teachers have all collectively expressed concerns over not being able to teach their students properly because there are too many to teach at the same time. This large class size takes away from giving the students personal attention. Teachers are given a lunch break but there are no other breaks in between classes. Due to the rigorous curriculum assigned by the Ministry, teachers are left with no time to themselves. This not only impacts their ability to teach, but also their students’ ability to absorb materials which they will later be tested on.

In addition to the lack of classrooms, the school also needs a playground. This was mentioned by all the interviewees of this study. The lack of a yard prevents their kids from playing various sports activities. As the principal expressed, many of the students in this school come from families with extreme financial hurdles. The students see sports on public playgrounds, however they are unable to play because they do not have access to sporting equipment. The principal stated that, the district office has given us various sporting materials however we have no playground. Students tire of constant studying and naturally they look forward to recess time when they can run around and work off some energy before they start class. However, since there is no space for the activities, students become hyper in class and start disrupting their peers. A faculty member stated that, one might see a playground as simply a space for children to run around, but the truth of the
matter is that we need children to run around so they can settle down with seriousness and concentrate when it is time to open their books in the classrooms. Currently, children don’t enjoy recess time much because there is nothing to do except socialize with your friends. Since there is no playground on the premises, at times students run around the school putting themselves and their peers in danger.

The teachers interviewed were not able to identify any issues with the physical infrastructure of the school building. However, the principal addressed two concerns which were not mentioned by any of the staff. The first issue was the monsoon rain weather. During the monsoon season, heavy rain causes the two corner classrooms on the first floor to be flooded. Depending on the severity and the damage caused by the flood, students are divided up into groups and transferred to other classrooms of the same grade level on a different floor. The flood issue has been a constant problem over the years. The funds provided by the government are not sufficient to make the changes necessary. Second, the lack of government funds for school maintenance. The school has hired a cleaning/maintenance person; the labor cost for the service is covered by donations from local community members. All the participants in this study stated that the issues that their school faces with classroom space, extracurricular activities and school maintenance are present in every school regardless of the type of community they are in. Therefore, the issue is derived from the inaction by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. The principal concluded the interview, by stating that there are various infrastructural issues with the primary schools both in Bangladesh’s urban and rural communities. To conclude, the Ministry has taken many initiatives. However, every time the political leadership of the
country changes so does their educational goals and plans. Thus initiatives are planned and formulated; however, very few are executed. Instead of setting goals which will most probably not be acted upon, the Ministry should set-forth educational policies that will carry on even when political leadership has changed.

*Family Structure*

Five parents were interviewed and all had attended a formal high school, but did not complete their studies. With the exception of one parent who works, the remaining four were housewives. The participants interviewed were parents of students in fifth grade; also all of their children had a private in-home tutor. While four parents stated that they send their child to that specific school because it is closer to their house, one parent compared the school to other local schools that they examined before admitting their child. Comparing this school to some of the local private schools in the neighborhood, the parent felt that this school, which is public, has a better teaching atmosphere.

The parents were then questioned about the school’s physical infrastructure; four of the five parents stated that they have not seen anything alarming with the school’s structure. Stating that there is “no issue” with the school, all four parents concluded the interview with similar remarks, this is a great school. The parent that had opposing views expressed the need for larger classrooms and more classroom furniture, and mentioned the school is not clean. Thus parents in this school had minimal complaints, and were generally satisfied with the school.
Students

In this school, ten students from fifth grade were interviewed, five boys and five girls. Of the ten participants, one student’s parents completed high school while the remaining did not. All of the students that were interviewed lived within close proximity to the school and they all had a private tutor. When questioned about their peers having a private tutor, all except two stated that most of their peers have a private tutor at home as well.

The students did not find anything alarming with the school’s infrastructure; however, there were small changes that they thought would be beneficial. According to one student, the school needs more bathrooms, the number of bathrooms that are currently available are not enough. Also the students expressed the need for a proper playground. Knowing that there is no space outside the boundary walls of the school to develop further, the students wished that there was a way to keep the gates of the school closed. It is often open and children that do not attend the school wander around the yard. In this school, there are no physical infrastructure issues in the eyes of the students. However, one issue that is not related to the physical structure of the school that has impacted all the participants in the interview as well as the remaining students in the school is access to clean drinking water.

Urban School (B) in Dhaka City

The second urban school in Dhaka, is located minutes away from the American Embassy, facing one of the two main roads that run through Dhaka City. Situated across
the road from one of the leading private elementary and high schools in Dhaka, urban school (B)’s infrastructure differs significantly compared to the schools across the street. The front of the school faces the main road. Enter past the metal gates, there are two buildings parallel to one another with a twenty-foot open space dividing the two buildings. The buildings were initially constructed as two stories; later an additional level of classrooms was constructed on both buildings.

The first and second floor classrooms were primarily for the lower grade classes. The third floor classrooms were for fourth and fifth grade classes. The first, second and third grade classrooms are in major need of renovation. The cement on the floors and walls are chipping, which can prove to be a physical detriment to the students due to toxins. The windows are constructed with a metal grill inside the classrooms and shutters facing outside the classroom. The shutters have glass panes that are broken and have not been replaced in most of the classrooms. During rainy days, water leaks into the classroom through the broken shutter glass. Unlike the previous urban school classrooms, there are no paintings or posters hung on the classroom walls. The classroom walls are severely marked with pencil drawings and scratches and are in need of repainting. In addition, trash was scattered on the classroom floors, and a similar situation was observed in other classrooms on the first and second floor as well.

The conditions described above were not the case on the third floor classrooms. The third floor, which was constructed recently, was in much better condition than the bottom two floors, with proper windows and shutters that were not broken. The classrooms on the third floor are not affected by harsh weather conditions. The benches are recent,
unlike the furniture in the first and second floor classrooms that was chipped and contained graffiti. In addition, the ceiling fans on the first two floors were non-operating, while the third floor classroom ceiling fans were in working order. The description above was the case for both buildings.

The two buildings are separated by eight feet wide open space between the buildings, but, there is one four-foot wide overpass on the second floor that links both buildings. Since there is no overpass linking the third floor, students either have to walk down to the first floor and cross over to the second building or cross through the second floor. Since there was only one overpass connecting the two buildings, there was often congestion by students rushing to the other building during dismissal. While there are bathrooms on every floor, two of the six bathrooms are not in usable condition. In addition, only the first and second floor exterior was painted: the third floor which was recently constructed was not painted after construction. There is no playground inside the school property and while the school is surrounded by a five feet high boundary wall separating the school from its community, the lack of open space has limited recess activity. In comparison to the first urban school, the second urban school is in much more need of both renovation and maintenance. The principal of the school explained that the lack of posters and other creative imagery inside the classrooms are due to lack of funding.

**Instructional Staff**

In the second urban school, four teachers and the principal were asked to take part in the study. Of the teachers that were asked to participate, only one teacher agreed while
the remaining refused despite being requested by the principal as well. The teacher who did agree to take part in the study has been teaching at that school for twenty-three years. Currently there are 626 students enrolled in the school. The participant is the senior staff and most experienced member of the faculty. Thus, in this school one teacher and the principal was interviewed. However, the remaining interviews proceeded as planned for the research with five parents and ten students.

The principal of this school has a Master’s Degree and has been working at that school for the past six years. When she initially started her career at the school there were various infrastructural problems such as the windows missing glass and a substantial amount of classroom furniture in unusable condition. The school was in dire need of more classrooms to properly seat the students. In addition to being mentioned in the monthly reports which the principal submits to the district office, infrastructural matters were also discussed with staff members directly at the district office. After years of requesting expansion, the third floor was constructed, adding additional classrooms. At the time of construction, other small repairs were made such as to the windows. The completion of the third floor enabled the classroom size to decrease; currently there are forty to forty-five students per classroom.

Currently, the primary infrastructural issue at the school is its lack of a playground. The site is the total size allocated for constructing a school with no additional space for recreational activities. This has impacted the school in many ways. For instance the lack of a proper playground has meant that students are unable to participate in inter-district sports activities. Aside from impacting student activities, it also impacts the activities the school
can do with their local community. The district office encourages the principal to initiate activities after school by engaging parents and local community members. However, due to the lack of proper space for the seminars, the school is unable to conduct such activities.

The principal views the issues at hand as being driven by the administration. She stated that, the problems are caused by the negligence of the government and The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. While the principal addressed the current problems, the teacher that was interviewed takes a step further discussing the existing problems from his perspective and its multilateral effects. According to the teacher, the main problem in the school is space. Students are often taken to the field in front of the American Embassy for sports activities. Over the years many attempts have been made to host seminars and other events at the school but due to the lack of space, they were later canceled.

In the city, parents who are financially stable send their children to private schools where lunch is provided or parents are able to provide lunch from home. However, students in this school come predominantly from lower income families where most students are not provided food from home, nor is it provided at school. As a result, most of the students come to school hungry and lack concentration in classrooms. Often parents go to work and forget to bring their child’s lunch to school. The principle addressed that many of the students help their parents with work, such as assist in a tea shop. By doing so, they miss several days of class and later it becomes harder for them to catch up: often leading them to drop out of school.

The key problem with the educational system, according to the teacher, is that there are not enough teachers in the primary education sector. He stated that the government
cannot fully be blamed for the conditions in the schools because Bangladesh is a poor county and lacks the funds necessary for both educational development and for hiring more teachers. Thus the teachers who are working in the primary sector are left with no other option but to carry the burden of the workload. Aside from developing a proper school infrastructure, attention needs to be given to the teachers who teach. The Ministry requires a large curriculum and teachers have no option but to teach back to back with no breaks in between. This not only exhausts the teacher, but impairs their ability to make the students understand the material when they themselves are not in condition to teach. Aside from the regular curriculum subjects, recently the ministry has set forth guidelines for teaching extra-curricular subjects such as music and art. They provided the school with various musical instruments and art supplies. However, the staff is not professionally trained to teach either subject. Therefore, the subject and materials provided are useless since there is no instructor to teach.

Finally, the ministry has announced that every primary school will receive one computer. However, how will the students be taught to use a computer when the teachers themselves lack the training? According to a school staff, pamphlets and grouser with images of computer parts such as monitor, keyboard and etc. is needed to teach their students the basic knowledge of a computer. The participant suggested that, the ministry should create pamphlets in advance for the schools so the teachers can familiarize themselves with the basic computer knowledge. Stating that the government is trying and it is impossible for the ministry to solve all the issues regarding physical structure and other renovations at once. The teachers hope that the upcoming years will bring solutions for the
issues faced by the public primary education sector. The teacher concluded the interview on behalf of the faculty members at the school stating that, The education system that exist in our country seems to be divided; private school for the working class and government school for the lower class. Thus, education is dividing society into two different social classes. This not only affects the kids at a young age, but also when they grow up and goes into the work force. This notion of rich and poor, private and public still remain, causing public school students to fall behind at a later point in life and in careers. This ends up being a great burden for the whole country. Thus, the ministry has the ability to control the situation but they are not. Another issue is that, the political party is constantly changing. We have had various research reports conducted by the government ministry, however, few years later before the results of that research can be implemented, the political party changes, and once again the government has to conduct another research. Thus the primary education in Bangladesh is not unified.

*Family Structure*

In this school, five parents were interviewed of which only two attended a formal elementary school, and the remaining did not finish. While most of the parents live within close distance from the school, they sent their children to that particular school because it was the most convenient for them. While four of the five parents showed minimal interest in their child’s progress, stating that they sent their child to that school to socialize and that they try to attend school meetings, however have not been able to attend for the most part.
One parent of the five keeps in contact with their child’s teacher on a regular base regarding the child’s progress.

The issues currently present with the school’s physical infrastructure remained invisible to all the parents. They have all stated that they find no problems with the school. One parent stated that, “it is a government school, thus the education ministry knows what best for the students. It is the government’s business, I am just the parent.” However, two parents did mention that the school needs to be well maintained; currently the school is very dirty and in dire need of a “paint job.” Therefore, the parents have not expressed any alarming concerns regarding the school. Instead the parents show concerns regarding the cleanliness of the environment their child is in.

Students

In this school, ten students were interviewed of which all were in fifth grade. The students’ lives within a thirty minutes walking distance from the school. Of the ten participants, only two children has parents that attended high school while the other eight participant’s parents did not attend school or the children themselves could not provide accurate information.

The students were questioned regarding why they liked attending that school. Of the ten students, eight answered that they liked coming to school because education is important. However, two students answered differently: the first showed interest in school because she is able to be herself in school. Coming from a conservative family, at home she is not given the privilege to express her thoughts. She stating that, “in school I feel free, and
when I am home, I am expected from my parents to constantly sit in front of my books and study." In contrast, the second student revealed that he comes from a financially struggling family, thus being educated and getting a proper job was the path to getting him and his family out of poverty.

According to another student, “The infrastructure of the school is just as very important as maintaining the school's physical condition.” All the participants in this study have expressed concerns about the school's physical environment. Another student described the school to be very “dirty.” One student suggested having garbage cans in every classroom and having students take part in keeping the school clean. Although the lack of a playground was mentioned by every student, keeping the school clean was a bigger concern.

Of all the students that participated in this study, one student’s answer shed light on a vital issue which is invisible to an outsider. The student addressed that, often various studies are done at this school, and fifth grade was the preferred sample group that the study was designed around. Thus, the fifth grade classrooms are kept clean, however, the remaining grades’ classrooms are not given much priority. This causes the lower grade classrooms to be unsanitary, ruining the overall image of the school. In addition to the painting of the school, which was expressed by parents, students feel that the classrooms are very “boring,” as the classes are not decorated with learning materials or any other decorations. As a result, the learning environment of the school is not appealing to the

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49 Quote Students
students. When the principal of the school was questioned regarding classrooms adornment, she stated, we have not received any funds from the district office for classroom decoration. The physical infrastructure issues in this school are minimal, however, the non-structural issues are impacting the students and teachers severely.

**Urban School (C) in Dhaka City**

The third and final school is located inside a diplomatic zone of Dhaka City. Surrounded by a residential community, the school is constructed inside the same property line of a public government high school. BORDERED by a five-foot high wall around the property, both schools have to share the vacant property that is located between the two buildings. Being located on the opposite corners of the square property, upon entering through the metal gates that are open at all times, the front yard divides the elementary school from the high school. The entrance to the elementary school building is locked for security measures. Since the staff office is located directly across from the entrance gate, guests waiting outside are given access to the school building by faculty. The school building infrastructure is in the shape of the letter “L,” with three stories of classrooms. Similar to the previous schools, the lower grade classrooms take place on the bottom level while the fourth and fifth grade classes take place on the third floor.

The inside conditions of the classroom are different across the grades. There are more posters with various imagery in Bengali inside the kindergarten, first, second and third grade classrooms, while the posters and imagery inside the fourth and fifth grades are in English. The classroom furniture are in need of replacement, however, as stated by the
principal, the ceiling fans are in the working condition. The ceiling fans were only seen in upper classman rooms and not in the lower grade classrooms, however the windows inside the classrooms and the building are all in proper condition and not affected by monsoon weather conditions. The classrooms are kept clean by students. Currently there are two classes located on the first floor that were recently renovated. Due to poor construction, water saturates from beneath the ground, flooding the classroom. The classrooms are currently in unusable condition and will be left vacant until further funds are provided for the fixture. Similar to all the other schools in this study, the hallway walls facing the outside of the school have grill bars for security and air circulation purposes. However the grill bar does enable rain water to come inside the hall ways making the passage slippery and hazardous during rainy days. The school still has the initial paint on the outside wall from when it was first construct and the exterior of the school has not been repainted ever since. While most of the paint still remains in place, various parts of exterior walls are chipping paint. Also, there are two bathrooms on each floor of the school that need renovation.

*Instructional Staff*

In the third and final urban school, five school faculty, four parents and ten students were interviewed. The school is located in a diplomatic zone community with fifteen hundred students in seventeen classrooms. In addition, directly across from the primary school is a high school. In this school four teachers and the principal participated in this study. Of the five members, four of them have been a teacher at the school for over five
years and the principal has recently joined the faculty and has been working there for ten
months. There were various issues when the teachers initially started their careers at the
school because it was originally constructed as a one floor building with a tin roof. Under
the supervision of the incumbent principal, numerous constructions took place and
currently the school is a three floor building. From the initial construction period to the
present day, the number of bathrooms has been an ongoing obstacle. There are not enough
bathrooms constructed in the school to accommodate the fifteen-hundred student body. In
addition, the school is in need of more classroom furniture as most of the present furniture
is in severe condition.\footnote{Classroom furniture for this study refers to the basic amenities necessary in a classroom: benches and table, chalkboard, proper sealing lights and fans.}

Under the supervision of the previous principals, various requests were made to
the district office for fixtures and repairs. The process was time consuming; although they
were completed, they were not done properly. For instance, the school received funding for
two new classrooms to be built and after going through the administrative process, two new
classrooms were constructed. However, the company that constructed them did not do a
proper job, thus during monsoon season the classrooms get flooded, preventing classes to
take place during rainy weather conditions. The principal has rooted the situation to
corruption stating that, often the funds that are given to the construction company to build
new classrooms are not spent appropriately. Furthermore, to lower the spending and
maximize profit, the construction company uses low quality material which deteriorates
quickly. Thus, again the district office has to tender the repair job and in most case it is the
same construction company redoing the fixes. Aside from the two classrooms, few other classrooms and the principal’s office also get flooded during monsoon heavy rain. They have been told by the district office that further funds will be provided after the next education budget approval.

The primary supporter of the school is the School Committee Board members. According to the principle, over the years new board members were elected and the current members have been a substantial asset to school. Since the school received funds for reconstruction and development every few years, local community support and donations are imperative. The board members are currently in the process of allocating donations for the school as funds are currently minimal. Since all the members that took part in this study have similarly shared concerns regarding the bathroom issue, the principal has made the development of bathrooms as the school’s top priority. Currently the two classrooms that were recently renovated are closed until receiving repair funds.

Keeping a school clean with a large student body is a great challenge. The teachers in every class and grade have assigned students in groups to various cleaning tasks. The principal states that this not only keeps the school clean but teaches students discipline, manner and respect towards the environment. Due to a tight budget, the school can afford to hire only one maintenance/janitorial employee, which leaves the school vastly unattended to many things as keeping the school clean cannot be done fully by one staff.

Aside from the infrastructural issues currently present, the school also faces another issue which is equally important according to the teachers and the principal. The students come from a mix socio-economic background, predominantly middle class and
lower class. Many of the students come to school without any breakfast and they are given bare minimum to eat from home. This reflects back on their class performance as they often feel tired in class, falling asleep and in many case, they faint from hunger. The parents of the students were contacted and asked to come into the school to speak about this topic. Despite various conversations with parents the problem still persisted. Most parents responded stating that, “I don’t have anything to give them to eat in the morning.” The school board members have generously donated snacks and other dry food to be kept in school for students that come to class on an empty stomach and faint.\textsuperscript{51} While certain infrastructural issues will remain in the school until substantial funds are received, others are being resolved with the help of the committee board members. However, faculty members are confident that eventually all the problems will be resolved.

\textit{Family Structure}

In the final school, four parents were interviewed and all four of the participants had studied up to high school, however did not finish the degree. Two parents stated that they send their child to this particular school because it is convenient for them. Another parent stated that their family members and the child’s father had attended the school and had great success from the education they received. The remaining parents stated that they send their child because they have no other choice, they cannot afford to send their child to a private school and government school is the only option.

\textsuperscript{51} Although this issue is not directly related to the infrastructure of the school and the purpose of this study, nonetheless it was seen present in many schools. It is a vital obstacle that schools are left to face and deserves further study for a possible food donation program from the ministry.
Since various constructions were done in the past recent years, parents are predominantly satisfied with the school and have not identified any severe structural issues. However, they stated that new benches and tables are necessary as the current furniture is in a deteriorating state. They all are dependent on the government to provide funds for renovation. One parents stated that, if the government does not provide proper funds, then there isn’t much the school can do but wait.

Students

There were ten students interviewed in this school from the fifth grade, of the ten students five were boys and five were girls. They all live within close proximity to the school, and all of their parents have attended high school, but many have not completed. While most of the students did not have a response when questioned regarding the physical structure of the school and the types of improvement that would make the school a better environment, three students answered addressing the need for more classroom furniture and proper electricity. However, only one student addressed flood issue during monsoon seasons and how it impacts her class. Stating that, her classroom is often flooded with rainwater from the window since the window are broken, she suggested fixing the windows in the school, preventing rain from coming inside the classroom. In addition one student stressed the need for the school to have their own playground. The current yard, which is located between the elementary school and the high school, has created various conflicts between the students. Since there are no staff present to monitor the students during recess, often students from the high school engages in harmful activity with the students from the
primary school. This has caused and still causes many students to stay inside their classrooms during their lunch period. The student suggested creating a boundary wall between the two schools, which will provide a secure playground for the elementary school students.
CHAPTER 4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

*Rural School (A) vs. Rural School (B)*

The two rural schools examined in this study face similar issues, however they have contrasting approaches to finding a solution. While some of the problems can be resolved and initiatives were taken to do so, others remain unresolved. Both schools are located in a rural community outside of the rural capital, rural school (A) is located north of the capital (a six-hour drive) and rural school (B) is located south of the capital (also a six-hour drive). Although both schools are public and constructed on government property, the amount of property the schools were constructed on and how the vacant land within the school premise is used, vary exceedingly. In addition, certain parental and student responses shed light on imperative underlying issues that are not directly related to the physical structure of the building, however, they are important for understanding the different variables that impact childhood education in Bangladesh.

Before evaluating the school structures, it is imperative to examine the types of candidates that were interviewed for this study. In school (A), the principal was female and in school (B) the principal was male. In Bangladesh, gender role is significant, especially in the extent to which one can accomplish a task. While it was prevalent that both communities were male dominant, in school (A) the principal had specifically stated that, all the teachers in this school including myself are women, and in this country, less importance is given to what we say in all aspects of society. Later she addressed that, during numerous occasions, her proposal to the district office was not taken seriously for
consideration because she was a female principle. Although gender is an important issue in education, only one of the five principles interviewed, addressed being a female as an obstacle in a male dominated society.

In both schools, the teachers that were interviewed held a higher academic degree than the principal, however there were also other teachers who were not interviewed that held a lower degree than the principal. Traditionally, the school principal is the most experienced member of the staff and highly educated. In school (A), the principal was indeed experienced in her field, however, the teachers in the school were more educated than her as well as much younger in age. Similarly in school (B), the teachers were more educated than the principal, and also older in age and teaching experience. Thus the role of the principal in both schools is led not by someone that is the most qualified with a higher degree and work experience, but by individuals who want to take on the responsibilities and hurdles that come with the role of a being principal.

Both schools share similar problems such as overcrowding in the classrooms due to insufficient classroom size, lack of enough bathrooms, students arriving to school hungry, inconvenient school time schedule and syllabus. The classroom size and bathroom issue can be resolved by constructing more classrooms to decrease the number of students per class and creating bathrooms sufficient enough for the student body. In addition, difficulties with the school time and syllabus are issues that the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education can evaluate and redevelop. However, preventing parents from sending their children to school on an empty stomach is an issue that cannot be resolved as easily. While the battle against poverty has been one of the toughest challenges every nation is
facing, in Bangladesh it is impacting the public primary education system by creating intangible challenges that are difficult to resolve.

Teachers and parents of both schools have suggested that the ministry should provide snacks in school, especially for students who come from financially struggling households. However, they have also accepted that such assistance will be unlikely since, Bangladesh is a poor country and does not have much money to spend on education, stated one parent. Although both schools share similar issues, they have their own individual problems that are incomparable to the other.

In both schools, student population is increasing rapidly for different reasons. In school (A), the principal linked the size of her student population to parents from average middle class admitting their children into private and NGO-operated schools, thus, leaving room for parents of lower income families that face day-to-day survival to admit their child in public school. Thus, there is a increase in enrollment of students from lower income families. Private schools and NGO schools filter two types of students. The first are from average middle class family that can afford a private education and the second are students who come from financially struggling families, however their parents are involved and supportive of their education.  

According to the principal of school (A), students in that school are filtered mainly from financially struggling families who are inactive in their child’s education. In addition, parents and teachers have both agreed that most of the students that attend school A live

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52 Many NGO schools that admit students require their parents to also be involved in their child’s education. This usually requires regular school visits and participating in various school activities and seminars.
within close proximity, thus the school is convenient for them. In contrast, parents in school (B) were interested in the school’s academic success instead of its location. Therefore, the increase in admission in rural schools is a result of the quality of the education provided and the convenience of the school location.

Although both schools are in need of more classrooms to host the growing student population, only one is able to construct the additional space needed. School (A) has substantial amount of vacant property within school boundary and can be used for constructing multiple buildings and school (B) does not. Instead, school (B) can only construct one building for classrooms, which is currently closed, thus they are limited on space for expansion. Although school (A) has the space needed, they did not receive the funds required to construct an additional building. But, school (B), limited on space, were granted funds to construct additional classrooms. Being mindful that the schools are located in rural districts, it can be insinuated that the district offices in rural communities in Bangladesh favor primary schools that have produced exceptional academic results with the necessary financial support, while ignoring schools that are struggling, despite the opportunities for growth the struggling school may possess.

*Urban School (A) vs. Urban School (B) vs. Urban School (C)*

The urban communities in Bangladesh are very different from the rural communities located on the outskirts of Dhaka City. Similarly, the issues that exist with the schools differ as well. The three urban schools that took part in this study are all located in the capital city of Dhaka, however, the individual communities that the schools were
located in are different from one another. While certain issues are shaped by the communities the schools are in, overall, all three schools have common issues.

Before assessing the differences and commonalities within the school, it is worth noting that the principals of all three schools had Master's Degree. In addition, all three principals were female and residents of these communities. They did not stress concerns regarding their gender and how they are treated, an issue that was addressed by the female principals in one of the rural schools. Moving forward, all three schools face similar struggles (to be described in detail shortly), however, the issues themselves illustrate that there is a high possibility of similar occurrences in many other public primary schools in Bangladesh.

The classroom size remains to be a primary issue across all three schools. Although the very obvious answer would be to construct more, but this process would require substantial funding which is currently unavailable. In addition, another issue that all three schools face is the lack of a proper playground, prohibiting an array of activities that could have taken place if the schools had their own space. Similar to the former issue and its lack of a solution, a multi-use schoolyard cannot be constructed for the most obvious reason and lack of vacant property. All three schools are located inside the urban communities where their surrounding is staggered with local shopping stores and multi-story apartment buildings. Thus any type of development that would entail the need to go beyond the school boundary wall is unrealistic. The two issues mentioned above can only be resolved if the schools are relocated to a different community that has ample property to
build the necessary classrooms needed and have space for a proper multi-purpose school yard strictly for school use.

However, the difficulties that have risen due to the extensive curriculum and the school time are issues that can be resolved. By synthesizing the curriculum and rearranging the syllabus, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education can substantially impact the quality of education being given at the schools without the fear of adding additional financial cost.

The two other issues that are present amongst all three urban schools are the schools’ maintenance and starving students. In every community, despite their urban or rural community context, schools are constructed to facilitate an educational environment, empowering students with the strength of knowledge. Since schools are generally established with the intention of lasting a life-time, it is imperative that the conditions of the schools have as much priority, for which fulltime maintenance staff is absolutely necessary. Since the current schools lack a proper staff for maintaining the schools and keeping a clean environment, this also impacts the students and their perspective of the learning environment. All three schools are struggling due to the lack of a proper full-time maintenance staff. In spite of this, urban school (C) has integrated their students into taking responsibilities for keeping the school clean. Although urban school (C)’s approach is very commendable, still, student attend school to be educated not do maintenance duties, therefore their solution is temporary.

Finally, the issue that all three schools face is not related to the schools physical infrastructure, yet it is absolutely imperative and is seen impairing certain students from
reaping the benefits of an education. Students who come to school hungry are unable to learn properly, affecting their learning experience and also the learning experience of their peers. Currently, students might not pay enough attention to the teacher because they are hungry, this holds back their peers from accelerating. Although teachers and parents expressed the need for the Ministry of Education to provide snacks for students, the likely of that occurring is miniscule due to the lack of financial resource at the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. A temporary solution was initiated by school (C) where donated money was used to purchase snacks for students who come from financially struggling families. Although this is a commendable proactive approach, nevertheless they are limited on funds as well and cannot bear the cost for long periods, hence a permanent solution is necessary.

The conditions of the three urban schools are relatively the same, as they are facing similar challenges. The effects of the monsoon weather conditions were stated by urban schools (A) and (C), but not by school (B). Although school (B) did not mention the impact of heavy rain, it cannot be insinuated that urban school B is in better infrastructural condition since all three schools are within a two-mile distance from one another and have similar classroom structure.

Another factor that differentiates the schools from one another are certain conditions mentioned by teachers that impact that particular schools, but did not affect the other schools in this study. For example, in school (A), the teachers discuss the influence of the political ruling government. As governments change, so does their initiatives for development, leaving previous incomplete development plans stranded. In school (B), child
labor has caused many students to be absent from class so they can assist their parents in various odd jobs. As a result, this causes students to drop out of school at a certain stage because students view education as not something that is contributing to their everyday survival and helping them contribute to the household income. Lastly, school (C) discusses corruption with the construction company that won the contract to perform the construction job at the school. The challenges faced by all three schools will continue in the upcoming years, but school officials remain optimistic, as all have stated that, one day we will receive the proper support and will no longer have these problems.

*Rural Schools vs. Urban Schools*

Government primary schools in Bangladesh have come a long way over the years. While most of the existing primary schools were constructed decades ago, various constructions have enabled them to accommodate the rising number in students. However, as the number of student enrollment in primary schools increase, greater changes in the existing schools become urgent. Since majority of the issues faced by both rural and urban school overlap, the existing issues are not caused by the context of the community the schools are in.

Even though issues faced by the rural schools also exist in the urban schools, there are certain factors that distinguish the two categories of schools. Academic success is a factor that separates the two rural schools, yet it was not mentioned as an impacting cause that separates the urban schools from one another. As stated in the earlier sections of this thesis, in rural communities, academic success is determined by how much support the
school receives, it can now be assessed that based on the results of this study, this effect is only present in rural communities and not urban.

Another factor that has impacted both communities and was stated by all the principals as significant is community involvement. The principal in rural school (A) has expressed concerns over the lack of community involvement, stressing that if community members helped by contributing financially, the funds would assist with the various necessary repairs the district office is not willing to offer. In contrast to the lack of community support in rural school (A), an abundance of support from the community is seen in urban school (C). The community support urban school (C) receives have aided toward various financial burdens and provided snacks for students that come to school hungry. In addition, community support is also seen present in rural school (B), as parents collectively contribute financially to cover the cost of the tutoring programs at school.

While the issues discussed in this research remain similar in both communities, one specific obstacle was mentioned by the principal of rural school (A) which was not mentioned by another participant in this study, that is the effects of an NGO operated school in the same community. NGO operated schools have significantly helped struggling communities in need of an educational system which goes beyond the traditional public government schools. Although the schools are successful in fulfilling their purpose, unfortunately, they also unintentionally impacted the surrounding schools in a negative way. In this case, rural school (A) is seen impacted by the NGO operated school, which is within close proximity of the schools. Although NGO operating schools are in every corridor of Bangladesh and they are present within close distance to all the other schools in
this study, only rural school A has reported being affected from their establishment. Thus it cannot be concluded that NGO operating schools contribute to the types of students present in government primary schools across Bangladesh.

In both rural and urban schools, the following issues are currently present: lack of classrooms, lack of bathrooms, improper maintenance, inconvenient school time, lengthy curriculum by which teachers are unable to finish within the class time period, student-teacher ratio, and students having no food to eat at school. Although the remaining four issues that were identified in both communities through the discourse of this study is not related to the physical structural issues, they are equally impacting the schools and the students as the issues that are related to the physical structure.
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Education is one of the primary pillars of every nation despite their financial standing. It is through knowledge that information is shared and passed on from generation to generation. While some nations have started the race to education centuries ago, others have taken part in recent decades. Bangladesh’s current education system has come a long way since its liberation in 1971. However, various crucial changes are needed to battle the issues that exist in both school structure and non-school structure.

The purpose of this study was to identify the problems that are present in the public primary schools in both the rural and urban communities of Bangladesh. Two different community contexts were chosen to illustrate the differences within the environments the schools were constructed and how their respective community environment impacts them. The communities that were chosen to conduct this study were unique in their own respected ways. The data of this study demonstrate that the challenges schools encounter are not a result of the rural or urban community the schools are in, instead they are present in every community in Bangladesh. In addition, new parameters were presented that are not related to the schools’ physical infrastructure, but, equally impacting the school.

Parents and teachers have accepted their conditions due to the country’s financial standing, labeling the country as “poor.” Their judgment and acceptance of the circumstances blinds them from seeing possible solutions to these issues. Instead of reasoning the circumstances to finance issues in the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, parents should take upon the role to contribute to the education system in ways
which best fits them. Parental contribution is not strictly defined by financial contribution, instead, parents that have certain labor skills can collaborate together and volunteer to alleviate at least one of the issues, such as helping to keep the school clean. Since most of the students come from a financially struggling family, monetary contribution will hardly be given.

The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education need a strategic outline for future school construction. In the outline, aside from having the quantity of classrooms, there should also be a set amount of bathrooms that are to be constructed based on the amount of classrooms in the school building. Since bathroom were seen as one of many issues schools are left to deal with, future construction should alleviate the possibility of not having enough bathrooms in a school.

The current physical infrastructure and the issues being faced should serve as a lesson for the mistakes not to be repeated in future constructions of primary school. A component that should be regulated in future school models is vacant property for multiuse sports and other activities. Of the five schools that participated in this study, only one school (rural school A) had vacant property for sports activities. While classroom time is very important for the students, the time they spend outside of classroom during recess, is also imperative. During their recess time, having vacant space allows the students to engage in various sports, socialize with friends, and most importantly it gives them the opportunity to take an actual "break." The lack of a playground makes the students feel like they spend the whole day inside four walls with no real break. This concern was addressed by many of the participants including both teachers and students.
In addition, local municipal politicians should be given the responsibility to play greater role in their community primary school. Municipal politicians represent not just someone of authority in certain community, but also someone who is seen as a role model in that community because it is through the community members votes that they receive their title and authority. Therefore, local politician should take further initiatives to advocate the importance of parental involvement in their children's education. If the parent is not able to attend every parent-teacher conference, they should make time based on their availability to meet with either the teacher or principle to discuss their child's progress.

In the initial stage of this thesis, a range of literature was reviewed which looks at different case studies conducted primarily in the United States. Although the United States primary public education system cannot compare to that of Bangladesh, the literature reviews set a fundamental framework and establish basic components that are necessary in every school, despite the country or the community they are in. In addition, the literature review shows a certain quality and qualifications that are necessary to have in elementary school teachers. In the schools examined for this study, the teachers were older in age. Consequently, the current faculty who are of older age should to be retrained for different approaches to utilize in their classrooms. In addition, there is a lack of teachers in the primary school sector which was acknowledged by many of the school staffs in the study.

The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education needs a macro-scale campaign to promote teaching jobs in public primary schools. The lack of interest for education major in university to seek public school as a possible place for employment reflects upon the quality of job. The negative notion of being a teacher in a public primary school that exists
within the young professional generation needs to change. Therefore a mass campaign needs to be established that highlights the teaching profession in the public sector positively. In addition, the Ministry should join efforts with universities to shed light on one of the most important professions in Bangladesh and every society.

Also, the results of this study shows evident that an urban school’s community context does not give them higher advantages than that of a rural community context. This result is seen in the data collected for this research in two ways: first, the same set of issues was present in both urban and rural community and the second is a laptop being present in rural school (B) and not the other schools. Rationally, one would expect schools located in the urban community to be much more technologically integrated, however, instead of urban schools receiving access to computer since they are surrounded by technology, a rural school which is academically accelerating received funding and a technological tool (laptop).

Funding and support is not distributed equally, instead certain schools are selected for receiving various types of support from the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, while others do not. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education should provide support to all schools in both rural and urban communities’ equally. Also, schools that are in need of renovation and redevelopment should be given greater priority over schools that perform academically exceptional. Thus, the support system provided by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education should be based on the individual school needs and not the success of its students.
Lastly, the two other missing components that need further consideration from the Ministry, was mentioned by only two of the participants in this study. The first is the lack of a library inside the school. The absence of a library limits the student from independently learning and acquiring knowledge of various things that are not listed in the school syllabus. A library is especially significant for public primary schools, since majority of students come from financially struggling families, purchasing a book to read for leisure can be a burden on the family. Thus, having a library inside school would not only give the students an additional activity to do during recess but also allow them to develop as an individual with vast knowledge.

The second component that is missing in the public school is a properly trained extracurricular activity staff, such as music or arts teacher. While an extracurricular activity such as art and music is becoming more common in public schools, none of the schools have reported to have a professionally trained musician or artist to teach their students. Instead, regular staff member that has personal experience in art or music is chosen to teach the students. This not only defeats the purpose of having such activities since they are taught by someone who does not have professional training. But, it also puts more pressure on the regular staff members who not only have to teach their regular subjects, but also teach a class which they themselves are not fully knowledgeable of. Therefore, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education should provide professionally trained staff for the schools for extracurricular activities.

Reflecting back to the initial hypothesis, in which I stated that there is a positive relationship between adequate school infrastructure and its educational success. From the
results seen in this study, it can be concluded that there is indeed a positive relationship between school infrastructure and educational success. However, the challenges that the schools are facing are both structural and nonstructural causes, which is not a result of its community context. Instead, they are a result of negligence and lack of support provided by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education equally to all the schools.

The issues currently faced by the schools in the public sector are in need of more attention from higher administration. From my examination of the schools, it was clear that the primary education division has tremendous potential to excel. The staff members are all very dedicated to empowering their students with knowledge to succeed and go further in the future. However they need certain tools such as classroom furniture, parental and community support, and proper renovations done on time so classroom time is not disrupted by deteriorating structure. All these characteristics combined with proper administrative support from the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education will enable the teachers to actually help their students succeed. In concluding this thesis, I would like to reflect back on a statement made by a teacher in urban school (B), the educational system in Bangladesh lacks unification, and it is through unifying that the education system will progress.
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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNARS

Instructional Staff Interview Question

Subject ID:

1) What is the last grade of formal education you have completed?
2) How long have you been teaching/working in this school?
3) Are there any computers in your classroom? If so, are they mostly used by teachers or by students?
4) When you first arrived at this school what were some of the infrastructural issues you encountered?
5) Have you addressed your concerns with the school headmaster/principle?
6) Have you seen any action taken to address your concerns?
7) Keeping in mind the structural issues that currently exist or existed in the past, why did those problems arise?
8) Are the current issues a result of the rural or urban context of the community this school is in, or do to administrative causes linked to the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education?
9) What is the quality of the classroom roof?
10) What is the quality of the classroom wall?
11) What is the quality of the classroom floor?

Parent Interview Question

Subject ID:

1) What was your last grade of formal education you have completed?
2) At what age did you get married?
3) Why do you send your child to the school they are attending?
4) How does your child come home after school? Do you pick them up or do they come home by themselves?
5) When was the last time you attended a parent-teacher meeting?
6) Do you help your child with any homework? If so, do you understand the material?
7) Do you see any problems with this school? If so, why do you think those problems exist, are they a cause of the rural or urban community this school is in?
8) Have you spoken to school teachers or administrators regarding your concerns?

**Student Interview Questions**

**Subject ID:**

1) What is your age?
2) Do you live far or close from school?
3) Did your parents go to school?
4) Do you like coming to school every day?
5) If you were given a choice today, you can come to school, or stay home and do whatever you like, what would you pick?
6) What are some things you would like to see change in your school?
7) When you grow up, what would you like to be?
APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

Educational Structural Observation in Bangladesh

Informed Sheet- Provided at Consent/ Assent
You are invited to participate in a research study about educational structural issues. In this study you will be asked questions to identify your comments and concerns regarding your school’s infrastructure. You will be asked to identify infrastructure issues you currently facing or have overcome.

This study is being conducted by Minhajul Meje, candidate for the Masters in Urban Studies at Fordham University. This study is supported by the Urban Studies department at Fordham University.

There is one qualification to participate in this study: You must have a minimum of five years of experience in your respected fields.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to participate in this study, you would be interviewed for about forty minutes; interview will continue if we surpass forty minutes depending on your availability. The interview will encompass questions regarding your teaching experiences in your assigned school and problems you are having or had with the physical infrastructure of the school.

Participating in this study may not benefit you directly, but it will help identify the different problems educators are facing in teaching in schools that are in need of infrastructure development.

The information you will share with us if you participate in this study will be kept completely confidential to the full extent of the law. Your personal information will be assigned a code number that will identify you to this study. The list that will identify your name to your assigned code will be kept in private and only I will have access. After this interview has been analyzed, your name and code will be destroyed leaving no trace to your identification.

Also, the results in this study will be used in a Master's thesis that will be in public domain.
If you have any questions about this study, please contact Minhajul Meje at 718-775-7703, Meje@fordham.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. E. Doyle McCarthy, Chair of the Fordham University Institutional Review Board (212-636-7946 or IRB@Fordham.edu).

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM WHETHER OR NOT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE.
You are being invited to participate in a research study. We will be discussing your everyday school experience. If you agree to be in this study, we will meet with your teacher and you will be asked some questions.

Everything we talk about will be kept private between us. If you tell me about something or someone that can hurt you or your hurting yourself, I will have to tell someone but I will not tell the person who is hurting or hurt you.

If you agree to be in this study, I will start the interview. If you have any question at this time you can tell me. If you have any questions at anytime, you can ask me right away and not wait till the end. At anytime in this interview if you do not want to answer any questions you can tell me to skip the question. At anytime in this interview if you do not want to answer any more question I will stop the interview. There is no right or wrong answers.

Minhajul Meje (Principle Investigator)
Subject’s Initials ______
Subject Identification # ____

You do not have to be in the study, and you can stop if you do not want to do it, at any time.

Child’s Assent: I have been told about the study and know why it is being done and what I will be asked to do. I also know that I do not have to do it if I do not want to. If I have questions, I can ask Minhajul Meje. I can stop at any time.

My parents/guardians know that I am being asked to be in this study.

PLEASE SIGN IF YOU AGREE TO BE IN THIS STUDY.

We will give you a copy of this form so you can take it with you whether you agree or not.
CHECK BELOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Child’s Assent Date ________________

List of Individuals Authorized to Obtain Assent

Name Title Day Phone # ___________
APPENDIX C: MAP OF BANGLADESH
Abstract

Minhajul Meje

BA, Fordham University

Educational Infrastructural Development in Bangladesh: A Comparative Rural and Urban Community Context Study of Government Primary Schools in Bangladesh

Thesis directed by Rosemary Wakeman, Ph.D

Students’ academic performances are often seen via statistics with no reasoning to the conditions and obstacle they have to overcome. The goal of this paper is to discuss the importance of structural development in both rural and urban primary schools and the influences of the community and environment which encompasses the schools. In theory, Bangladesh does have equal resources to properly educate students at the primary level of education. However, in practice, due to lack of adequate facility, funding and other necessary resources, there are numerous obstacles which prevent a child in Bangladesh from successfully completing their education in primary schools in both rural and urban communities. In this paper, I observe the context of the obstacles both the school and community face and how they endure their conditions to provide a quality education. A comparative study is conducted which examines the schools in both communities in Bangladesh. Based on interviews conducted from five schools there are three major issues discovered; students arrived to school hungry, inconvenient school timing and extensive syllabus, all major factors in the hindrance of education. Although, the three issues listed are not related to the physical infrastructure of the school, nonetheless they are just as imperative and impacting to the overall education of the students. Next, it was expressed that the government provides support to schools based on the schools’ academic performances, but even then, the schools face difficulties in adequately using the funds. Also, status of a community is determined to be insignificant in rating the success of a school. This study highlights the significance of infrastructural development in government-funded primary schools in both rural and urban communities to enhance mutual learning experiences and keeping the academic curiosity, which is vital for all learners that strive for academic success.
Vita

Minhajul Meje was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh and currently resides in New York City. After graduating in 2004 from Saint John's Preparatory High School, he attended Fordham University in New York City where he majored in Urban Studies and minored in Business Administration. In 2008, he received the Bachelor of Arts and Science degree in Urban Studies. In September 2010, Minhajul entered the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Fordham University in the Urban Studies program.