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# Bangladesh EDUCATION Journal

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Bangladesh  
**EDUCATION**  
Journal

**Manzoor Ahmed**  
Advisory Editor

**Abu Hamid Latif**  
Editor

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BRAC University (BIED, BRACU)

Inspiring Excellence

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# **BANGLADESH EDUCATION JOURNAL**

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## Notes from the Editor

The contents of Volume 17, No. 2, December 2018 issue of *Bangladesh Education Journal* include two articles on higher education and one on the woes of teaching English in secondary schools—all of great topical importance.

The public lecture of **Sir Fazle Hasan Abed** on higher education in Bangladesh addresses quality and relevance challenges in higher education for an aspiring middle income country. His seven-point agenda concludes with a plea for picket-fencing the higher education institutions against the assault of “mal-politics” that seems to hold hostage the future of the country.

**Dr. Tracy B.E. Omorigiwa** of University of Benin in Nigeria reports about sexual harassment among undergraduates, which prevails “moderately,” but affects academic life, mental health and self-esteem of the victims, most of whom are the female students. The remedies proposed are awareness raising, a system of punishment for offences, and responsible dress code.

**Amin Rahman and Raqib Chowdhury** of Monash University, Australia, engaged in experimental work in improving teaching of English in Bangladesh rural secondary schools, argue for conceptualising the purpose of English as a Lingua Franca for effective communication and suggest methodology for teaching it as “English-for-Life” rather than “English-for-exams.”





# **C o n t e n t s**

## **Notes from the Editor**

### **Higher Education for an Emerging Middle Income Country**

*Sir Fazle Hasan Abed KCMG*

09-23

### **Sexual Harassment among University Students in Nigeria: Prevalence, Psychosocial Factors and Prevention**

*Tracy B.E. Omorigiwa*

25-33

### **Teaching “English for Life”: Beliefs and Attitudes of Secondary School English Teachers in Rural Bangladesh**

*Amin Rahman and Raqib Chowdhury*

35-53



## Higher Education for an Emerging Middle Income Country

Sir Fazle Hasan Abed KCMG\*

### Editor's Note

*This paper is based on the keynote address delivered by the founder of BRAC, reputedly the world's largest development NGO, at the Assembly on Higher Education held at the Senate Hall, University of Dhaka on 11 March, 2018. The Assembly was sponsored by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES). The views expressed in this paper are not necessarily of FES.*

*Sir Fazle, also the chairperson of the Board of Trustees of BRAC University, speaks about the character of and expectations from institutions of higher learning in a developing country. He asserts that aiming for and maintaining quality in the educational programme is the central concern of the university and suggests a practical concept of quality that the university must strive for.*

*Sir Fazle offers a seven-point agenda about what should be done on key problem areas: a) Pedagogy and Teachers in Higher Education, b) New Thinking about Teachers in the Education System and the Role of Higher Education, c) Values and Ethics, Institutional Culture and Teachers' Role, d) Research on Critical National Concerns, e) Expansion Only with Basic Quality Assurance, f) Higher Education Financing, and g) Higher Education Governance – Protecting it from Mal-politics.*

*Considering the significance and topicality of the ideas and views of Sir Fazle, the paper is reproduced in BEJ.*

**Key words:** *Higher Education, Bangladesh, Quality in Higher education, Pedagogy and Teachers, Agenda for Action.*

### 1. Introduction

Since its birth as an independent nation in 1971, having been ravaged by war and destruction, Bangladesh has made great progress in achieving high economic growth and poverty reduction. The average rate of GDP growth has exceeded 6% in recent years and the incidence of moderate poverty fell to 25% by 2015. Extreme poverty fell even faster to half of this rate. Bangladesh crossed the World Bank's threshold for low middle income in 2015.

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\* Founder of BRAC; Chairperson, BRAC University Board of Trustees

Demographic, health and education indicators as well as indicators of gender equity have shown major improvements. Bangladesh is a positive outlier compared with the social progress of countries with similar per capita income. It benefits from the demographic dividend along with greater participation of the female workforce. The long-term development objective is to achieve upper middle income status and eliminate extreme poverty by FY2031 and cross the threshold for developed countries by 2041. The aim is to accelerate ongoing structural transformation to achieve double digit growth in manufacturing along with further growth of the organized service sector. The rural economy is expected to undergo transformation as more non-farm activities emerge and the spread of ICT increases productivity and efficiency. These objectives and aspirations bring to the fore the importance of developing the skills and capabilities of people, especially those emerging from the higher education system and taking the lead in different spheres of national development.

The country looks towards ambitious targets in line with the global SDG4 goal of “ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning for all” by 2030. The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been endorsed by the Government of Bangladesh.

The ten SDG4 targets cover primary to tertiary education, technical and vocational education, skills development of youth and adults, literacy and numeracy of the population, inclusiveness and equity in education, quality of education and teachers, as well as the provision, scope and character of education services that address the targets. Knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour that contribute to sustainable development are given prominence. In contrast to EFA 2015 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), attention is given to a broader range of education issues including tertiary education and the opportunities for lifelong learning for all in a learning society. Substantial re-thinking is clearly required regarding priorities for action in education for the immediate future and the longer term. In this re-direction of priorities and strategies, universities and the entire higher education sub-sector deserve special attention.

## **2. Higher Education -- A Diverse and Complex System**

By 2016 (the year of the latest University Grants Commission report), there were 137 public and private universities of different kinds in Bangladesh with 3.5 million students. We have travelled a long way from just six public universities in 1973 with less than a hundred thousand students, including students in affiliated colleges under those universities.

It is a diverse and complex system. There are 42 public universities officially established, of which 37 are functioning. They enrolled 3,150,409 students in 2016, including students in their affiliated colleges. Excluding the National University, the Open University and the Islamic Arabic University, the enrollment in public universities was 260,084, which is a more meaningful number to compare with that of private universities.

Private universities, the first one opening its doors in 1992, now officially total 95, though 9 are not operational, with an enrollment of 337,157 students in 2016. The mainstream universities, therefore, had around 600,000 students.

Higher education is more than the customarily known universities, as the total enrollment numbers suggest. The major components of the higher education system as of 2016 are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Components of Higher Education in Bangladesh (2016)**

<b>Universities</b>	<b>Affiliated Institutions</b>	<b>Students (% of total enrollment)</b>	<b>(Girls)</b>
Mainstream Public Universities (34 functioning, with 11 general and 23 specialized universities)	319 (Medical/Health technology and others)	264,084 (11.2%) (8.4% excluding affiliated institutions)	(86,294)
National University	3,081 colleges	2,300,053 (73.0%)	(1,064,170)
Open University	--	256,304 (8.1%)	(100,647)
Islamic Arabic University	1,247 madrasas	77,247 <sup>1</sup> (2.5%)	(30,899)
Islamic University	--	162, 998 <sup>1</sup> (5.2%)	(62,791)
Total Public	4,647 affiliated institutions	3,150,409 <sup>2</sup> (100%)	(1,393,082)
Private Universities (86 functioning)	--	337,157 (100%)	(92,237)
Grand Total	4,647 affiliated institutions	3,487, 566	(1,485,319)

Source: UGC, 2017. Report of the University Grants Commission, 2016.

<sup>1</sup> Islamic Arabic University launched in 2015 as an affiliating university for Madrasas is in the process bringing under it institutions formerly under Islamic University.

<sup>2</sup> Number does not add up due to incomplete data for component categories.

We can see from Table 1 the scope and complexity of higher education:

- Of about 5,000 tertiary-level institutions, only 120 are functioning mainstream universities. Of 3.5 million tertiary level students, 600,000 are directly in universities. These exclude the Quomi stream religion-based institutions, which have been given recognition by the Government without exercising any regulatory authority and are not included in this discussion.
- University students, public and private, make up 17% of tertiary students. Among them 7% go to public universities and 10% to private universities.
- Girls constitute 32% of mainstream public universities' and 27% of private universities' student bodies.

The total higher education system consists of distinct components which have different roles and contributions to make. They complement each other and are inter-dependent. Faculty for all components of higher education generally comes from the mainstream universities.

By developing human resources in specialised professional areas, the professional institutions relieve the burden on the mainstream universities, leaving them free to engage in basic and applied research and interdisciplinary areas of higher education. Universities have a special role to play in the creation, evaluation, maintenance and dissemination of knowledge. A relevant question is how closely and directly the university as a centre for research, knowledge production and dissemination should be tied to the job market when other institutions of higher learning are also involved in this task.

The colleges under the National University are the work-horses of the higher education system. They supply the bulk of mid-level personnel for both the public and the private sector as well as teachers for the K-12 school education system. It can therefore be said that the quality of the National University colleges determines the quality of the large majority of educated human resources in the country and thus affects how efficiently the country functions. That said, evidence indicates that this large segment of the tertiary education system remains particularly weak in its provision for facilities and faculty and in the quality of graduates produced.

The Open University helps to expand the opportunities for higher education in a flexible way, serving the objective of equity and taking pressure off mainstream universities while maintaining acceptable quality. There is potential for making good use of digital technology and open source educational content freely available to a large body of our learners with the mediation and necessary language adaptation by the Open University.

It is also essential to look at higher education development as part of the total education system. There are two direct links between higher education and the rest of the system. First, the school system provides and prepares students for higher education. How schools do their job determines what tertiary institutions can do and whether they can succeed. Secondly, tertiary institutions supply the teachers for schools. It is a cyclic relationship but making it a virtuous cycle is a challenge.

In this regard, it has to be recognized that, despite policy statements about turning our people into capable human resources and taking advantage of the demographic dividend, Bangladesh has failed to invest enough in education. The average of around 2% of GDP allocated as public resources for education is one of the lowest in the world, among developing countries and in the region. A UNESCO global monitoring report notes budget allocations of 3.8 % of GDP in India and 4.1 % in Thailand for 2015. (UNESCO, 2017. Global Education Monitoring report 2017/18.)

The low investment in education is also evident in the higher education sub-sector, with inadequate per student spending in the public sector and in research and provision for libraries, laboratories, student dormitories and research budgets, as discussed later.

### **3. Assuring Quality - The Overarching Problem**

#### **The concept of quality**

We are all concerned about the quality of education or, in our case, the quality of institutions of higher learning. We complain with good reason about the erosion of quality, would like to see things change and be a part of the change process. But it appears to be remarkably difficult to come up with a succinct definition of quality in higher education that we can all agree on. We end up resorting to a discussion of inputs – facilities, teaching faculty, learning materials and content, and students. We talk about how these different elements are brought together in an interactive process by institutional leaders, managers, faculty and students to produce the outcome. The outcome is the transformed learners – more competent, skilled, purposeful, wiser, those who are better equipped to fulfill their own personal goals and help make their community and the world a better place.

We in BRAC University have set goals for ourselves concerning the kind of persons our graduates should be. We want them to possess a few essential attributes. They should have good written and verbal communication skills. They should be able to think critically and apply scientific reasoning in solving problems. They should have skills to look at evidence and undertake basic quantitative analysis. They should be tech-savvy and both use and benefit from digital technology. They should be sensitive to the changing global world. They should accept and respect diversity and the plural identities of human beings which would serve as a moral compass for them. International discourse about 21st century skills such as those advocated by UNESCO and the European Union echo these objectives (Altbach, et al, 2009; European Parliament, 2006).

We do not claim that we have a formula to ensure achievement of these goals. But they provide us with an agenda and help us define the quality outcome we aspire to. A system thinking looking at the inputs, the process and outcomes can help us get there.

The standards and rules for quality in higher education have been specified in the charters of establishment of the universities and other tertiary institutions, including the University Ordinances of 1973, the Private University Act of 1993 and the amended Act of 2010.

A serious difficulty is the lax application of the provisions of the law. In consequence, despite the expansion of the system, the benefits of the investment are not realized. The expected competencies and capabilities of the graduates are not developed, leading to poor private returns to the individual graduates (and those large numbers who do not graduate), as well as poor social returns for the nation from the investment in higher education.

#### **The composition of the sub-system**

One concern is the distribution of students among the disciplines and the relevance of the learning content for the employment market and national development. Given the growing anxiety around the world about youth unemployment, even higher education graduates (Barber, et al., 2013), the question of relevance is critical.

**Table 2. Student Enrollment by discipline (2016)**

<b>Academic Disciplines</b>	<b>% of Students in 34 Public Universities</b>	<b>% of Students in National University</b>	<b>% of Students in Open University</b>	<b>% of Students in Private Universities</b>
Arts/Humanities	16.1	29.1	86.8 <sup>1</sup>	10.0
Social Sciences	14.4	32.4	--	11.0
Science, Agriculture, Technology, Medicine	48.1	9.4	4.2	40.0
Commerce/ Business	13.3	28.3	2.0	33.0
Law	2.0	0.6	0.3	-- <sup>2</sup>
Education	1.1	--	5.6	-- <sup>2</sup>
Pharmacy	--	--	--	3.0
Other Diplomas and Certificates	5.0	0.2	1.2	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>98.0</b>

Note. Calculated from UGC data. Total does not add up to 100% due to incomplete data.

Source: UGC, 2016, Tables 2.1.2.4 (p.123) and 2.3.1.2 (p.309).

<sup>1</sup> Includes Social Sciences.

<sup>2</sup> Included under Social Sciences.

Table 2 shows the distribution of students by area or discipline of study in different segments of higher education. Some observations regarding this distribution of students by disciplines can be made:

- Public and private universities enroll a high percentage of students in science, technology, agriculture and medicine – 48% and 40% respectively. National and Open Universities, which serve over 80% of tertiary students, enroll a small proportion of students in these career-oriented practical subjects – only 9% and 4% respectively.
- Enrollment of National and Open University students in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences is 72% and 86% respectively, compared to enrollment of 30% and 21%, respectively, of mainstream public and private university students in these subjects. One wonders if this should not be the other way around. Presumably, more capable students come to the mainstream universities, and they could pursue a liberal education and courses in basic sciences to become leaders in different academic and professional fields and pursue advanced studies.
- Both private universities and the National University appear to be responding to perceived market demand for training in business and commerce, though the quality of training and its credibility in the market vary greatly.



- Teaching as an occupation absorbs a high proportion of tertiary graduates, but there is little opportunity for professional preparation of teachers in the tertiary education system. Universities don't seem to have a significant role here. Only the Open University, according to the data, offers some courses.
- How well the disciplines and learning contents of the Islamic University and the Islamic Arabic University, which enroll almost eight percent of tertiary education students with public patronage, prepare their graduates for the contemporary society and professions appear to escape discussion and objective analysis.
- The data regarding enrolment by discipline are incomplete and not comparable across institutions. A standard classification of disciplines and subjects could be developed and applied across the system to collect and analyse data for better planning.

### Teachers and Teacher-Student Ratio

Among the top 100 Asian Universities within the 600 best universities in the World University Rankings 2016, none has more than nine students for every staff member. This is well below the average 16.5 students per staff member for all 800 universities in the World University Rankings (Times Higher Education Supplement, 2017). Such a gross ratio provides only a rough order of magnitude. An appropriate teacher-student ratio depends on the proportions of faculty with different levels of experience and qualifications and how they are deployed for teaching, tutorials, research and student counselling. Table 3 provides the numbers and overall teacher-student ratios for public and private universities in Bangladesh.

**Table 3. Teacher-Student ratio in Public and Private Universities**

Categories of Universities	Full-time teachers	Part-time teachers	Total	Teacher Student-Ratio
Public Mainstream Universities	13,072	(2,706 on leave)*	10,366 available	1:26
Private Universities	10,463	5,108	15,671	1:22

Source: UGC, 2017. Report of the University Grants Commission 2016.

\* Teaching staff on study leave or absent for other reasons and not available for teaching.

The prevailing teacher-student ratio is not sufficient to enable university teachers to engage in teaching, outside class advising and interaction with students, and also to pursue research and professional development activities. The National University gross teacher-student ratio is 1:23 with about 100,000 teaching personnel teaching 2.3 million students. The gross ratios are subject to the actual availability of personnel and ensuring qualified teaching personnel for each subject. Support for teachers with digital learning resources, and preparing them and students to make use of these resources would be one way of optimizing teacher productivity.

The number of teachers is not the only issue, of course. Lack of professionalism and skills of teachers is widely regarded as one of the reasons for the low learning achievement of students and graduates not quite matching market needs. Professional development of university teachers is limited to obtaining an advanced degree in the respective discipline. They are seldom trained to acquire pedagogical skills and engage students in an active learning process; these aspects of teaching-learning strategies are overlooked.

Another aspect of teachers and teaching is the role of the tertiary system in preparing teachers for the school system which, in turn, supplies the students -- the essential inputs -- for the higher education system. We will come back to this issue later.

#### **4. What Can Be Done?**

In order to bring about the desired changes in the higher education system so it serves the human and socio-economic needs of an emerging middle-income country, a system view must be taken. The key elements of inputs, the processes for managing the inputs to produce the outputs, and then delivering the outcomes have to be examined and put into effective use.

We examine some key elements of the system and argue for transformative shifts from customary approaches to set in motion the change needed to take us to the destination – 2030 and beyond. We suggest actions and strategies related to pedagogy and teachers, more funds and their better use, expansion strategies, institutional culture and values and governance to fit the purpose.

##### **a. Pedagogy and Teachers in Higher Education**

Pre-tertiary education does not prepare most students to become independent learners with the discipline, study habits, communication skills and reasoning capabilities expected of higher education students. It is necessary to recognize this reality and start from where the learners are. Remedial and supportive measures for learners need to be part of pedagogy in every subject in institutions of higher education. The teaching-learning process needs to allow and encourage each student to grow and develop from where he/she is.

The rapidly evolving technology landscape opens new vistas for learning. Universities have to formulate the strategy for the inclusion of technology for teaching and ask: What is best done face-to-face, and what online, and in what contexts? What is the role of the human teachers? How can they increase their effectiveness and how can technology complement them? (Bates, 2015:251).

- Teachers in universities and other higher education institutions must have the knowledge in their discipline. They also need the knowledge and skills to be effective teachers in order to accompany young learners in their journey to learn and grow. The initiatives taken by universities and the UGC to introduce professional development of their teachers need to be strengthened and additional resources invested. Every institution of higher learning (IHL) should have an effective professional faculty development center.
- Open educational resources (OER) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, videos, tests, software, and other means of conveying knowledge. A minority of more tech-savvy and brighter

students are already taking advantage of these, which is creating a new digital disparity. A concerted and systematic effort is needed to adapt these materials for the majority of students. The instructors have to be prepared and encouraged to be the intermediary to help students access the open resources. The Open University should take this on as a major project, while all Universities can move towards placing more of their regular courses on-line for their students.

### **b. New Thinking about Teachers in the Education System and the Role of Higher Education**

Few will disagree that a major obstacle to achieving quality with equity in the education system, as envisaged in Education Policy 2010, is the professional and personal capabilities and attributes of teachers. A vicious cycle, of teachers with limited capability and poor motivation producing students from primary and secondary schools who are ill-prepared for higher education, is at work. Many, in turn, become low-capability teachers, thus perpetuating the cycle. A way has to be found to break this cycle and attract the “best and the brightest” of young graduates into teaching and retain them in the profession. Global experience of addressing this challenge suggests possibilities from which we must learn. Bangladesh does not have a pre-service teacher education programme, unlike many countries, though school teaching is the single largest field of employment for college graduate (Ahmed, 2015).

- A national teacher development initiative has to be undertaken to begin to orient and prepare emotionally and intellectually bright young people after higher secondary for teaching as a noble and rewarding profession. This will include several key steps:
- A pre-service teacher preparation programme should be incorporated into the undergraduate degree programme with education as a subject in one or two Government colleges in every district under the National University. Students will receive a BA or BSc degree, depending on the combination of other subjects taken along with Education as the core subject, in addition to a teaching certificate.
- Academic and other quality standards required by National University and UGC (hardly enforced at present) have to be strictly enforced in selected colleges for this initiative. Financial and personnel provisions have to be made for this purpose under a special project.
- A National Teaching Service Corps (NTSC), with attractive remuneration and status, is seen as a key step that will create a national cadre of teachers who, in a few years, will create a nucleus of quality education personnel in our schools and bring about a qualitative change in teaching and learning.

A beneficial fallout of this initiative, if properly implemented, would be to show the way for a qualitative change in the colleges under the National University.

### **c. Values and Ethics, Institutional Culture and Teachers' Role**

An institution of higher learning (IHL) must clearly articulate the personal qualities and attributes students should cultivate. It must create the environment for abiding by those values and ethical principles in behaviour and conduct among peers, between students and

teachers, and students' interaction with the wider society. Responsibility, honesty, upholding the dignity and rights of all humans, appreciation of diversity and plural identities of people, and practice of democracy should guide social interaction in the academic community.

IHLs need to prepare teachers and encourage them to be role models for students in practising the pedagogic approaches and inculcating the values and ethics befitting an IHL. Teachers should be recruited, oriented, supervised, assessed, and rewarded on the basis of how they discharge their role model responsibility.

- IHLs should create an environment that allows them to live up to their function of encouraging all in the IHL community – students, teachers, administrators and parents – to contribute to building an institutional culture. Codes of conduct for the major groups of actors in IHL -- students, teachers and administrators -- should be developed and all encouraged to abide by these through a fair and transparent enforcement mechanism.

#### **d. Research on Critical National Concerns**

A university worth the name must contribute to creating knowledge as well as applying knowledge and technology to finding solutions to critical national priorities. Examples might include climate impact and promoting the green economy; sustainable production and consumption; turning waste into useful products; alleviating drudgery and hazardous work; human ecology in land and water scarcity; bridging the digital divide, bio-technology and genetics, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, robotics and relevant social science research.

The initiatives taken so far in this respect are insufficient and lack strategic cohesion. They are piecemeal efforts by individual teachers. They are still not part of an integrated plan for teaching, research and professional faculty development that encourages and rewards research along with good teaching. There is not enough planning and strategizing with stakeholders -- industry, Government and academia – to set priorities and extract the results of research.

- A research and development council in each university should work with the private sector to develop and support a research agenda and promote start-ups for linking research to application. The regulatory body for higher education, UGC, needs to take the lead to convene stakeholders, set priorities and agenda, encourage collaboration and mobilise substantially larger resources for research.

#### **e. Expansion only with Basic Quality Assurance**

The UGC 2016 report informs that the total output of higher education graduates and post-graduates was 508,946. This is meagre for a country of 170 million. Yet, high unemployment is reported among graduates. As noted earlier, there is mismatch between the disciplines and areas of study of the graduates and market needs. It is not a matter of a direct one-to-one correspondence between jobs and university qualifications, which is not possible to establish. It is also impractical because of rapid changes in job profiles and skills requirements. The mismatch is linked to the quality of education, the competencies of graduates, and employers' expectations and confidence regarding quality. The job market needs people with basic competencies, generic skills, who are capable of adapting to the changing environments and are willing and able to continue learning. .

We noted above that the quality standards set for institutions are not enforced, especially in respect of academic quality. There appears to be a much stronger emphasis on physical infrastructure development by UGC for the growing sub-system of private universities; and on neither infrastructure nor academic criteria for the large network of colleges under the National University. These issues stem from problems related both to governance and meagre resources (see below).

Out of 42 public universities and 95 private, 5 and 9 respectively are yet to be operational. Yet, at least ten more are reported to be in the pipeline. Meanwhile, 4,100 seats remained vacant at graduate and post-graduate level in public universities in 2017, mostly in the outlying districts. They fail to attract students because they “do not have adequate number of teachers, library, laboratories and dormitories.” (New Age, “New, outlying district public universities failing to woo students,” 5 March, 2018).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina spoke of having at least one public or private university in each district – a commendable and appropriate target. The purpose of this expansion will be fulfilled only if the minimum acceptable quality standards for academic work and facilities are ensured.

- Higher education opportunities must expand; an appropriate target would be to at least double enrollment (from 13.4% gross for age group 17-24 years in 2015) in the next 10 years in order to come closer to the ratios of access in the region (India - 23.9% in 2013; Thailand - 52.5% in 2014). But the resources invested may be wasted and frustration generated if minimum standards are not enforced. These have to be ensured by proper planning of the academic programme, providing sufficient resources and applying effective governance (see below). [Enrollment rates from World Data Atlas, <https://knoema.com/atlas>.]

#### **f. Higher Education Financing**

Total public education funding has been unacceptably meagre, as noted earlier, and the share allocated to higher education has been also disproportionately low. There appear to be no standards or benchmark for per student spending to ensure an acceptable standard. UGC reports wide variation in per student spending even for the same type of academic programmes and institutions. At the high end is Bangabandhu Maritime University with Tk 469,608 and Bangabandhu Agricultural University, Mymensingh, with TK 326,779 annual spending per student in 2016. For general public universities, at the high end was Khulna with Tk 154,888. At the low end, it is – 28,325 for Begum Rokeya University and 36,095 for Jagannath University.

For the National University, per student expenditure for 2016 was reported to be Tk. 1,362, while for the Open University it was Tk 1,049. It was not clear what cost items were included in this calculation, but it appears to be too low to ensure any quality.

In the case of private universities, no public resources are spent and universities operate on the basis of cost recovery. The average spending per student (not counting infrastructure and capital expenditure) was reported to be Tk. 109,230 in 2016 -- with great variation among institutions..

Private universities have become a vital part of the higher education system and their role and significance will increase as the demand for higher education grows. Even if the Government is not expected to contribute to running private universities, it can take measures to promote broader and more equitable access of learners to private universities by supporting student loans and providing incentives for relevant research. This kind of support would enhance the 'public good' role of private universities.

- Total public education funding must grow. A reasonable target is 4 to 5 percent of GDP in 5 years, which would be in line with the recommended international benchmark. Public allocation for higher education must increase proportionately to assure acceptable quality in mainstream and specialized universities, the National University institutions (including the special teacher preparation initiative) and the Open University.
- A student loan scheme, especially for private universities, should be introduced by a tripartite arrangement of the banking sector (guided by the State Bank), university and the loan beneficiary student. Public liability would be minimal in the form of some interest subsidy and risk coverage through insurance. The capital and the operating cost can be supported by loan or grant from international financial institutions and bilateral donors. A beneficial fall-out would be quality criteria that may be applied to participating universities in the loan program, including adherence to non-profit and non-commercial operating principles as required by the private university charters.

#### **g. Higher Education Governance – Protecting it from Mal-politics**

The state of disarray in higher education governance -- arising in part from non-enforcement of the rules and standards that already exist -- must be overcome. The University Grants Commission, proposed to be turned into a Higher Education Commission, needs to build the capacity and clout to enforce standards and rules fairly and transparently, without fear and favour. The system needs to move towards greater autonomy with accountability for individual institutions, as long as they abide by the agreed rules of the game. Institutions should be allowed to earn the right to exercise greater autonomy as they demonstrate the capacity to abide by rules and maintain performance standards.

Higher education -- for that matter all education -- needs to be out of bounds for political interference motivated by short-sighted views and factional or individual interests. A case in point is student organisations sponsored by major political parties, which has become a major disruptive influence on campuses.

In April 2010, when the National Education Policy was about to be announced, five of the most eminent educational leaders of the country -- Prof. Kabir Chowdhury, Prof. Zillur Rahman Siddiqi, Prof. Jamal Nazrul Islam, Prof. Anisuzzaman, and Prof. Serajul Islam Chowdhury -- in a joint appeal urged political parties to sever their links with their student arms. This appeal is more relevant today than ever (Five Educationists' Press Statement, April, 2010).

A legitimate demand is being raised for reactivating student unions in universities to serve as incubators of leadership in society and politics. It will work only if the present vicious student politics can be brought under control.

Mal-politics -- or inappropriate influence of political parties, culture and personalities -- has engulfed many aspects of education management and decision-making. This is glaringly evident in the universities. It begins with the process of approving and establishing public and private universities and colleges -- based on political lobbying rather than the rational application of criteria. New institutions have sprung up where they are not needed.

It embarrasses me to recite the litany of problems that have been listed in the news media and research reports. It is long and painful – the wrong side of student politics leading to many kinds of crimes that would be credit to a mafia godfather. The pernicious influence spreads to dormitories, campus life, admission of students, question leaks, tenders and contracts for university business, safety of female students, and even the appointment of staff and teaching personnel.

There is a glorious history of students' involvement in national politics, especially during the state language movement and in the 1960s and 1970s when students showed the way to political leaders at critical moments. As a general rule, students were more concerned with their extra-curricular campus activities conducted through the elected student union. For almost three decades there has been no student union election in any institution of higher education because student politics have been completely taken over by the major political parties and student bodies have lost their independent existence. Unless this situation changes, the election of student unions, now ordered by the high court, is not likely to bring a positive outcome. It is in this context that the five most distinguished educationists of the country felt it was necessary to cut the umbilical cord of student organisations to their political parents.

A researcher summarized the mis-governance scenario in public universities as follows:

Major irregularities, extreme partisanship, severe academic disorder, administrative mismanagement, and academic, administrative and financial corruption have engulfed Bangladesh's public universities. The role of the UGC in supervising universities has become so negligible that it cannot exert any influence against this corruption. (Akhter, 2016).

Private universities have not remained immune to the influence of mal-politics. "No rules left to be broken," a headline in a news report about private universities indicates at least a perception of the problems they face (Wasim, B.H., Daily Star, 2 August, 2014). A Transparency International Bangladesh study in 2014 published a report about how a circle of officials from the Ministry of Education, UGC, and a private university blatantly engaged in corruption including selling fake diplomas. The shocking report gained no friends for TIB; rather much of the private university community and the Ministry of Education opted to "shoot" the messenger of the bad news.

- The governance problems in higher education are rooted in the political culture of the country and the desire of politicians to control and influence regardless of the effects on the education system. Only a political decision at the highest level, as suggested by the distinguished educationists, can help reverse the situation.

- Members of Parliament should voluntarily abdicate the honour of taking over chairs of management boards of educational institutions and should resist placing their proxies in such bodies. They should support the election or selection of respected educationists or respected parents of students in these positions.
- The 1973 University ordinances and the 2010 Private University Act may be reviewed to ascertain where modifications may be needed in the present context and meet future challenges. Most important, however, is the need for restraint by the political power structure in exercising control over the education system from a partisan angle.
- A key element of political restraint would be to reorganize the UGC as the Higher Education Council with enhanced authority and professional capacity so it can play its role in guiding the development of higher education in the larger national interest without a wide array of control from the Ministry of Education.
- The National University should be decentralized to divisional level with appropriate professional capacity and authority, as was considered at one time, but shelved without much explanation. The regional structures can become independent affiliating universities, which is well justified in view of the large numbers and diverse institutions and the significant enrollment that each region would still have.

No nation has reached a “developed country” status without building a decent higher education system including some top-notch institutions which could be described as “world class.” We have a long way to go.

Forty-seven years ago, in this month on 7th March, Bangabandhu, the Founding Father, gave a clarion call to launch our struggle for liberation. The struggle continues. Our education system, including the universities and the other institutions of higher education, must be part of this struggle and make its contribution.

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## Sexual Harassment among University Students in Nigeria: Prevalence, Psychosocial Factors and Prevention

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### Abstract

*This study explores the prevalence, underlying social factors of sexual harassment and its prevention in the University of Benin, Nigeria. The main objective is to ascertain whether psychosocial factors are perceived as correlates of sexual harassment by university undergraduates. The study adopted the descriptive survey research method. The sample of 380 undergraduate students was drawn from the Faculties of Social Sciences, Engineering, Arts and Basic Medical Sciences of the University of Benin, Benin City. Using the non-proportionate stratified random sampling procedure, 95 undergraduate students were randomly selected from each of the faculties.*

*The instrument for the study is a 30-item questionnaire with a four-point Likert-type scale. The instrument was developed to ascertain the perception of respondents about prevalence, underlying psychosocial factors and prevention of sexual harassment. Three experts determined the content validity of the instrument, which was then subjected to internal consistency test using the Cronbach alpha method. It yielded a coefficient of 0.88 indicating a high level of internal consistency. The mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics were calculated for the study.*

*Results show the prevalence of sexual harassment of university students as moderate. The psychosocial factors influencing sexual harassment of students include financial insufficiency, moral deficit, lust and a weak system of redress. Result showed that occurrence of sexual harassment tended to be directed more towards females than males; and females were more negatively affected than males. The study identified awareness, propriety in dress and punishment for offences as necessary institutional responses to prevent sexual harassment. It is recommended that awareness-raising programs for students, lecturers and all university staff be incorporated into the programs of universities to encourage effective institutional responses towards addressing sexual harassment.*

**Keywords:** *Sexual harassment, sexual abuse, psychosocial factors, university, institutional response*

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## 1. Introduction

In every society, there is social interaction between the sexes. In such interaction, mutual interest and reciprocal response define a civilized and socially acceptable sexual behavior (Aluede, 2000). The increasing manifestation of some social vices in higher institutions in Nigeria has been a matter of concern and may be affecting the quality of graduates being produced. One such problem is sexual harassment that has attracted the attention of researchers and the media as a common phenomenon in Nigerian Universities (Gaba, 2010). Sexual harassment is a global issue that has permeated the fabrics of society including University communities and workplaces. (Aluede, 2000; Oswald & Wyatt, 2007; Wilson & Krans, 2014; Taiwo, Omole & Omole, 2014; Long & Hubble, 2018). The phenomenon of sexual harassment among undergraduates is, therefore, not limited to Nigeria or Africa. The incidence of sexual harassment and the causative factors need to be understood and what could be done to reduce vulnerability of students need to be investigated. (Okeke, 2012).

The term sexual harassment was coined in the 1960s by feminists on the contention that the legal system, being male-dominated, lack understanding of how women feel after they have been sexually harassed (Oswald & Wyatt, 2007). Sexual harassment is defined as an unsolicited, unwelcome and unreciprocated sexual overture from a person to elicit unwanted sexual relations from another person (Schuffer, 2000). This includes any inappropriate sexual overture, unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favors' and subtle and unsubtle persistent behavior (Amadu, 2009; Aditi, Sangeetha & Binu, 2016). It also includes assault and actual sexual abuse that may be expressed physically, verbally or non-verbally, usually from someone with a higher power or at an advantageous position to a less privileged person (Willness, 2007). Sexual harassment in schools has also been described as an unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that makes the victims feel uncomfortable, fearful or powerless, and interferes with their schoolwork (Magley, 2011).

There is a high level of sexual harassment occurrence between male perpetrators and female victims among university students (Aluede, 2000). The pertinent literature suggests that many of the cases of sexual harassment go unpunished and the victims are left to deal with the trauma, which stays with many of them for a long time and sometimes turns into psychological condition and mental health challenges. According to Quaicoe-Duco (2010) and Long and Hubble (2018), sexual harassment has a destabilizing effect on the education of female students, as the effects of sexual harassment for them are more negative than for their male counterparts (Gaba, 2010). Silva and Hill (2005) noted that female students are more traumatized by sexual harassment especially when it involves rape. Unwanted sexual behaviors that annoy or make other people feel uncomfortable can be in the form of verbal, non-verbal, physical harassment and sexual coercion, which is considered an extreme form of sexual harassment (Comer, 2013).

There have been studies and reports on gender violence in the form of sexual harassment in higher education for at least the past three decades (Morley, 2011). Such misconduct affects female students' psychological well-being tremendously, owing to their socio-economic vulnerability in general and how they are perceived from political and socio-cultural perspectives.

Schuffer (2000) indicates that the most common trend of sexual harassment in the Nigerian universities is sexual advances from male lecturers to female students confirming the unequal power relations where the perpetrator occupies a higher and influential position of authority over the victim. There are also incidences of sexual harassment from male students to female students, and in some extreme cases, of rape when the female student refuses to respond to male advances (Taiwo et al., 2014; Aditi et al., 2016).). Some of the causes of sexual harassment according to Imonikhe, Idogho and Aluede (2011) arise from moral deficit and lust, especially in cases where some female students engaged in sexual harassment by seducing male lecturers, or are lured by their male lecturers expecting to be awarded unmerited grades in the examination.

## **2. Statement of the problem, research questions, hypotheses and methodology**

In developing countries like Nigeria, poverty has been found to be a key reason for many females yielding to sexual advances even when they dislike such actions. (Ogunbameru, 2006; Taiwo, et al, 2014). A related factor is that parents, busy in livelihood pursuits, do not find enough time to guide and groom their children (Amadu, 2009; Luke, 2011).

On the whole, research indicates that functional and formal institutional structures must be sufficiently equipped and directed to address issues relating to sexual harassment (Morley & Lussier, 2009). The institutional structures are required to control or forestall the occurrence as well as to discipline perpetrators (Wilson & Krans, 2014). The effects of these phenomena manifest in increased school drop-out, low skills of graduates, low productivity, aggression, and mal-adjustment among young adults who are not capable of contributing to socio-economic development of the country (Obodo, 2009). This study seeks to contribute to the analysis of sexual harassment by establishing evidences on the occurrence of sexual harassment among university undergraduates in the University of Benin. The research objectives that guided this study are;

- To determine the level of occurrence of sexual harassment among university students.
- To ascertain whether psychosocial factors are correlates of sexual harassment as perceived by university undergraduates
- To determine whether male and female students differ on how they experience sexual harassment.
- To recommend possible institutional responses to addressing the occurrence of sexual harassment in universities.

### **Research Questions**

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of occurrence of sexual harassment among university students?
2. What are the psychosocial factors responsible for sexual harassment among university students?
3. What are the institutional responses to address sexual harassment?

## Hypotheses

The study seeks to test the hypotheses that;

1. There is no significant difference in the occurrence of sexual harassment between male and female students.
2. There is no significant difference in the effect of sexual harassment on male and female students.

## Methodology

The descriptive survey design adopted for this study enabled the researcher to collect data using a 30-item questionnaire constructed on four-point Likert-type scale titled "Psychosocial factors as correlates of sexual harassment Questionnaire" (PFCSHQ). Three lecturers in the Departments of Sociology and Social Work in the University of Benin assisted and advised on ensuring the validity of the instrument. The instrument was administered on 380 students of the University and the data obtained were analyzed using the Cronbach alpha formulae for internal consistency and reliability with coefficient of 0.88 obtained. The sample of undergraduate students was selected from the Faculties of Social Sciences, Engineering, Arts and Basic Medical Sciences of the University of Benin, Benin City. Using the disproportionate stratified random sampling procedure, 95 undergraduate students were randomly selected from each of the faculties. The data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics treatment of mean and standard deviation.

## 3. Presentation of Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the level of occurrence of sexual harassment among university students

**Table 1: The occurrence of sexual harassment among university students**

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of prevalence
1	Some lecturers make sexual advances to my classmates	2.63	0.85	Moderate
2	Some of my classmates have been deprived of a grade before because of refusal to consent to lecturers' sexual advances	2.80	0.52	Moderate
3	Some students make sexual advances at lecturers for better grades	2.61	0.83	Moderate
4	Some of my classmates have been sexually harassed by a fellow coursemate in the past	2.86	0.60	Moderate
	<b>The level of occurrence of sexual harassment</b>	<b>2.72</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

**N= 380; key: 1.00 – 1.99 = Low; 2.00 – 2.99 = Moderate; 3.00 – 4.00 = High**

Table 1 shows a calculated mean value of 2.72 and a standard deviation of 0.70 ; the mean falls within 2.00 and 2.99; so, the level of occurrence of sexual harassment among university students can be described as moderate.

**Research Question 2:** What are the psychosocial factors responsible for sexual harassment among university students?

**Table 2: The psychosocial factors affecting sexual harassment among university students**

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of prevalence
1	Students from poor families yield more easily to sexual advances	2.76	0.77	Accepted
2	Moral deficit is responsible for sexual harassment	2.83	0.81	Accepted
3	Weak institutional redress is linked to sexual harassment.	2.60	0.10	Accepted
4	Lust from male lecturers or students leads to sexual harassment	2.90	0.82	Accepted
	<b>Psychosocial factors responsible for sexual harassment</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>0.62</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

**N= 380**

**Test mean = 2.5**

Table 2 shows a calculated mean value of 2.76; 2.83; 2.60; 2.90 for poverty; moral deficit; weak institutional redress; and lust of male lecturers and students, respectively with a test value of 2.5. The mean values of all listed factors are higher than the test value;, so, it can be concluded that all listed psychosocial factors influence sexual harassment among university students.

**Research Question 3:** What are the institutional responses to address sexual harassment?

**Table 3: Institutional responses to sexual harassment**

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Acceptance of response
1	The need for modesty and propriety in dress	2.45	0.33	Accepted
2	Awareness raising of students and lecturers on the consequences of sexual harassment	2.66	0.62	Accepted
3	Enforcement of institutional rules and regulations to punish offenders	2.83	0.81	Accepted
4	Institutional support for students with financial inadequacy	2.43	0.45	Rejected
	<b>Institutional responses to sexual harassment</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>0.55</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

**N= 380**

**Test mean = 2.5**

Table 3 shows a calculated mean value of 2.45; 2.46; 2.83 for propriety of dress; awareness and punishment for offenders respectively with a test value of 2.5. The mean value is higher than the test value. So, institutional responses such as proper dressing, awareness and punishing offenders' would help in addressing the issue of sexual harassment among university students. Institutional support for financial inadequacy of poor students, with a mean value of 2.43 and less than the test value of 2.5, is not considered to be a necessary institutional response.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the occurrence of sexual harassment between male and female students

**Table 4: t-test of independent samples of the occurrence of sexual harassment between male and female students**

Sex	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Male	113	12.59	4.97	-21.23	0.000
Female	267	21.29	2.93		

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 4 shows a t value of -21.23 and a p value of 0.000, testing at an alpha level of 0.05, the p value is less than the alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference in the occurrence of sexual harassment between male and female students, is rejected. Consequently there is a significant difference in the occurrence of sexual harassment between male and female students. Since the mean value of females is higher than that of males the result shows that female students experience sexual harassment more often than male students.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference on the effect of sexual harassment on male and female students.

**Table 5: t-test of independent samples of the effect of sexual harassment on male and female students**

Sex	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Male	113	12.96	5.69	-20.24	0.000
Female	267	22.82	3.63		

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 5 shows a t value of -20.24 and a p value of 0.000, testing at alpha level of 0.05, the p value is less than the alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference of the effect of sexual harassment between male and female students, is rejected. So, there is a significant difference of the effect of sexual harassment between on



male and female students. Since the mean value of females is higher than that of males the result shows that female students tended to be affected by sexual harassment more than male students.

#### **4. Discussion of Findings**

This study found that there is a moderate level of the occurrence of sexual harassment among University of Benin students. The findings of this study are consistent with earlier research findings (Aluede, 2000; Aditi, et al., 2016) that there is a high occurrence of sexual harassment among university students with males as perpetrators and females as victims. This is also in line with Schuffer (2000), which indicates that the most common type of sexual harassment in the Nigerian universities is improper advances from male lecturers towards female students and from male students towards female students. The finding revealed that the psychological and social factors linked to sexual harassment in universities include poverty, weak institutional redress, moral deficit and lust. The present study appears to be consistent with other research findings, indicating that sexual harassment of students often occur due to different psychosocial factors (Taiwo, et al., 2014), which expose students to harm. The findings also revealed that low socio-economic contexts of female students correlate with sexual harassment among university students. This is indicative of the influence of the economic status of students' households as a factor in their susceptibility to sexual harassment. This finding supports the work of Ogunbameru (2006) that suggests the link between poverty and sexual harassment to be strong.

The study also found that weak institutional system of redress is associated with sexual harassment in universities. This is thus in line with the findings of Taiwo et al. (2014, p. 17), which recognized "the weak system of redress in the higher institutions" as a reason for the increasing perpetration of sexual harassment among university students. This study found that most victims do not report the occurrence as they lack confidence in the institutional redress structures. Moreover, the findings of the study revealed that moral deficit and lust influence sexual harassment of female university students. This is in agreement with the work of Imonikhe et al., (2011) that a number of female students experienced sexual harassment by lecherous male lecturers, or were lured by their lecturers expecting to be awarded unmerited grades in the examination. In the same vein, Imonikhe et al., (2011) found that lecturers attested that as a result of revealing attire worn by female students made it hard for them to concentrate, and led them to make sexual advances.

The results of the present research confirmed that female students are more prone to be subjected to sexual harassment than male students. The finding agreed with earlier research findings such as that of Okeke (2012).. In addition, this study found that the effects of sexual harassment on students differ from female to male students. This implies that female students experience more negative effects, in part because they are more vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse. This is supported by Quaicoe-Duco (2010) that sexual harassment has a destabilizing effect on the education of female students more than on their male counterparts, especially when the girl students are victims of rape ( Silva and Hill,2005).

In addition, this study found that the strong institutional efforts and responses are likely to help in addressing the phenomenon of sexual harassment. This finding thus concurs with the

findings of Morley and Lussier (2009) to the effect that institutional structures must be sufficiently equipped and directed to address issues relating to sexual harassment. Wilson and Krans (2014) also confirm that the problem of sexual harassment requires formal institutional structures, including the right to control or forestall the occurrence as well as to discipline perpetrators. The findings related to all the variables jointly explain the influence of psychosocial correlates of sexual harassment among University of Benin students.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study, having highlighted the phenomenon of sexual harassment with specific focus on the students of University of Benin and concentrating on the prevailing psychosocial factors in the university environment, suggests that there are significant concerns which require remedial action. Nevertheless, there is room for additional research. Based on the present findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Awareness programs for students, lecturers and all university staff should be incorporated as a key approach in the academic programs a part of effective institutional response towards addressing sexual harassment in universities.
- The psychosocial factors with regard to sexual harassment should be subject of research and such research should be encouraged in the field of social and psychological protection to better recognize and understand the phenomenon.
- Institutional vigilance regarding sexual violence or harassment and the defense of the rights of the victims' are of critical importance to improving students' well-being, and in the prevention of sexual harassment.
- Strategic measures that can be taken by institutions of higher learning should be considered and instituted to promote better attitudes and morals in society, starting from upbringing of the young at home.
- Institutions of higher learning need to discourage seeming tolerance of sexual harassment in the institution through enforcement of rules, policies and strategies for the prevention of sexual harassment.

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## Teaching “English for Life”: Beliefs and attitudes of secondary school English teachers in rural Bangladesh

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### Abstract

*In rural Bangladesh, most people speak English with a regional accent which is generally not intelligible to Non-Native Bengali Speakers (NBS). Although NBS understand each other; this type of pronunciation creates problems for many Bangladeshis, like handicapping students studying abroad, professionals migrating to Anglophone countries, tourists and businessmen, government officials and diplomats, communicating with their foreign counterparts, at home and abroad.*

*This investigation was undertaken with a view to bringing this serious problem to the attention of relevant stakeholders of English education in Bangladesh such as teachers, researchers, course planners and policy makers. One of the key aims was to find out if secondary school teachers would accept English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and intelligible pronunciation and be prepared to learn and teach their students simplified versions of English pronunciation and spoken English, which would be not just easy to learn and teach, but also a cost-effective and engaging approach.*

*The study leads to the conclusion that the ultimate goal should be to teach English-for-life instead of the current approach taken by teachers which is English-for-exam pedagogy.*

**Keywords:** *English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), Native Speakers of English (NS), Non-Native English Speakers (NNS), Native Bengali Speakers (NBS), Intelligible Pronunciation, English-for-Life.*

### 1. Introduction

Today while English is widely accepted as a Global Language, it is also acknowledged that Britain is no longer the sole owner of the language (Brumfit, 2001; Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006; Widdowson, 1994); nor does it have the prerogative to regulate its norms of use. In postcolonial times, different pronunciation standards have evolved such as the British English (BrEng) or Received Pronunciation (RP), (Roach, 2010; Cruttendon, 2014), General American (GA) (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, 1996), Australian (Harrington,

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Cox, Evans, 1997), which are followed by so-called Native English Speakers (NS) and some non-native English speakers of English (NNS) as well. Next, we saw the emergence of World Englishes (WE) (Kachru, 1992) with people speaking Indian English, Nigerian English, Singapore English, which are now sufficiently developed to be considered as distinct varieties of English. WE was followed by a turn towards English as an International Language (EIL) (Widdowson, 1997), later known as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (Jenkins, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Mauranen, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2015). More recently research is being done on English as a Multilingua Franca (EMF) communication (Jenkins, 2015), in which interlocutors mix words from their own languages or other Lingua Franca with ELF to communicate with each other. Both ELF and EMF are free from any ‘standard’ norms and codes and belong to no single country.

Such multiplicity of standards of existing Englishes and emerging new forms are bound to create problems for national language policy makers, learners and teachers. Which standard or form of the language to use and how to go about training the thousands of teachers and learners, at different levels, in the chosen standard/form quickly, without spending too much money, but still getting the desired result, remains a debate.

We refer to the current way of teaching English in schools as *English-for-exam* pedagogy because English is taught as one of many other subjects and students seem to be unconcerned about whether it will be used or needed after one leaves school. All they aim for is to pass the exam. We propose another approach and call it *English-for-life*. As the name of the approach suggests teachers have to first of all make students aware that the subject is not to be treated like the other subjects they study. Teachers have to teach it like the vernacular language Bengali is taught and instil in the learners’ minds that the language is to stay with them for ever, like their mother tongue.

In the following section after a brief background about Bangladesh, the status of English pedagogy, past and present, in the country is provided with proposals for the future.

### **Status of English in Bangladesh**

In the former East Pakistan, in secondary schools (class VI to X), English traditionally received major emphasis (Ahmed, 2016). From year 11 onwards, the medium of instruction was exclusively English. After the independence of Bangladesh, which had its roots in the Bengali Language movement of 1952 that culminated in a 9-month long war in 1971, Bangla was declared as the official language for all communication and the judiciary and it is no surprise that Bengali, which “still plays a sentimental role in national identity formation” (Chowdhury and Kabir, 2014, p. 9), was also declared as the language of instruction at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. This led to the gradual deterioration of the standard of English in Bangladesh over the past 47 years. Currently, 76% of English teachers in secondary schools have an English competence of less than level 6 in a 13-point assessment scale of Trinity College London, in spoken English (English-In-Action, 2008). The following statistics may help readers appreciate the enormity of this problem.

Of the estimated 158 million people, 72% live in rural Bangladesh; 98% of the population speak Bangla, and 18% speak English (Euromonitor-International, 2010). There are about 30,000 secondary schools, of which 98% are private schools. There are about 120,000

English teachers in secondary schools and an estimated 86,000 English teachers in rural secondary schools (BANBEIS, 2017; Billah, 2017).

Currently, English is a compulsory subject in schools, from year 1 to 12, and taught as a foundation course in Dhaka University (Chowdhury & Farooqui, 2011; Habib, 2013; Khan, 2000) although still the phenomenon of unintelligibility of English pronunciation looms large.

### **The study topic and its significance**

This investigation was to study The beliefs and attitudes of English teachers in secondary schools in rural Bangladesh towards English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and intelligible pronunciation. There has been neither any study on learning/teaching/using ELF and intelligible pronunciation in Bangladesh nor on what English teachers/learners think about pronunciation standards such as the so-called British English (BrEng) or General American (GA).

The findings from this study will provide information to planners and course designers about gaps in the knowledge and skills of English teachers in secondary schools in rural Bangladesh about English Pronunciation in general, and about ELF and intelligible pronunciation in particular. The planners may use such knowledge to develop and implement national policies on English Pronunciation pedagogy. Researchers and academics on the other hand may develop long-term professional development programs for English teachers of rural schools, while it is hoped that the Government may allocate funds, and its education and training wings may arrange appropriate training for teachers.

## **2. Literature Review**

The review of literature presented in this section has been arranged into four themes.

### **a. Pronunciation Pedagogy**

According to Jenkins (2000), 60% of breakdowns in communication occur due to pronunciation problems. However, Pronunciation Pedagogy is neglected and still treated as the “Cinderella of Language Teaching” as Kelly pointed out back in 1969 (p. 87; see also Baker, 2011). Teaching English Pronunciation is complex mainly for the following reasons:

1. Mismatch between spellings and pronunciations of English words like “rough”, “dough”, “czar”, “mnemonic”, “women”, “psalm” etc.
2. Existence of different pronunciation standards, Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA).
3. Segmental and supra-segmental are two important features in English Pronunciation (Roach, 2010) and the debate surrounding which feature to teach first. Features like intonation are dependent on individuals and it is not possible to isolate them out for teaching all beginners - Jenkins (2000) suggests a ‘balanced’ approach.

Maniruzzaman (2008) argues that the subject of Pronunciation teaching is neglected in Bangladesh and notes pessimistically,

Firstly, the absence or exclusion of EFL pronunciation from the curriculum/syllabus is indicative of the fact that the curriculum/syllabus designer has deliberately or ignorantly

overlooked its significance. Hence, the curriculum/syllabus designer's qualifications, expertise and honesty could be seriously questioned.

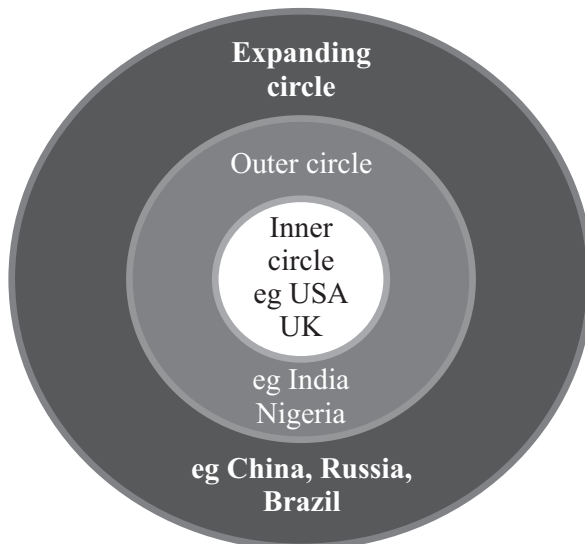
Secondly, the locally produced materials and/or the imported overseas ones used to teach/learn EFL do not usually embody pronunciation components and lessons. This indicates that the local materials developers are either unaware of the importance of pronunciation or not capable of designing pronunciation materials or just blindly confined to the syllabus devoid of pronunciation components.

This argument may be countered as the Bangladesh National Curriculum Text Book Board's (NCTB), series of text books, *English For Today* for different classes (Kabir et al. 2014, 2015) and others, which were developed for 30,000 secondary schools (BANBEIS, 2017); these contain pronunciation teaching materials. They have lessons on English sounds and intonating techniques; songs, poetry, and English plays serve as indirect materials. While teaching English pronunciation to NBS, the first author noticed that different students learn differently. Some learners, who have difficulty in making/learning individual new English phonemes, manage to pronounce the same sounds when they appear in words in English poems or songs.

#### **b. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)**

A lingua franca is a common contact language used by people who speak different first languages and do not understand each other's native languages. The term 'lingua franca' originates from the Arabic 'lisan al farang' meaning language of the foreigners (House, 2003). Over the years, a large number of scholars have been championing ELF and promoting ELF research (see for example, Bayyurt, 2017; Björkman, 2008; Cogo, 2009;

**Figure 1: Kachru's three concentric circles for World English**



Source: Kachru, B (1992)



Canagarajah, 2007; Dewey, 2011; Holzman, 2014; Hülmbauer, 2009; Jenkins, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Mauranen, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2004; Sifakis, 2015; Walker, 2015).

Crystal (2003) gave the following estimates of the number of English speakers in Kachru's three concentric circles (1992) – Inner circle – 400 million; Outer circle – 430 million with NS competence (the figure is higher if English speakers with medium level of conversational English are included; and Expanding circle – 750 million with medium level of conversational English (Figure 1).

Thus, as many as 1.2 billion people in the Outer and Expanding circles (NNS-NNS) could use ELF communication. They could also communicate in ELF with 400 million people of the inner circle countries (NNS-NS) because ELF, although meant for NNS-NNS communication, does not exclude NS-NNS or NNS-NS communication. However, it may be noted that the NSs of English do not represent a reference point, as summarized below:

ELF emphasises that people have something in common rather than their differences; it implies that mixing languages is acceptable- and thus there is nothing inherently wrong in retaining certain characteristics of the L1, such as accent; finally the Latin name [lingua franca] symbolically removes the ownership of English from the Anglos both to no one and, in effect, to everyone. (Jenkins, 2000, p. 11)

ELF does not endorse, espouse or promote any particular pronunciation standard. It can be a subset of either Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA) or indeed any other standard (Jenkins, 2012) in which the non-mandatory parts of pronunciations of the standard, on which it is based, are removed.

According to Jenkins “the focus of ELF1 was mainly on form, beginning with my] own research into ELF phonology/phonetics” (2017c, p. 2). The aim was to identify an ELF variety or varieties that could then be codified, taught and used instead of ‘standard’ British or North American native English, which were generally too complex for NNS. Next, the focus of ELF research shifted from ‘form’ to ‘variety and variability’ due to the requirement of negotiation of meaning among different ELF speakers who belonged to different speech communities. Jenkins (2017c) called this “a complementing paradigm” and reconceptualised ELF in terms of “communities of practice”, or CoP, and termed this as ELF2 (p. 2). She proposes further re-conceptualisation of ELF based on research on multilingualism and multilingual communication where people knowing more than one language communicate with each other mixing different languages where English may be one of them. This is stage 3 of ELF (ELF3) and is still in its early stages of research. Jenkins (2017c) calls this English as a Multilingua Franca (EMF).

With the shifting of ELF towards ELF2 and ELF3, the need to codify ELF became irrelevant. According to Jenkins, “in general, ELF researchers have argued that it is for English language teaching practitioners to decide what is appropriate for them and their learners to take from ELF research and apply to their classrooms.” (2017c, p. 10). Bayyurt and Sifakis (2015), two academics from Turkey and Greece respectively, adopted Jenkins’ cue on ELF pedagogy, which was not to dictate to teachers what and how they should teach ELF, but let them decide how to use their ELF knowledge for more effective teaching, and design lesson plans accordingly.

### c. Intelligibility

ELT researchers have been trying to problematise the term intelligibility for long. Cruz compared the definitions by different scholars from 1950 to 2003 (Cruz, 2007) who all took different factors into account. The simple definition “being understood by a listener in a given situation” by Kenworthy (1987, p. 3) is in alignment with Rahman’s (2014) analogy of serving and drinking of tea with intelligibility. Another very essential component of ELF communication is ‘mutual intelligibility’ (Jenkins, 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2014). For this there is need for applying accommodation strategies (Dewey, 2011). Cogo and Dewey (2006) and Hülmbauer (2009) discuss the use of accommodation theory towards effective ELF communication.

According to Bayyurt and Sifakis (2015) “ELF-aware teachers should become conscious of the need to develop in their learners the capacity to communicate intelligibly with other speakers, despite the inevitable existence of [grammatical] errors” (p. 13).

### d. Beliefs and Attitudes

Dalton-Puffer et al. (2007) argue that ‘attitudes’ are a social phenomenon. Jenkins (2012), in her book on English as a *Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity*, devotes separate chapters on (a) language attitudes, where she looks at accent attitudes research (p. 87), and (b) literature review on research on ELF attitudes, which considers prospective teachers’ ELF attitudes (Jenkins, 2012) to different nationalities. Sifakis and Sougaris (2005) looked at Greek teachers’ attitude towards ELF. According to them many use the terms ‘beliefs’ and ‘attitudes’ interchangeably. However, Jenkins (2012) differentiates between them explaining that “attitudes operate below the level of awareness while beliefs refer to ‘overt categories and definitions’ that people have over linguistic matters” (p. 106). Bayyurt and Sifakis (2015), in their ELF-TEd project surmise that “central to any examination of the implications of ELF research for teacher education is a concern of teachers’ perceptions and attitudes towards ELF-related issues” (p. 3).

## 3. Methodology

In conducting this study, the following step-by-step approach (Creswell, 2014, p. 58-70) was taken. First, *the unintelligibility of English pronunciation in secondary schools in rural Bangladesh* was identified as a problem. There was a need for this research because (a) The Medium of instruction in 30,000 non-English medium (NEM) schools in Bangladesh (BD) is Bangla (BANBEIS, 2017), (b) Teachers in BD NEM secondary schools are not fluent in spoken English (Maniruzzaman, 2008; Billah, 2017), (c) 70% of NEM schools (21000) are in rural Bangladesh (Euromonitor- International, 2010), (d) BD rural school teachers are not trained to teach English Pronunciation (Maniruzzaman, 2008), (e) BD rural school teachers do not have access to English Pronunciation programs and Pronunciation experts, and (f) no research has been done on this topic. So, it was decided to research this problem because it would add significant knowledge to educational practices (Creswell, 2014, p.62) in Bangladesh.

### Sampling type

As it is typical in qualitative research of this type to perform an in-depth study of a few individuals or site (Creswell, 2014), ‘purposeful sampling’ (Creswell, 2014, Dörnyei, 2007)

was employed. Such sampling helps researchers to understand the cause of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2014, p. 205). Therefore two participants were selected from two secondary schools from two dissimilar regions, where people speak different dialects of the Bangla language. The sampling technique was in alignment with the two categories of ‘purposeful sampling’ – (a) Extreme Core Sampling and (b) Typical Sampling as discussed below.

### Validity and trustworthiness

The notion of validity is not typically used in qualitative research; instead researchers attempt to achieve data trustworthiness. In Bangladesh, volunteering is not very common, therefore the two teachers who volunteered can be considered to be spokespersons and true representatives of their respective regions who can bring to the fore the problems as well as aspirations of their community. This in turn means that their responses can be considered as trustworthy. Accuracy and validation check was done by the strategy known as ‘member checking’, (Creswell, 2014) - participants were given copies of the summary of their interviews, to confirm and/or comment, which they did.

### Data Collection

Creswell (2014) and Dörnyei (2007) suggest that samples should be different in as many ways as possible to enable assessing how the phenomenon or the study question appears to a heterogeneous instead of a homogeneous group. This is known as ‘Extreme Core Sampling’.

The two participants were different as shown in Table 3.1

**Table 3.1. Difference in characteristics of the two participants**

Characteristics	Naim	Raihan
Age	41	48
Education	BA Honours English	BA and B.Ed
Teaching Experience	MA English	25
Dialect Spoken	14 Jessore/Khulna dialect - /j/→/z/ ; /i/ intermix /i/ ad /e/	Rangpur/Rajbanshi dialect – makes heavy use of nasal sounds like /n/ and /ng/, /m/; Pronounces /r/ like a vowel. /ɔ:/→/ ɒ/
Work outside their teaching school	Helps NGOs as interpreter. Teaches grade 9 and 10 in neighboring schools when requested	Runs English teaching clubs, in several places within the Rangpur division aided by his trainers he trained
Type of school	Girls	Mixed

The two interviewees selected were ‘typical’ teachers, who love teaching, and came from teaching families (Creswell, 2014; Dörnyei, 2007) as shown in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2. Teachers in the family of the two participants**

<b>Naim</b>	<b>Raihan</b>
1. Father was head teacher in primary school	1. Wife is primary school teacher
2. Three brothers are primary school teachers and one brother is teaching in a government college	2. Youngest brother is head of Autistic school and wife is Assistant Head Teacher in same school
3. Sister is primary school teacher and brother-in-law is teacher in secondary school	3. Another brother's wife is primary school teacher
4. The school was founded by uncle	

From the above we may conclude that both interviewees were from teaching families, and teaching is 'in their blood'. They are highly respected community members and it could be said that in a sense they fall in the same class as Brahmins of the ancient Hindu traditions (Sivan, 2005).

### **Selection of participants and sites**

First, Ethics clearance was obtained from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) for conducting the interviews in a low-risk project for which the only identified risk was some minor inconvenience. Help was sought from an NGO, Volunteers Association for Bangladesh (VAB) for selecting rural schools in two different regions – one in the North-western part and the other in the South-western part of the country. An Explanatory Statement (ES) about the project was sent to the headmasters who circulated it to their English teachers meeting the selection criteria. Selected volunteers were given further explanations about the study; dates, time and venues for the interviews were agreed with each.

### **Interviewing**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in English based on 10 pre-written questions (Appendix A). Each interview lasted about 50 minutes. Interviews started with an introduction and warm up session followed by the ten questions and follow-up questions, ending with the winding up session. Participants could take toilet and prayer breaks. The interviews were audio-recorded which was later transcribed into English text using a transcription software called TRANSCRIBE. Transcribed text of the two interviews were summarized and sent to the interviewees to receive confirmation from the two interviewees as validity check of the interview transcripts. Pseudonyms were used throughout to maintain anonymity of participants. Interviewees were given the option to withdraw.

The above steps were taken to maintain rigour and uniformity in the two interviews.

### **Analysing the data**

There is no single best approach (Creswell, 2014) for analysing data. A researcher should use one that is convenient and suits him. Dörnyei (2007) suggested 'latent content analysis', which bases its analysis on coding for common themes in the data contents. Creswell (2014, p. 237) suggested that while interviewing, the researcher should keep thinking about analysing the data that he is receiving and make real-time mental and physical notes of different themes that crop up during the course of the interview.

### Coding data

The two audio data sets - interview questions and answers, were played several times, with breaks in between, with the aim of arriving at some themes (Creswell, 2014). The aim of this exercise was to arrive at common themes and find out in which of the common themes the uncommon themes could be included. In section 4 a basic summary of findings from these two interviews has been given in a tabular form.

## 4 Findings

Table 4.1, categorised by response themes, shows both common and different characteristics between the two interviewees' responses to questions.

**Table 4.1. Table showing summary of findings by themes**

Theme	Raihan	Naim
Believes Pronunciation teaching is important	Teaches English pronunciation regularly, although not required by job	Teaches English pronunciation to school students.
Accents	Finds both British and American accents tough. However perceives British accent 'easier' compared to GA. Has regional accent. Would like to change it.	Likes British accent and would like to speak with British accent. Finds it easy to follow. Not acquainted with American accent. Has regional accent. Would like to change it.
Intelligibility and 'good' and 'bad' accents	Considers British Accent as 'good accent'. Considers any accent which is not intelligible as bad accent	Considers Intelligible accent as good and non-intelligible accent as bad.
ELF and intelligibility	Discusses ELF and Intelligibility with students. Has accepting attitude towards ELF and Intelligible pronunciation. Believes that ELF and intelligible pronunciation training is good. Prefers training in ELF over British and American standard pronunciation in teaching	Is ready to accept ELF and intelligible pronunciation Has positive attitude towards ELF and Intelligible pronunciation. Believes that ELF and intelligible pronunciation training are good. Prefers training in ELF over British and American standard pronunciation in teaching
Community Leadership	Respected by the community, college/university teachers and graduate students at universities as an 'expert' teacher of English. Many join his 24-week long, 24 hour morning/evening courses to improve their spoken English.	Known within schools and community as an 'English expert' and often called to act as interpreter for foreigners

## 5 Discussion

### a. Pronunciation

From the interviews it was obvious that both participants have a positive attitude towards good pronunciation and believe that teaching pronunciation is extremely important. Raihan mentioned that he had tried to teach IPA and found it ineffective and that learners found it difficult and felt bored. At the time they were not asked what books and dictionary they used for teaching/learning IPA and English. However, contrary to Maniruzzaman's (2008) comments that there are no pronunciation teaching materials for Bangladeshi schools, in NCTB's EFT books for classes IV, V, VI (Kabir et al. 2014, 2015), there are specific lessons with guidance and practice words to teach/learn pronunciations of (a) Consonant sounds, /f,v,s,ʃ,z,ʒ/, (b) vowel quality and vowel quantity of monophthongs, (c) diphthongs, and (d) how to intonate.

Besides these lessons, in all EFT books, poems and plays which, if recited and enacted, should help students to learn both segmental and supra-segmental features of English pronunciation (Roach, 2010). Billah (2017) seems to think that the situation of poor pronunciation still exists in Bangladesh. That suggests that the pronunciation lessons available in NCTB text books are either ignored or skipped by teachers as both annual class exams and board exams, JSC and SSC, do not require students to demonstrate their skills in English pronunciation.

It was observed that the two participants were both aware that people of different countries speak with different accents. They were able to recognise (a) regional Bangladeshi accent, (b) British English accent, (c) American Accent and (d) Indian accent. They reported having been more exposed to British pronunciation - which they preferred - compared to the American accent. During the familiarisation session during the interview, both participants were told that approximately 50 varieties of accents are spoken in the UK, and only 3-5 % of the British population use the RP accent (Crystal & Davey, 1975). Many people from one region of the UK do not understand the accent of another region. It is likely that if the two participants had told this to their trainees and NBS English learners became aware of this phenomenon, they would feel less guilty of having a regional accent.

### b. ELF and Intelligibility

Raihan was found to be familiar with the term *Lingua Franca* and its use. He explained the term to his trainees by demonstrating how the Bangla language is used by people of different regions of Bangladesh who speak different dialects, and also by some tradespeople who have their distinct sociolects. Raihan tried making his trainees aware that communicating outside one's community using a common language is actually using a '*lingua franca*'. This suggested that Raihan and his trainees had taken the first step in becoming ELF-aware and he and his English learners may be preparing for an ELF and intelligible pronunciation. At this stage, it should be sufficient to let Bangladeshi teachers become familiar with the aforementioned first two stages of ELF, i.e. ELF1 and ELF2 (Jenkins, 2017a, 2017b) before they are made fully ELF-aware when they could be taken through an ELF-Ted program (Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015). ELF1. This is already in use in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi Regional English, though not codified as Indian English and Singapore English, is spoken and understood by English users from different regions of Bangladesh.

### c. Intelligibility

As we have seen in the review of literature above, researchers have been trying to define the term ‘intelligibility’ for more than 50 years (Firth, 1996). Different researchers took different factors into account in their definitions, some of which are not very easy to conceptualise. Their aim seems to be to try to satisfy everyone with one definition by taking the ‘*one size fits all*’ approach.

Our goal was less ambitious. We use a very simple definition of ‘intelligibility’ - it is a speech by a speaker, which is understandable by his listeners. By this definition, if a Bangladeshi speaks English with another Bangladeshi in a regional accent, and the listener understands the speaker, it will be considered intelligible speech for that purpose or environment (ELF1). This is in alignment with Kenworthy’s (1987, p. 3) definition – i.e., “being understood in a given situation” (1987, p. 3). However, when a Bangladeshi speaks English in a regional accent with a non-Bangladeshi, the latter may not understand him. In this case the Bangladeshi has to speak at a *different level* of intelligibility, which may involve him learning and using a different accent (ELF2). Such speakers may find it appropriate to ‘code switch’; they may use regional Bangladeshi accent when speaking with a Bangladeshi and switch to another accent when speaking with an NBS.

It was noticed that both participants had a positive attitude towards teaching people to develop a clear and globally understandable accent. It was encouraging to learn that these two teachers, who came from two very different regions of Bangladesh, both agreed that they should develop and speak with an accent understandable by one and all, which fit our definition of intelligibility.

### d. Beliefs and Attitudes

The frequently cited paper by Sifakis and Sougaris (2005) looked at the attitudes of teachers in state schools in Greece about their pronunciation beliefs and practices. Sifakis teamed up with Bayyurt of Turkey, on a joint project on ELF-Education for Teachers (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015). The main aim of their project was to make teachers “ELF-aware”. In the first phase of this project, they developed a teacher education program called ELF-TEd for which they proposed an ELF-TEd syllabus. In the second phase they used action research, and made teachers design lesson plans using their ELF knowledge in their respective schools (p. 7). The final phase involved peer reviewed evaluation of the plans. The ELF-aware project suggests changing the deeper beliefs of teachers about their teaching practices (Sifakis, 2015, p. 3) and expects teachers to decide how and what they should teach. They are not to be dictated by ELF researchers (p. 4). According to them an ELF-educator is to be a facilitator of ELF trainees. In recent articles, we see Jenkins (2017c, p. 2) also taking this view about letting teachers decide about how they should teach their students. This is a shift from her original position when she attempted to codify ELF by designing her famous ELF core model (Jenkins, 2000).

### e. Community Leadership

Introducing a novel concept like ELF and Intelligible pronunciation to teachers and students who are used to using some regional pronunciation for decades is not an easy task. It requires acceptance and support of stakeholders, school authorities, colleagues, students, parents,

community leaders and local and national political representatives. Making such a paradigm shift in ELT pedagogy needs a leader who is trusted by all within a community. He is to take learners to new places and heights in English Pronunciation and spoken English. Jenkins (2017a, p. 2) argues that it is the duty of ELF-aware teachers, not ELF researchers, to suggest ways of teaching and designing test plans. This may require each group or individual to modify her LFC to suit their individual needs and environments. Sifakis and Bayyurt (2015) are of similar opinion, however they have gone a step further. They got 10 teachers from Greece and Turkey and tried making them ELF-aware with their ELF-Ted program. They then asked the trainees to design lesson plans for teaching within their respective environments. Next, these course participants were asked to evaluate each other's plans armed with this new knowledge. The British Council, which normally runs training courses on Pronunciation using the British standard, has also, it seems acknowledged the recent changes in people's conceptions about pronunciation. It has also developed a Free online course (Hall et al., 2013), aimed at making trainees become ELF-aware.

From the personal experience of conducting training courses for different groups in rural Bangladesh, including teachers, the authors believe that community leaders who permanently reside and interact with community members are most suitable for leading such ventures to success. Bringing experts for a short time from the British Council, the American Centre, English in Action, DFID, BRAC, other NGOs, or even university professors, to run courses on ELF and Intelligibility for school teachers and awarding them certificates may not achieve the desired results. From empirical evidence one can say that such training by external bodies aim at numbers and statistics, rather than real changes in teaching and learning. Organisations are interested in the number of persons they trained and not on the final outcome, while attendees are interested in increasing their collection of certificates.

From the two interviews, it was obvious that both Raihan and Naim are special Community Leaders, highly respected by everyone for the good work they have been doing within their schools and respective communities in different ways, to enhance their skills in English, particularly spoken English. The results so far have been positive. With their present beliefs and enthusiastic attitudes on ELF and intelligible pronunciation, if and when they get ELF-aware as suggested by Sifakis and Bayyurt (2015, 2017) and Hall et al. (2013), they should be able to start developing their individualised ELF-education programs for use in and around their neighbouring villages. It appeared that they were both intelligent and conscientious enough to know when they have taken a wrong turn and need to back-track or when to ask for help and advice on related matters from somebody they can trust.

## 6. Conclusion

The phenomenon that prompted this study was the phenomenon- *unintelligibility of English pronunciation of teachers and students in rural Bangladesh*. To solve this problem, the research question that was posed was '*What are the beliefs and attitudes of English teachers in secondary schools in rural Bangladesh towards ELF and intelligible pronunciation?*' To our knowledge, this is the first investigative research that explores beliefs and attitudes of secondary school teachers in rural Bangladesh about ELF and intelligible pronunciation.



### Research outcome

The study revealed that the two participating teachers believe that teaching of Pronunciation to learners is important, and should be done, even if it is not part of their job. They also demonstrated a very favorable attitude towards ELF and intelligibility. Both participants had heard of ELF and were keen to learn more about it. It was interesting to learn that if they were asked to make a choice between two courses, (a) English as a Lingua Franca and Intelligible Pronunciation and (b) one of the two international pronunciation standards – like the British standard or American standard, they would choose the first course. The two participants were found to have a slightly varied degree of awareness about ELF but similar beliefs on intelligible and non-intelligible speech. This is a positive sign which may be exploited further.

Even if Maniruzzaman's arguments (2008) about the non-existence of pronunciation teachers and pronunciation materials in the school curriculum are correct, at least these two teachers are reifying pronunciation teaching, though on a very small scale. It is quite possible that there are individuals in other parts of Bangladesh who, with similar beliefs and attitudes, are trying to address the phenomenon of this study in their own ways, which may be worth tapping into.

The participants also believe that it is extremely difficult to learn to speak with a BrEng or GA pronunciation standard; these are time consuming, costly and difficult to master. Therefore, they would not consider teaching either of these standards to their students. However, they believed in the usefulness and benefits of teaching intelligible pronunciation to their learners, which was less difficult. The interview transcripts (subject of a follow-up paper) show that they believe in exposing them to the supra-segmental features of English pronunciation through English songs, recitation and films. They want their students to understand NNBS and NNS English pronunciation and enjoy English news on TV and radio. They engage their trainees in these types of activities for which they have received the 'go-ahead' signal from their respective headmasters. They also have the consent of parents, and guardians and prominent community members who have seen positive results emanating from such activities.

### Observations and reflections

While talking to an NNBS, an NBS will be well advised to stop using local varieties of English sounds, particularly for consonants like /f,v,z,ʒ,w/. He should also utter English words using the correct vowel quality and quantity (Roach, 2010; Rahman, 2016a) and intonate words in phrases and sentences to make them more meaningful. The useful finding that came out from this study was that both participants believed that it was necessary for them and their learners to attain an appropriate level of intelligibility for global communication. This cannot be achieved overnight and will require teachers and learners to become aware of *global* intelligibility, change their beliefs and attitudes about the need to attain such intelligibility and get necessary training to learn to utter new sounds and other features of English Pronunciation as ELFC (Jenkins, 2000) or ELFA (Rahman, 2014), as the case may be.

With a well-designed ELF-awareness training program, including exposing trainees to English speakers or accents from different NS and NNS countries (ELF-EXP), it is possible

to improve the current situation of *non-intelligibility of English Pronunciation of NBS*. This is in alignment with Sifakis and Bayyurt's current work (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015, 2017) on the topic and British Council's publication on *Changing Englishes* (Hall, Wicacsono, Liu, Qian and Xiaoqing, 2013).

Roach's book (Roach, 2010) is used at universities in Bangladesh for teaching phonetics and phonology – not Pronunciation. Parts from this book may be used for familiarising learners to the 24 consonant and 20 vowel sounds in RP. For a more practical approach, Underhill's English Pronunciation Workshop video may be used (Underhill, 2011). Rahman's *English Pronunciation Guide-Book* (Rahman, 2016a), written in Bengali to serve as a self-study guidebook for NBS English learners who are not yet comfortable reading English books, which is the case in rural Bangladesh. This may help teachers and students who are interested in improving their skills in English Pronunciation.

For finding pronunciations of newly encountered English words, currently the most popular dictionary is *Students' Favourite Dictionary* by AT Dev (1993), which gives incorrect pronunciations of some words as it uses characters from the Bengali alphabet to represent English sounds not present in the Bengali language. For example, the pronunciation of "zoo" is given as /dʒu:/. This problem is being rectified by some schools (Zaman, 2017) which use the English Pronunciation Dictionary for Bangalis (EPDB) (Rahman, 2016b). The EPDB employs Bengali Phonetic Alphabet (BPA) (Rahman, 2016 a) to transcribe the RP pronunciations of some 29,500 English words.

Currently, in primary and secondary schools in rural Bangladesh, English is treated by teachers and students like all other subjects in the curriculum. Teachers strictly follow the syllabus and prepare their students for exams. Most students want to pass the subject to go to the next class while high achievers memorise to score good grades, which unfortunately does not guarantee admission at top universities when there are written entrance exams (Haque, 2017). This is *English-for-exam* pedagogy.

The authors believe that English should be taught so that learners think of it as a subject that will come useful later on in their professional and working life. They should learn to use it like learning to drive a car. This is *English-for-life* pedagogy.

### **Recommendations for further research**

Pronunciation is a practical subject. Merely reading from Roach (2010) and answering questions set in the exams is not enough. Short-term course providers may start running two to three day practical workshops on ELF Pronunciation and intelligibility. Such courses should be based on the competency based model (Rothwell, 2010) where learners should be asked to practically demonstrate that they have learned each element in all the units before receiving their Competency Certificate.

The knowledge and skills in ELF and intelligible pronunciation of teachers of Greece and Turkey as discussed above (see section 4. Findings) should not be too different from that of Bangladeshi secondary school teachers. It would be ideal if some Bangladeshi university took the initiative and carried out a similar action research and developed a one year long ELF-TEd program with a practical curriculum to make Bangladeshi school teachers ELF-

aware. In such a course it would be good to include an ELF-EXP component, where students would be exposed to ELF communicators from different countries. Also, teachers should be prepared to run *English-for-life* instead of the current trend of *English-for-exam* courses. Trainees undertaking such a program should be required to demonstrate their ELF-awareness to their teachers and peers and, as part of their requirement to complete the course, develop a lesson plan for teaching English in their schools with ELF-emphasis.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Questions

1. Do you teach English Pronunciation?
2. Would you like to speak English with a British accent?
3. Would you like to speak English with an American accent?
4. Would you like to continue speaking English using the accent you have? What do you term that accent?
5. What do you consider a “good” English accent?
6. What do you consider a “bad” English accent?
7. What do you think of undertaking a training on ELF pronunciation and then practising it to master it?
8. What do you think of teaching ELF and intelligible pronunciation to your students after you have mastered it?
9. How will you benefit if you speak English with an ELF pronunciation?
10. Do you think that given the required resources you can promote ELF and Intelligible pronunciation? Do you need specific resources to promote and teach ELF and Intelligible Pronunciation?

Time: 1 hour for each interview.









