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National Education Assessment, 2001—II

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In all cases, around one-quarter of the students were defined as achieving "near-mastery" of the basic items where "basic" represents the learning defined as a minimal requirement for successful completion. Only in Bangla was the proportion achieving mastery of the "basic" items above 25%. In science, the proportion achieving mastery of the "basic" items was almost 20%; but mastery of the "proficient" items was at a much lower level. "Proficient" representing the learning that the team defined us desirable for all students to achieve. In mathematics and social studies, the proportion defined as a achieving mastery was well below 10%. As a result, two thirds or more of the students in both social studies and mathematics were defined as "non-masters".

Performance in mathematics and social studies was similar in class 5 to class 3. In Bangla and in science, there was evidence of a decline in the proportion achieving "mastery". In mathematics and social studies, the proportion achieving "mastery". In mathematics and social studies, the proportion defined as achieving mastery was well below 10%. As a result, two-thirds or more of the students in both social studies and mathematics were defined as "non-masters."

5.6 What Students Can and cannot Do:

This study also makes a subjectwise and classwise list on what on average students at class 3 or class 5 probably can or cannot do. Rasch one-paramenter items response theory (IRT) methods were used to analyse each data set. Far each grade-subject, those items were identified which the average student was likely to pass (ie., 75% probability or more), and likely to fail (ee. 25% probability or more of passing).

5.7 Teachers Expectations and Actual Outcomes:

During the analysis of the achievement data, a workshop on 27 June 2002 was conducted to explore teachers' under standing of their students achievements and gather their judgments of what students' ought to be able to do. Their estimates were then compared with the actual outcome. Table-10 below shows the average of the teachers expectations in each subject, the actual outcome and the difference between the two

It seems clear from these results that teachers on the whole consistently over-estimate students learning achievement-although their estimates in general are not particularly accurate.

5.8 Findings- Social and Economic Background

A questionnaire was developed to gather information about factors in students' home and economic background that might affect learning achievement. Through overall analyses it is found that most families (80.5%) consisted of three or more children. Most respondents (42.8%) reported being ten years old, in spite of having completed five grades of education. There was however a tendency for more boys to be overaged and girls to be relatively younger. Most students (77.9%) reported that they had a separate space for reading at home. 85.9% reported having some help with their studies at home. Among them 78.8% got their help from family members, while only 7.1% reported having a private tutor. 49% students reported that their fathers had completed primary education. Urban mother were relatively much better educated than rural mothers. 19.8% were reported as having higher education in urban areas, as against 11.3% in rural areas. About parental occupation it was found that 48% were involved in agriculture, 17.4% in small business and 17% were in government service. Overall, 25.3% of respondents reported that their mother was a wage earner. About one student in three (37.5%) reported that they had to remain absent from school on occasion for household work.

Regarding economic background the great majority of respondents (74.7%) reported having a roof of C sheet, with thatch a distant second (11.2%), followed by pucca (8.9%). The proportion of respondents reported having electricity in rural areas was 24.2%; in urban areas it was 55.5%. The number of possessions found in the typical household is quite small 61.6% of the respondents reported having only one of the seven items (radio, bicycle, computer, electricity, motor car, TV and motor cycle) they were asked about. Only two were reported by about one-quarter of respondents-TV (21.7%) and electricity (25.9%).

6. Principal observations and Recommendations

* Mathematics and Social Science appear to need special attention at both class 3 and class 5 level.
* The difference between learning achievement in urban and rural areas should be reduced.
* By class 5 levels, boys appear to have moved significantly ahead of girls. This may be cause for concern.
* Item selection for future assessment should consider the basic, proficient and advanced levels.
* Children from small sized family appears to do better in the achievement tests.
* If a fully competency-based approach is to be taken, much larger numbers of items will be needed.
* In the classroom, students should be exposed to varied teaching and learning (including assessment) techniques focusing on development of higher-order thinking skills and at the same time address memorising information.
* A training programme to link assessment with instruction should be included in the training of trainers on assessment and curriculum dissemination.
* A continuing programme of training for AUEOs and teachers on varied assessment formats is needed.
* Academic supervision should include monitoring assessment procedures.
* The National Assessment should be repeated in three years (i.e. November 2004) using the same grade levels (class 3 and 5) and a subset of the items used in 2001.
* A center for National Assessment should be established to take charge of functions related to National Assessment.

7. Conclusion

The present National Assessment is no doubt a very great achievement in the history of education of Bangladesh made by the Primary and Mass Education Ministry. The study does not work with biased and inadequate sample. Rather it works with national representative probability sample and speaks on state of primary education in Bangladesh. Other status studies on primary education show that the primary graders achievement level is that much lower that it is within the black hole of no escape for quality thrust. On the contrary, this study shows that our primary children's performances at the four core subjects are not good and most of them belong to non-master level. Yet the achievement levels in the subjects ranges from 42.0% to 52.0% with a few master and some near master. since the study represents the nation in statistical sense, we can be hopeful that in such a moderately bad performance situation practical effort is possible to be taken up for rapid quality improvement of primary education.

Let us push forward for qualitative improvement of Primary Education in Bangladesh.

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