

## Research Project Abstract

The most direct impact on student learning results from well trained teachers who employ quality teaching methods. Developing countries intent on improving their education systems are channeling resources into improved teacher training including current best practice teaching methods and strategies. In primary schools in Bangladesh, teachers have been characterized as “passive”, “mechanical”, and “lacking enthusiasm”, while primarily using instruction which is “lecture based and teacher centered”. Although several explanations of this behavior have been suggested, little research has been undertaken to identify the cause of teacher behaviors and choices.

In Bangladesh, Primary Training Institutes (PTIs) prepare prospective primary school teachers through the one-year Certificate in Education (C-in-E) training program. Recent educational policy initiatives in Bangladesh have sought to improve educational quality and student learning outcomes through reform of the teacher training program at the PTIs. Through these initiatives, graduates of the PTIs have been trained to use more innovative teaching strategies, which include child-friendly, interactive and participatory approaches.

The field work undertaken for this study examines the transfer of training to practice within the context of government primary schools in Bangladesh. The questions guiding my study are:

1. Do teachers who graduated from Primary Training Institutes in Bangladesh employ the teaching methods that they have been taught during their first year employed in government primary schools?
  - a. What methods are primary school teachers taught to use in PTIs and how do PTI instructors perceive their usefulness in promoting student learning?

- b. What is the dominant teaching method used by teachers during their first year as a classroom teacher and why is this method chosen?
- c. What do teachers perceive as influencing their choice of teaching methods in the classroom and why?

During my 5-month Junior Research Fellowship with the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies, I collected qualitative data to build three case studies of new teachers of government primary schools in Dhaka, Bangladesh. My field work consisted of the following data collection: site visits to the interviews with PTI instructors and administrators, observations of PTI classes, document analysis of PTI training materials, three in-depth interviews with teacher participants, and one week of classroom observations of three new teachers in government primary schools. Over the next six months I will be preparing my dissertation manuscript for the requirements of my Doctorate in Education from Lehigh University. This resulting study will be a multi-case analysis which will examine the factors that contribute or hinder the transfer of teacher training to classroom practice.

### **Detailed Report**

During my five-month fellowship as an AIBS Junior Fellow I was able to accomplish all of my pre-established research goals, including site visits, interviews, and classroom observations. My field work activities consisted of:

- 1 visit –Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) in Mirpur, Dhaka
- 2 visits –National Curriculum & Textbook Bureau (NCTB) in Motijeel, Dhaka
- 5 site visits–Primary Training Institutes (PTI) in Dhaka region to observe teacher training classes, interview superintendant, and talk with instructors

- 4 initial site visits –Government Primary Schools (GPS) for first meeting with teachers and principal permission for research activities in school
- 19 days –Classroom observations (total of 59 class periods)
- 9 in-depth teacher interviews

Site visits at the DPE and NCTB provided insight into the government activities directed toward teacher training and improvements in pedagogy. These visits put a human face and real life context to the many government initiatives I have read over the past year while preparing my research proposal. Additionally, I was able to obtain a letter of permission from the DPE for my field work activities in the PTIs. After acquiring the requisite permissions, I visited three PTIs, where I conducted informal interviews with superintendants and instructors. I was also able to observe teacher-training classes. PTI instructors also provided me with contact information for potential research participants.

After I secured my three research participants, I visited the three GPSs where they were employed to get permission from the Head Teachers and explain the nature of my research activities in the schools. Field work in the schools consisted of three in-depth interviews and one week of classroom observations.

At the beginning of my fellowship period, I created a research calendar in Publisher for my personal use. On my second day in Bangladesh, I visited the DPE where I found out the dates of school and PTI closings (Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha holiday breaks) and extended exam periods (school based and Primary School Certificate exams). This information was invaluable to my planning. I was able to construct a realistic plan for the five-month research period. The research plan not only helped me schedule my field work, but gave me the flexibility to conduct any unplanned site visits (NCTB) or necessary re-visits (I revisited 2 PTIs).

I experienced one minor set-back during my fellowship period. My laptop computer and some other personal belongings were stolen from my residence in late July. I was able to replace my laptop, but I moved because I no longer felt safe in the previous location. It was clear that I was targeted in that neighborhood as I was the only foreigner. Housing arrangements are difficult to arrange prior to arrival and there are pros and cons to the choices American fellows have. We can live in the *bedeshi* area of Gulshan and Banani, but we will not experience or learn about the culture. Conversely, if we choose to live in other areas our presence is obvious, which can result in a dangerous situation.

My preliminary research has been accepted for presentation at two national conferences, the Bangladesh Development Initiative Conference at Berkeley in February the Comparative and International Education Society Conference in New Orleans in March. Furthermore, I have applied to four other dissertation and publication preparation workshops throughout the spring. In depth discussion and critical feedback are crucial to my manuscript preparation. In mid-November, I gave a summary of my research activities and preliminary findings at the AIBS Dhaka Center where AIBS representatives and four others were in attendance. I look forward to not only presenting my research, but publishing my findings as well.