SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE NEEDS OF
TWO BANGLADESHI SCHOOLS

A Dissertation Submitted to the

College of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

In the Department of Educational Administration

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon

By

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to identify the major school improvement needs and related strategies for two Bangladeshi secondary public schools based upon the perceptions of in-school professionals, parents, and students. To implement the study, I employed the constructivist/interpretive paradigm with a case study as my research design. The data collection techniques of document analysis, Nominal Group Technique (NGT) meetings, and individual interviews were utilized. For the purpose of NGT meetings, from each school, one teacher group, one parent group, and one student group were interviewed. After the completion of NGT meetings, individual interviews were held with one participant selected from each NGT group. I also interviewed the headmasters of the two schools.

This study revealed that in a Bangladeshi educational context, major catalysts for improvement were market mechanisms and educational policies. The most significant finding of this study was that considering contextual applicability before implementing new initiatives was a critical strategy toward achieving sustainable school improvement in Bangladesh.

The data indicated that in these schools, desired improvement efforts mainly consisted of two clusters: identifying the key school improvement needs and developing the strategies to meet those needs. The data revealed that the identified school improvement needs can be grouped into *providing the resources* and *improving the school culture*. To enhance school effectiveness, these Bangladeshi schools need to recruit more specialized teachers, implement effective instructional methodologies, elevate the image of teaching profession, and provide teacher-led professional

development. Participants identified other suggested school improvement needs to be: low student-teacher ratio, good textbooks, more extracurricular activities, and more instructional materials (such as, computers, projectors, televisions, sound system, and so on).  This study also revealed a strong perception that the role of collaboration in improving school culture is crucial.

Participants explained that in order to successfully implement improvement initiatives, major challenges to the process need to be addressed. Participants identified three important barriers to implementation. These included lack of attention to the voices of all stakeholders during policymaking, the misuses of private tutoring or coaching, and lack of commitment among some of the teachers in their teaching. Findings affirmed that these barriers could be addressed by including all stakeholders' voices in educational policy-making, addressing the misuses of private tutoring or coaching, and making teachers more accountable.

A number of implications for theory, practice, policy, and further research arose from this study. Participants noted that teachers, parents, students, teacher-training authority, Bangladeshi Government, Non Government Organizations, school administrators, and district administrators were co-responsible within their own capacities to provide the necessary support and resources for school improvement in Bangladeshi context.

## DEDICATION

To My Parents, Md. Fozlur Rahman and Jebun Nesa –

It's a Blessing to Have Parents Like You.

&

To My Wife, Nazia Ahmed Ema –

It's a Blessing to Have a Wife Like You.

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**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Over the past four decades, there have been many studies conducted on educational reform. Coleman et al. (1966) found that schools made little difference in the cultivation and socialization of children, and that the child's family socio-economic status (SES) and social culture were more important determinants of the child's educational achievement. These findings triggered a debate that led other researchers to engage their attention on effective school correlates research (American Association of School Administrators, 1992).

Research related to the analysis of schools that were the exception to the Coleman report (1966) findings soon appeared in the United States (Averch, Carroll, Donaldson, Kiesling, & Pincus, 1972; Mayeske, Okada, Beaton, Cohen, & Wisler, 1972; State of New York, 1974). These studies identified schools that raised student achievement scores in mathematics and reading for lower socioeconomic students. Edmonds (1979) contended that these studies documented school characteristics that were strong determinants of instructional effectiveness. This focus on school effectiveness and school improvement existed not only in the United States but also in Britain. At the time Edmonds (1979) was investigating school effectiveness, Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, and Ouston (1979) conducted a large scale longitudinal study of twelve inner city schools in London.

Purkey and Smith (1983) argued that school effectiveness is a *causal* concept. They also explained that in school effectiveness research not only are differences in overall performance assessed but the further question of causality is raised: which *school*

*characteristics* lead to relatively superior performance, when the characteristics of the student populations are otherwise constant? There were many studies conducted on characteristics of effective school. Edmonds and Frederickson (1979) first organized characteristics of the effective school into seven correlates.

According to Hopkins and Reynolds (2001), school effectiveness has a lengthy history, whereas school improvement has a relatively recent history that has already passed through three distinct phases. Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) described three distinct phases of school improvement, as documented throughout the past 40 years. The first phase of school improvement, recognized during the late 1970s to the early 1980s, was free floating, rather than representing a systematic and programmatic approach to school change. The main focus of this phase was organizational change, school self evaluation, and the ownership of change by individual teachers and schools. Most of these programs tended to be variable and fragmented in both conception and application. Consequently, these improvement practices did not have much impact upon classroom practice (Reynolds, 1999; Hopkins, 2001).

The second phase of the school improvement started in the early 1990s. The prime focus of this phase was the interaction between school improvement and school effectiveness communities. In this regard, Desimone (2002) noted that the second phase of the school improvement was facilitated by more systematic interactions between school improvement and school effectiveness research communities. According to Teddlie and Reynolds (2000a), this merged perspective brought large-scale changes, which represented a knowledge base about *what works* at the school level to enhance student achievement. In this phase, there was a greater focus on organizational and classroom

change as reflected in approaches toward staff development premised upon models of teaching (Joyce & Showers, 1995).

Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) noted that the third phase of school improvement has been in existence from the mid- to late-1990s. They explained that the third phase of school improvement developed from limited success with regard to national educational reforms as reflected in various countries. Despite the remarkable increase in educational reform efforts, in most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, student achievement through these educational reform movements was not as successful as anticipated.

The third phase of school improvement practice and philosophy attempted to draw lessons from these apparently limited achievements of existing improvement and reform (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001). Hopkins and Reynolds further noted that limited success was reflected within a number of improvement projects in the UK, such as the Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA) Project, the High Reliability Schools (HRS) Project, and many of the projects associated with the London Institute of Education National School Improvement Network (NSIN). In Canada, limited success was experienced in the various phases of work conducted in the Halton (Ontario) Board of Education. Similarly, in the Netherlands, limited success was documented in the Dutch National School Improvement Project.

### School Improvement: Problematizing Contextual Relevance

The main focus of the third phase of school improvement was to develop context-specific school improvement. Many educational researchers (e.g., Hamilton, 1998; Harber, 1997a; Harber & Davis, 1997; Harber & Muthukrishna, 2000; Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001; Reynolds, 1998) noted that there was great difficulty associated with

applying a set of school improvement strategies across contexts. Regarding local context

in school improvement research, Reynolds (1998) stated that school effectiveness and

school improvement research sat at the centre of educational discussion in many

countries. He further noted, as the number of articles and books on school effectiveness

had multiplied, so have the misgivings about the current nature of the enterprise. Among

the misgivings there were two major criticisms concerning context.

According to Hamilton (1998), the first criticism was that of contextual relevance

– is the list of characteristics that constitute an effective school universally valid? The

issue was raised in recent school improvement research. Hamilton also noted,

> The tendency for research to come up with a package of key characteristics and,
> sponsored by powerful quasi-governmental agencies, this package is placed on
> global market for educational panaceas. Bundled with a franchising deal and/or
> complementary of technical support, it is then disseminated around the world
> (e.g., east of Berlin, south of Rome and north of Euston). (p. 16)

Hamilton further described such an approach as an *ethnocentric pseudo-science*. In fact,

contextualization is recognized as problematic by researchers of the school effectiveness

movement: "We also need more work on the extent to which school factors are universal

and apply across all contexts in a country or may be context specific" (Reynolds, 1998, p.

20). Regarding the importance of contextualization, Harber and Davies (1997) said that

judging the effectiveness of schools in *developing* countries, for example, may well

involve considerably different criteria from those in *developed* countries given their

differing contextual realities.

The second issue identified by Hamilton (1998) concerned the ideological context

– the social and political values underlying the goals of education. In this regard,

Reynolds (1998) noted that the school effectiveness movement had been far too

dismissive of the significance of the varied ideological purposes of schools: "Many have wanted to prolong our uniquely British love affair with the goals debate, rather than focus on means, as school effectiveness tries to do" (p. 20). Yet concern with goals is hardly a uniquely British phenomenon – issues surrounding education for a democratic society and democratic citizens, for example, are now part of a major international debate (Harber, 1997a).  According to Harber and Muthukrishna (2000), "it is impossible to ignore the questions: effective at what? effective for what? Ignoring or playing down the importance of goals and assuming a false consensus or homogeneity simply reinforces prevailing orthodoxy" (p. 422).  Harber and Muthukrishna also emphasized that means can only be judged in terms of the desired goals of schooling and these means and goals vary from context to context, from school to school and even from classroom to classroom. Those concerned with school improvement have been advised by the school improvement researchers and practitioners to pay attention to the unique features of the individual school situation and to build strategies on the basis of an audit of that particular context.

Currently, Bangladesh has made significant progress in school improvement efforts, especially in terms of increasing access and gender equity at both the primary and secondary levels (Asian Development Bank, 2003; The Bangladesh Government, 2005; UNICEF, 2000; World Bank, 2004). Although access to primary and secondary education has increased over the past decade, issues of quality and relevance remain major concerns. The Bangladeshi Government has recently devoted attention to the alleviation of problems associated with management and quality of education (Ministry of Education, 2005). To improve the quality of education in Bangladeshi schools, it is

most appropriate to identify the specific school improvement needs relevant to Bangladeshi schools and their stakeholders.

## Context of the Study

Before I delve into the background of the rudimental elements of the research, it is necessary that I discuss some of the social, political, economic, and educational contexts of Bangladesh.

### *Social, Political, and Economic Systems of Bangladesh*

The People's Republic of Bangladesh is a republic of southern Asia, situated in the north-eastern portion of the Indian subcontinent. It is bordered on the west, north, and east by India, on the south-east by Myanmar (Burma), and on the south by the Bay of Bengal. The area of the nation is 143,998 sq km. The capital and largest city of Bangladesh is Dhaka. The population of Bangladesh is 144,200,000, making Bangladesh one of the ten most populous countries (EDC, 2005). The overall density, 928 persons per sq km in 2005, is higher than that of other countries in the region except for microstates such as Singapore.

Bangladesh was a part of British India from 1757 to 1947. In 1947 it became a part of Pakistan known as East Pakistan. It emerged as an independent and sovereign state on 16 December 1971, when the nine month War of Liberation ended. During its 36 years of independence, Bangladesh has experienced periods of constitutional government broken by periods of martial law. It currently has a parliamentary form of government with a prime minister as the head of the government. There is a national parliament consisting of 330 members (300 members are elected by direct adult franchise and

another 30 female members are indirectly elected by the parliament). This parliament is known as the National Assembly of Bangladesh (Dalin et al., 1994).

Bangladesh is divided into four administrative divisions, each of which has a senior civil servant called the Divisional Commissioner. These divisions are sub-divided into 64 districts, each with a middle level civil servant called the Deputy Commissioner as the Chief administrative officer. The districts are sub-divided into 460 sub-districts (Dalin et al., 1994).

Bangladesh is agricultural, with three-fifths of the population engaged in farming. Jute and tea, principal sources of foreign exchange, follow rice as the most valuable agricultural products. The annual report of World Bank (2004) indicated that despite poor conditions at the time of independence and its extremely high vulnerability to natural disasters, Bangladesh's achievements in macroeconomic management, social development, and access to education have been impressive compared with many Asian countries (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Key Social and Economic Indicators in Selected Countries*

| Country | Poverty Headcount Index (Ranking) | Gross National Income Per Capita | % of Primary Age Group Enrollment |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bangladesh | 50 | 400 | 85 |
| India | 29 | 540 | 83 |
| Nepal | 42 | 240 | 70 |
| Pakistan | 33 | 520 | 59 |
| Sri Lanka | 25 | 930 | 97 |

Source: *World Bank, 2004*

The World Bank (2004) also indicated that Bangladesh has achieved steady annual economic growth of 4%-5% since the 1990s, with fiscal and current account

imbalances contained at manageable levels, low inflation rates, moderate public debt, and stable interest and exchange rates. During the 1990s, national poverty fell from 59% to 50%, one of the fastest rates of decline recorded worldwide. Infant mortality was halved and life expectancy increased from 56 to 65 years. In recent years, average economic growth exceeded 5% and poverty incidence continued to decline. Gross primary school enrollment rates rose from 90% in the late 1990s to 98% in 2003, while a corresponding increase has seen enrollment rates at the secondary level rise to 44%.

Bangladesh is famous for the ethnic and cultural homogeneity of its population. Family and kinship are the core of social life in Bangladesh. About 87% of the population of Bangladesh is Muslim, 12% Hindu, 0.6% Buddhist and 0.3% Christian. Islam is the dominant religion and its values and ideals pervade all spheres of state and social life. Bangla is the mother tongue of the people of Bangladesh (Dalin et al., 1994).

### Educational Systems in Bangladesh

The Bangladesh educational system has gone through various phases. From the time of the English rule (1757-1947) to the Pakistani regime (1947-1971) to the Bangladeshi system, education has evolved not only in methods, but also in language and governance. During the British rule, education was mainly reserved for the wealthy class. The language of pedagogy was English because schools were run by nuns and other British educators. The few natives who were fortunate to receive education were either from wealthy families (Nawabs) or had family ties with the British governing body. After the British left the Indian subcontinent, the territory presently known as Bangladesh came under Pakistani rule as the state of East Pakistan. School systems still largely functioned in the English language because schools, such as the Holy Cross and numerous Cadet

Colleges, were still taught by British educators. After the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971, the People's Republic of Bangladesh became an independent nation free to choose its own educational structure. As Bangladesh was, and still is, a secular state, many forms of education were permitted to co-exist. The British system was, and still is, largely practiced. According to Khandker (1996), the Bangladeshi system of education was divided into three mainly language delineated branches:  The English Medium, The Bengali Medium, and The Religious Branch.

  ***The English Medium***. The remnants of British rule in the Indian subcontinent are still influential because the second official language of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh is still English. Students in Bangladesh have the right to attend schools in the English medium where courses are all taught in English using English books, with the exception of the Bengali courses and the Religious course, which are offered in Bengali and Arabic, respectively. However, English medium schools are mainly private and thus reserved for the wealthy class. After three years of pre-school, students must successfully pass through ten grades to be eligible for writing the Ordinary Level Exams, also called the O-Levels. Then after one more year of studies, students can write the Advanced Level (A-Level) Exams. Both these routes are offered to Arts and Science students. The O-Level and A-Level Examinations are prepared in England and students world wide write the same exam at the same time. To write these exams, students must go to the British Council in Dhaka. Once the exams are written, they are sealed in envelopes and sent to England for evaluation. After passing the A-Levels, students are free to choose their subjects in the universities but most tend to leave the country to study abroad (Khandker, 1996).

*The Bengali Medium*. An alternative to the English Medium is the Bengali Medium, which is offered by the Bengali government. In the Bengali Medium, all the courses are offered in Bengali with the exception of English courses and the Religious course. The tuition fee is minimal compared to that in English schools but it still varies across the country. For example, a government school for the children of Army officers is likely to be more expensive than a government school in a poor village district. But everybody has the right to attend these schools provided that one meets the minimum criteria.

Students in the Bengali medium do five years of primary school. Then they advance to high school for grade five to grade ten. At the end of the tenth grade, students must write the Matriculation Examination, which is common to everybody graduating the same year in Bangladesh. These examinations are sent to regional boards to be administered and students write the examinations in different schools as indicated by their respective boards. Once finished, these exams are assessed by teachers from all over the country and the student standings are published in the newspapers. There are three divisions for the results. The first division comprises students receiving grades of 60 percent or above. The second division is for students with an average of 45 percent to 59 percent, and the third division is for students having an average of 33 percent to 44 percent. Below 33 percent is considered a failure and students in this category must rewrite the examination the next year. Students obtaining 80 percent or higher are given special recognition (Khandker, 1996).

*The Religious Branch*. Bangladesh is a poor country with millions of homeless children. To educate these children, there are religious institutions called Madrashas

where these children are sheltered, fed, and taught the ways of Islam by priests. These

children learn the scripts from the Koran and the regular prayers. Madrashas are generally

linked to Mosques and the children usually serve in the Mosque. As subsidies for these

institutions are very low, often these establishments rely on public donations and

donations to the Mosques. Higher studies within these establishments are close to non-

existent and upon maturity the children often become priests or other religious officials.

Islam plays a dominant role in the education systems of Bangladesh. Since 1983, it has

been required by government to teach Islamic studies in all branches. Hence, children

learn to read Arabic from a very early age. Nevertheless, non-Muslim students are never

forced to learn the Koran and can regularly be excused from Islamic courses (Khandker,

1996).

***Current Important Issues, Trends, and Policies of Bangladeshi Education***

With the highest density of population in the world and slow economic progress,

the people of Bangladesh are trapped in a cycle of poverty. Over 50% of the people who

live below the poverty line are not able to provide for their basic needs and amenities.

Bangladesh runs one of the biggest primary education systems in the world. Overall,

there are more than 16 million students at the primary level and over 7 million at the

secondary level (see Table 2). Enrolments at the tertiary level are relatively low but

growing rapidly. The development of primary education poses a daunting challenge

because of inaccessibility and resource constraint. Despite these constraints, Bangladesh

has achieved success in the field of literacy and primary education. The adult (age 15

years and above) literacy rate was estimated at 60% in 2005. Bangladesh's commitment

to education has been clearly stated in its *Constitution.*

Table 2

*General Education Statistics*

| Type of Institution | No of Institutions | | No. of Teachers | | No. of Student | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Female | Total | Female | Total | Female |
| Primary School | 80,397 | - | 344,789 | 124,990 | 16,225,658 | 8,134,437 |
| Secondary Schools | 18,500 | 3,708 | 232,929 | 46,983 | 7,398,552 | 3,868,014 |

Source: *Ministry of Education, 2005*

According to the education sector review of World Bank (2000), the most important issue for Bangladeshi secondary education is the irrelevance of the curricula. In Bangladesh, secondary education functions almost exclusively at present to ration access to higher education. It has no independent purpose of its own. Fewer than one in ten entering students completes the full secondary program. The other nine leave the system without preparation in life skills. Bangladesh also fails to provide equal access to quality secondary education and outcomes in terms of equal geographical coverage and distribution of inputs. Fees for out-of-school tutoring place an undue burden on poorer parents and undermine equity goals. Poor quality is a function of exceptionally large class sizes, averaging 56 students, coupled with lack of sufficient teaching materials, lack of accountability for results and perverse incentives (e.g., subventions by government not linked to performance or even minimal results).

In order to address issues at the secondary and higher levels, the Bangladesh Ministry of Education has developed a medium-term framework for the secondary education sub-sector, focusing on quality improvements, policy measures, and specific actions needed to reform the system. The development of this medium-term framework has benefited from an extensive range of consultations and workshops with stakeholders at the central, district, and sub-district levels. The main objective of reforms being

proposed is to address systemic governance issues aimed at raising the quality and cost-effectiveness of service delivery and at improving equity of access in secondary education (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Development plans within education have been given the highest priority in public sector investments. Education sector allocations are currently about 2.3% of GDP and 14% of total government expenditure. The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) has allocated nearly 15% of the national budget to the education sector (Ministry of Education, 2005).

In Bangladesh, the management of the education system falls under two ministries, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME, responsible for primary education) and the Ministry of Education (MoE, responsible for secondary, vocational and tertiary education). The Ministry of Education is concerned with policy formulation, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and execution of plans and programs related to post primary secondary and higher education, including technical and madrasah education. This Ministry is aiming to move towards a devolved system of governance within the current administrative structure. In this system the central government will be responsible for such things as formulating policies, financing, setting quality standards, and monitoring and evaluation, while lower levels of government will be responsible for administering the system (Ministry of Education, 2005).

In 2004, an Education Commission was established to review the status of education in Bangladesh and it provided numerous recommendations to improve each stream and level of education. Subsequently, The Government of Bangladesh initiated actions related to those recommendations. Some of the key initiatives included: enacting

a law in 1990 to achieve universal primary enrolment by 2005; increasing government

allocation to the education sector; subsidizing poor students, especially girls;

decentralizing primary and secondary education systems; and launching a large project

for the improvement of teaching quality at the secondary level institutions (Ministry of

Education, 2005).

In short, The Bangladeshi Government has begun to implement some of these

recommendations; however, many of them are still under discussion. It could be said that

this is the right time for the Bangladeshi Government to take some initiatives toward

identifying school improvement needs and related strategies for Bangladeshi secondary

public schools.  As Dalin et al. (1994) stated, "the school is the centre of change, not the

ministry or the district administration" (p. xvii). It was my intention to identify school

improvement needs and identify ways to meet these needs.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the major school improvement needs

and related strategies for two Bangladeshi secondary public schools based upon the

perceptions of in-school professionals, parents, and students.

## Research Questions

Three key research questions guided the research. Based upon the perceptions of

in-school professionals, parents, and students in two secondary public schools from

Rajshahi School Board, I was seeking answers to these questions:

1. What are the perceived school improvement needs for each school?

2. What specific strategies or initiatives are needed to improve school

   effectiveness for each school?

3.  What are the challenges or barriers to implementing key improvement

strategies and how might these challenges or barriers be overcome?

**Significance of the Study**

A study of this nature was of value for several reasons. Contemporary educational

researchers (Harber & Muthukrishna, 2000; Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001) noted that much

is written about educational change and about specific improvements; however, the study

and understanding of contextual influences on educational change and improvements of

practice is in its infancy. Educational researchers have devoted increasing attention to

develop context-specific school improvement strategies (Hamilton, 1998; Harber, 1997a;

Harber & Davis, 1997; Harber & Muthukrishna, 2000; Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001;

Reynolds, 1998). It is evident that there is difficulty associated with applying a set of

school improvement strategies in any context. School improvement researchers and

practitioners are advised to pay attention to the unique features of the individual school

situation based on audit of that particular context.  The findings of this study would

contribute knowledge to the existing literature on school improvement.

This study had implications for both in-school professionals and school

boards interested in school improvement in Bangladesh. The findings of this study

might contribute knowledge to in-school professionals engaged in improving their

students' achievement. The information from this study might also be valuable to

Bangladeshi school boards as they reflect on their commitment to provide *quality*

*education for all children* (Ministry of Education, 2005). The findings of this study

would provide guidelines to develop school improvement strategies for the

Ministry of Education, Boards of Education, school-based administrators, teachers, and parents in Bangladesh.

The significance of this study is also found in its ability to inform policy makers in their understanding of how schools can be improved in the Bangladeshi secondary public school system. This study also may provide policy makers with a frame of reference for planning reform policies related to system change.

Furthermore, the information from this study might be applied in school improvement efforts cross-culturally in other similar socio-economic contexts. For example, the countries listed in Table 1 experience more or less similar socio-economic conditions. Some of the African countries also have similar socio-economic conditions as Bangladesh. The insights and descriptions provided by the Bangladeshi in-school professionals, parents, and students in this study may help other similar socio-economic countries to improve their secondary public schools.

**The Researcher**

In order to understand the context of this study, it is appropriate to provide the reader with an introduction to the researcher and to clarify who the researcher is in relationship to the study. The researcher's values and beliefs influence every aspect of the research process. In this regard, Denzin and Lincoln (2000a) noted, "Every researcher speaks from within a distinct interpretive community that configures, in its special way, the multicultural, gendered components of the research act" (p. 18).

My professional background and experiences with schools in Bangladesh may be seen as influential in my decision to conduct research in this area. I originally came from Rajshahi, Bangladesh, where I completed my K-12 studies in different schools. After

finishing high school in Bangladesh, I received admission in the Middle East Technical University in the Department of Foreign Language Education, Ankara, Turkey. Upon graduation, I started working in a college as an English teacher in Bangladesh. I believe that my background and knowledge of the cultural and educational context and language allowed me to gain a better understanding of participants' perceptions of school improvement needs for Bangladeshi schools. Furthermore, my experience in administering different focus groups and individual interviews while conducting various school reviews for Saskatchewan Education Leadership Unit (SELU) in Saskatchewan and Manitoba was instrumental for this study. This experience has been valuable because the school review model was based on the correlates of school effectiveness.

Epistemologically, I feel comfortable within the naturalistic paradigm. A constructivist interpretation of the origin of knowledge seems to fit my personal beliefs. Undertaking research within this orientation dictates working from the perspective of a bricoleur (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a); that is, drawing upon a variety of methods and perspectives, as they are needed to adequately address the research questions. Nelson, Treichler and Grossberg (1992) also stated that, the choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions in turn, depend on their context. As an interpretive bricoleur, I tried to produce a bricolage, "a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a).

**General Parameters of the Study**

To avoid mispresentation and misinterpretation of data and findings, researchers must acknowledge parameters and constraints present within the research. Any field of

inquiry requires the researcher to delimit the exploration in order to facilitate the development of a specific focus for the study. Inherent within such investigations are assumptions about the processes being used. Therefore, limitations exist that constrain the generalizability of the results.

In conducting this study, I assumed that: participants were aware of the education system of Bangladesh and their own school circumstances; respondents were honest and accurate in their responses; and the data gathering procedures were adequate and accurately investigated the factors that affected the school improvement efforts.

The study was based upon the perceptions of in-school professionals, parents, and students of two purposefully selected secondary public schools from Rajshahi School Board, Bangladesh. The time-line for data collection was from October 1, 2008 to November 30, 2008.

The participants' responses were transcribed and translated from Bangla into English by a professional translator. The study had the limitations involved in translation such as clarity of wording and respondent understanding of terminology.

**Definition of Key Terms**

For the consistent interpretation of certain notions, connotations, and terms used within this study, I used the following definitions. The caution underlying these definitions is that "words approximate the territory; they never map it perfectly" (Weick, 1995, p. 107). In other words, these definitions were general meanings that, in one context or another, might be contested by pressure groups or disciplinary purists, but this language was carefully established for this study so that readers could make their own interpretations using specified frameworks (Stake, 1994).

*School Improvement*

A widely accepted definition of school improvement emerged from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) sponsored International School Improvement Project (ISIP), where Velzen, Miles, Eckholm, Hameyer, and Robin (1985) incorporated research findings into this comprehensive definition: "A systematic, sustained effort aimed at a change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively" (p. 48).

*Effective School*

Effective school is a short-term, output-oriented concept. According to Lockheed and Verspoor (1991), an effective school is a function of many factors including implementable curriculum, availability of physical facilities, instructional materials, trained and motivated teachers, and socio-economic background of pupils.

*Context*

According to Pettigrew, Mckee, and Ferlie (1988), the context can be divided into an inner context and an outer context. The inner context refers to the existing strategy, structure, culture, management, and political processes of the institution, which will influence the process. The outer context is the wider, perhaps national, social, political, and economic context, and the interpretation of local and national policies and events.

*Sustainability*

Heargreaves and Fink (2000) noted that "Sustainability does not simply mean whether something will last. It addresses how particular initiatives can be developed without compromising the development of others in the surrounding environment now

and in the future" (p. 30). Focusing on system thinking, Fullan (2005) argued that "Sustainability is the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose" (p. ix). To define sustainability, Copland (2003) stated that, "Becoming sustainable meant schools needed to find ways to embed their reform work, and especially their inquiry process, into the culture of the school" (p. 393).

### Needs Assessment

According to Rossett (1987), "Needs assessment is the systematic effort that we make to gather opinions and ideas from a variety of sources on performance problems or new systems and technologies" (p. 62). Kaufman and Valentine (1989) stated that needs assessment is a process we use to: identify gaps between current results and desired ones; or place gaps in results (needs) in priority order; or select the most important ones to be addressed.

### Quality of Education

According to World Bank (2000), quality of education means levels of student achievement that meet defined minimum standards.

## Organization of the Dissertation

In Chapter One, I outlined the context and background to the study, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, general parameters of the study, initial meanings of terms, and my role as the researcher. In Chapter Two, I have reviewed literature that explores concepts of school effectiveness and school improvement in different contexts and that examines issues of sustainability related to school improvement. I also included an initial conceptual framework for the study in this

chapter. In Chapter Three, I described the paradigm of inquiry for the study, which addressed epistemological considerations of this research. In Chapter Three, I also discussed practical considerations, including research design and rationale, data collection and recording, trustworthiness, and data analysis of this study. In addition, I addressed ethical considerations. The findings obtained from the data analysis are grouped and presented in accordance with the research questions in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, I provided the summary of the study, discussion of the major themes emerging from the findings, and implications for theory, practice, policy, and future research.

**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Contemporary educational researchers (Hamilton, 1998; Harber, 1997a; Harber & Davis, 1997; Harber & Muthukrishna, 2000; Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001; Reynolds, 1998) noted that much is written about educational change and about specific improvements; however, the study and understanding of contextual influences on educational change and improvements of practice is in its infancy. Consistent with these researchers, the purpose of this study was to identify the major school improvement needs and related strategies to meet these needs for two Bangladeshi secondary public schools based upon the perceptions of in-school professionals, parents, and students.

With Figure 2.1 in mind, I sought to do three things in this literature review: (a) explore the literature of school effectiveness research; (b) examine the literature on school improvement and more specifically school improvement in different contexts; and
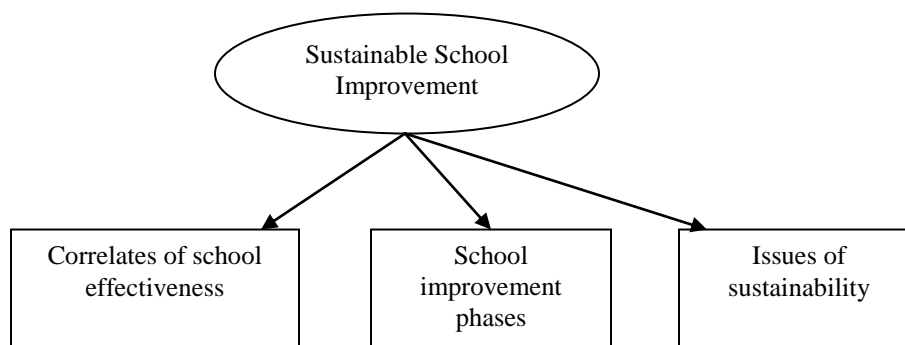


*Figure 2.1*. Literature review components.

(c) examine issues of sustainability related to school improvement. Finally, an initial conceptual framework for the study concludes the chapter.

**School Effectiveness**

In the last decade of the 1900s, there was a plethora of literature on school effectiveness (Scheerens, 2000). Because the work of educational planners has moved from increasing school enrolments to the improvement of the quality of schooling, planners have had to become interested in school effectiveness. What, however, is an effective school?

In his earlier study, Scheerens (1992) stated that school effectiveness refers to the performance of the organizational unit called *school*. The performance of the school can be expressed as the *output* of the school, which in turn is measured in terms of the average achievement of the pupils at the end of a period of formal schooling. Scheerens also noted that the question of school effectiveness is interesting because it is well known that schools differ in performance. The next question is how much they differ, or, more precisely, how much schools differ when they are more or less equal in terms of pupils' innate abilities and socio-economic background. In response to this question, Scheerens found that different strands of educational-effectiveness research have concentrated on different types of *variables* to answer this question.

Scheerens (2000) noted that in economics, concepts such as effectiveness and efficiency are related to the production process of an organization. Scheerens further explained that a production process can be summed up as a turnover or transformation of inputs into outputs. Inputs into a school or school system include pupils with certain given characteristics and financial and material aids. Outputs include pupil attainment at the end of schooling. The transformation process or throughput within a school can be understood as all the instruction methods, curriculum choices, and organizational

preconditions that make it possible for pupils to acquire knowledge. With regard to the

economic rationality, Cheng (1993) has offered a further elaboration of the definitions of

effectiveness and efficiency, incorporating the dimension of short-term output versus

long-term outcomes. In his terms, technical effectiveness and efficiency refer to "school

outputs limited to those in school or just after schooling (e.g. learning behaviour, skills

obtained, attitude change, etc.)", whereas *social* effectiveness and efficiency are

associated with "effects on the society level or the life-long effects on individuals (e.g.

social mobility, earnings, work productivity)" (p. 2).

From an organic system model perspective, Niskanen (1971) demonstrated that

public-sector organizations are primarily targeted at maximizing budgets and that there

are insufficient external incentives for these organizations – schools included – to

encourage effectiveness and efficiency. In this context it is interesting to examine

whether canvassing activities of schools mainly consist of the displaying of acquired

facilities (inputs) or of the presentation of output data such as the previous years'

examination results.

From the human relations approach to organization, job satisfaction or workers

and their involvement within the organization are appropriate criteria for measuring the

most desired characteristics of the organization. The organizational theorists who share

this view regard these criteria as effectiveness criteria (Mintzberg, 1979).

Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) stated that some organizational theorists have seen

organizations as political battlefields. According to this view, departments, individual

workers, and management staff use official duties and goals in order to achieve their own

hidden – or less hidden – agendas. Good contacts with powerful outside bodies are

regarded as very important for the standing of their department or of themselves. From a political perspective the question of the effectiveness of the organizations as a whole is difficult to answer. A more relevant issue is the extent to which internal groups comply with the demands of certain external interested parties. In the case of schools, these bodies could be school governing bodies, parents, and/or the local business community (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

When one is confronted with the diversity of views on effectiveness that exist within organizational theory, which standpoint should one adopt? Should one consider that there are several forms of effectiveness? Should a choice be made? Or is it possible to develop an all-embracing concept of effectiveness based on several views? In this regard, Scheerens (1992) and Scheerens and Bosker (1997) noted that the most suitable position would appear to be one where productivity, in terms of quantity and quality of school output, is seen as the ultimate criterion and the other criteria are seen either as preconditions (responsiveness) or means (criteria referring to organizational conditions such as teacher satisfaction). The next section of this chapter briefly examines school effectiveness studies from an historical perspective.

*Historical Perspectives of School Effectiveness*

The Equality of Educational Opportunity report (Coleman et al., 1966) in the United States dealt a blow to American education. The report examined equality of opportunity for minority children and found "schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context" (p. 325). Coleman et al.'s findings triggered a debate, which led other researchers to engage

their attention toward effective school correlates research (American Association of School Administrators, 1992).

Research related to the analysis of school effectiveness that were the exception to the Coleman report (1966) findings subsequently appeared in the United States (Averch, Carroll, Donaldson, Kiesling, & Pincus, 1972; Mayeske, Okada, Beaton, Cohen, & Wisler, 1972; State of New York, 1974). These studies identified schools that raised student achievement scores in mathematics and reading for lower socioeconomic students. Edmonds (1979) contended that these studies documented school characteristics that were strong determinants of instructional effectiveness.

Edmonds' (1979) five year search for effective schools found several that could be instructionally effective for poor children. Edmonds stated that Coleman et al.'s research fell short by viewing education in a limited light and that they did not provide any answers as to how education might be made more equitable. Edmonds also claimed that normative measures of schooling did not coincide with the expectations of some pupils and parents. Intelligence and ability were defined by Coleman et al. through the use of intelligence tests and standardized testing. According to Edmonds, schooling must be considered as comprising more than intelligence tests and standardized testing.

Starratt (1986) also noted that Coleman et al.'s (1966) attention to input variables was insufficient to conclude that schools did not make a difference. He suggested that both mediating and output variables required investigation. The effective schools research studied internal organizational variables such as student awards and discipline. The new wave of research also examined pedagogical variables such as practice time on assignments and climate variables like caring attitudes toward students as indicators of

effect. Internal organization, pedagogical practices, and climate were associated with higher levels of school achievement.

This interest on school effectiveness and school improvement appeared not only in the United States but also in Britain. At just about the same time Edmonds (1979) was investigating school effectiveness, Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, and Ouston (1979) conducted a large scale longitudinal study of twelve inner city schools in London. While the American studies focused primarily on elementary schools, Rutter et al. examined secondary schools. Input variables such as student characteristics were controlled and five output variables were examined. These output variables dealt not only with student cognitive achievement, but also student behavior, attendance, success, employment, and delinquency. This 15,000 hour study found significant differences among schools. Rutter et al. concluded that the differences in school impact were not due to input variables of physical or resource characteristics but due to the nature of the schools' ethos.

Quantitative studies were not the only means of looking at school effectiveness. In 1983, Lightfoot began a long-term ethnographic study of six high schools in the United States. She addressed the fragmented and complex nature of school settings through contrasting views and perspectives on events and people. Lightfoot found that "as we get closer and closer to understanding the culture of a social group, the anatomy of an institution, we recognize the inevitable inconsistencies and dissonant themes" (p. 19). She felt that the coherence of a single viewing faded and incoherence grew through multiple perspectives of the same phenomenon.

Lightfoot (1983) argued that goodness rather than effectiveness needs to be the emerging referent for schools. Goodness was not measurable by single output variables

though it may well include both measurable and elusive qualities. She saw schools as

changing wholes that were in the process of becoming better. She noted,

> Goodness…refers to what some social scientists describe as the school's 'ethos', not discrete additive elements. It refers to the mixture of parts that produce a whole. The whole includes people, structures, relationships, ideology, goals, intellectual substance, motivation and will. It includes measurable indices…but it also encompasses less tangible, more elusive qualities that can only be discerned through close, vivid description. (p. 23)

Goodlad (1984) conducted a study of 38 elementary and high schools. Parent,

teacher, student, and classroom data were collected through surveys, interviews, and

observations. Goodlad utilized a composite index of satisfaction from teachers, students,

and parents to rank order the schools. This composite index of satisfaction was an

accurate predictor of more or less satisfying schools.

According to Purkey and Smith (1983), in the general description of school

effectiveness and school-effectiveness research, it is important to note that school

effectiveness is a causal concept. Purkey and Smith made an explicit difference between

*school-effectiveness* research on the one hand and *school effects* research on the other.

They further explained that in school-effectiveness research not only are differences in

overall performance assessed, but the additional question of causality is raised: which

school characteristics lead to relatively higher performance, when the characteristics of

the student populations are otherwise constant?  There is a copious amount of literature

about the characteristics of effective schools. In the next section, I briefly review these

characteristics.

### *Characteristics of Effective Schools*

Edmond and Frederickson (1979) organized characteristics of the effective school

into seven correlates: (a) a safe and orderly environment conducive to teaching and

learning; (b) a climate of high expectations, in which the staff demonstrate that all students can attain mastery of basic skills; (c) instructional leadership by principals who understand and apply the characteristics of instructional effectiveness; (d) a clear and focused school mission through which the staff shares a commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and learning; (e) frequent monitoring of student progress using the results to improve teaching and learning; (f) positive home-school relations in which parents support the school's basic mission and play an important part in helping to achieve it; and (g) high time on task, brought about when a high percentage of students' time is spent engaged in activities to master basic skills. These effective school correlates gained wide acceptance in public school arenas.

Noting that school effectiveness is a multivariate phenomenon and that professional interdependence is essential, Renihan and Renihan (1984), summarized eight attributes of effective school: leadership, conscious attention to climate, academic focus, high expectations, sense of mission, positive motivational strategies, and feedback on academic performance. To this list the same authors (1995) added another element, which was parental involvement. The research of Levine and Lezotte (1990) also supported many of these factors of effective schools. In their research, Levine and Lezotte identified as key features of effective schools: safe and orderly school environment, strong instructional leadership, clear school mission, a school climate conducive to learning, increased opportunities for learning, student time on task, and positive home and school relationships, with leadership and expectations as the two areas that consistently came to the forefront.

In 1992, Renihan and Sackney developed a School Review Model. This heuristic model has been refined, tested, and applied in numerous schools and school systems over the intervening years. This version of the model was updated in 2005. In this model, Renihan and Sackney presented ten correlates of school effectiveness which included:

- *School vision and purpose*

- *Strong leadership*

- *Academic emphasis*

- *Instructional expectations*

- *Parental involvement*

- *Professional community*

- *Student involvement*

- *Feedback*

- *Positive climate*

- *Physical environment*

The following is a discussion of these effective school indicators with perspectives and related research findings as presented in the educational literature.

   ***Sense of mission/vision***. Having a sense of mission/vision is one of the most important characteristics of effective schools. An effective school projects a shared philosophy and a sense of vision of what those involved want to achieve. In this regard, Strong (2002) noted that in effective schools, instructional objectives and school goals are defined and clearly stated. A school's mission and primary goals are widely shared by teachers, administrators, staff, parents/guardians, and students.

According to Barth and Pansegrau (1994), "schools with a mission tend to be schools that are improving, schools that are more exciting and better than schools without mission" (p.2). Barth and Pansegrau further noted, "if you know where you'd like to go, it's more likely that you will get there" (pp.2-3). Vision, shared by members of an organization, helps people to set goals to advance the organization and is an important key for motivation and empowerment (Nauheimer, 2003). According to Corallo and McDonald (2002), the staff develops or reaffirms its "common vision, mission, values, and core beliefs" concerning student achievement, putting into place strategies to promote improvement, including collaboration (p. 5).

Rideout, McKay, and Morton (2004), in a study on effective school visioning process, found that a system's inputs, outputs, and functions define its purpose more clearly that its stated vision and goals. Their hypothesis was that "visioning strategy" (p. 71) could be the link between the leader and the functioning of the organization, and was important for a leadership strategy. Their conclusions were that visioning strategy appears to be controlled by in-school professional educators, specifically principals, and that principals view visioning as an event and not an ongoing process. Comments quoted such as, "We did ours five years ago" (p. 81) were indicative of this belief.

Rozycki (2004) struck a cautionary note on mission and vision on the educational scene. He suggested, "…they must be tempered with a sense of proportion, a knowledge of the resources available, and a cool evaluation of the likelihood of success" (p. 95). Rozycki called vision statements happy talk, which he said was "sweet slogans that enervate clear definition of goals that obscure inquiry into their achievability" (p. 94). Rozycki suggested a need for critical questions and criteria questions to challenge

mission and vision statements. Critical questions were defined as challenging the causal relationships inherent in a vision statement and criteria questions asked how definitions were created for items mentioned in a vision statement.

*Strong leadership*. According to Levine and Lezotte (1990), the principal should be considered "the most critical leadership determinant of effectiveness" (p. 16). An effective principal is one who is highly visible in the school and supportive to all staff members and students. In effective schools, leaders display common leadership qualities of assertiveness, willingness to assume responsibility, high standards for staff and students, personal vision, expertise, role modeling, and strength of character (Cotton, 2000). Adding to this, Speck (1999) stated that, empowering staff and students, building trust, monitoring and assessing progress, and providing assistance are critical elements of the leader role.

The effective school leader must have a clear vision. As Renihan and Renihan (1995) asserted, principals need visible, assertive leadership with a clear personal vision of where the school is going and an image of the school as it should be. Speck (1999), also said that the vision may reside in the principal as an individual but more frequently it is created jointly with the staff; in all cases this vision is clearly and repeatedly articulated within the school learning community.

Several researchers have asserted the importance of the principal's role as instructional leader (Brookover et al., 1997; Cotton, 2000; Walberg, 2002). On this point, Cotton (2000) stated that an effective principal ensures the alignment for all students. The principal spearheads efforts to collect, analyze, and discuss achievement data, and subsequently assists in the development of a school plan to remedy identified areas of

need. The principal is instrumental in fostering an environment of continuous improvement. Furthermore, Cotton (2000) stated that an effective principal believes that the school has the power to reach all students and that all learners can progress and achieve as a direct result of the instruction delivered.

Along with instructional leadership qualities, to be effective, principals should adopt the transformational leadership style. The main focus of the transformational approach to leadership is to establish a mutual relationship between leader and follower. On this point, Owens (2004) noted, "the result is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders" (p. 269). This mutual relationship empowers people within the organization. Increased efficiency and effectiveness, while personalizing the worker and the work environment, is the result. These positive relationships create an organization that desires success.

According to Bell (2001) and Cotton (2000), high performing, high-poverty schools have strong leaders who are thoroughly familiar with the learning process, understand and apply the principles of the effective schools research, and provide support to teachers. Principals encourage and support teachers in using content standards to guide curricular practices and classroom instruction (Bell, 2001). Moreover, Cotton (2000) stated that when necessary, the principal would model effective strategies and practices. Cotton further noted that an effective school administrator is responsible for securing necessary resources, including professional development opportunities, and will be in attendance for staff development taking place.

*Academic emphasis*. One of the crucial concerns for any school is its emphasis on academic work as a continuing priority. Renihan and Sackney (2001) described the

importance of academic emphasis on the effectiveness of the school. They stated, "[g]ood schools place a sustained focus on academic skills, and the importance placed upon this is reflected in the amount of school time and professional energy devoted to it" (p. 8). Effective schools are distinguished by a marked focus on high student achievement and it is reflected in the amount of school time and professional energy devoted to it.

Marzano (2003) contended that, considering all other factors, opportunity for student learning in the classroom has the strongest correlation to academic achievement. This opportunity for learning seeks to preserve student time on task and maximize time devoted to instruction. In this regard, Cawelti (2000) said that, in effective schools incentives and recognition are focused on pupils' achievement with extended time spent on task by students. On this issue, Cotton (2000) also suggested that, during the school day, announcements and disruptions be kept to a minimum as to not interrupt the instructional program.

*Instructional expectations*. Renihan and Sackney (2001) stated, "school effectiveness research has pointed to a strong positive relationship between student achievement and the expectations which teachers hold for them" (p. 10). They further explained that the underlying theory is that all students have the capability to meet intellectual goals in various areas. In particular, Gardner's (1983) Multiple Intelligences Theory supports the notion that every child has some area of strength and that other areas can be developed utilizing appropriate instructional strategies. Generally, teachers who hold appropriately high expectations for learning, compared to teachers who hold lower expectations, tend to have students who achieve at higher levels.

According to the research conducted by Marzano (2003), "high expectations and pressure to achieve refer to establishing challenging goals for students." (p. 35). As with all indicators of school effectiveness, the philosophy of setting high expectations for success of all students must start with the leadership of the school. What the principals say and do has an impact on the expectations of everyone in the building.

*Parental involvement*. Renihan and Sackney (2001), noted, "[t]here is a significant body of research which points to the fact that enhanced parental involvement is closely related to significant gains in several measures of school and classroom success" (p.11). Parent involvement is linked to children's school readiness: the more parent involvement in preparing a child for school the more ready the child is for school and the more success experienced (Fantuzzo & McWayne, 2002).

Scheurich, Goddard, Skrla, Mckenzie, and Youngs (2010) noted that parent and community ties to local schools have a direct effect on student achievement. Darch, Miao, and Shippen (2004) pointed out that parental involvement not only increased student grades and motivation to complete homework but it resulted in a more positive student attitude about school and increased student attendance. A MetLife survey of teachers indicated that over 80% of teachers believed that many motivational, behavioral, and academic problems of students can be resolved with family support (Tam & Heng, 2005). This survey suggested that parental involvement in effective schools is crucial.

School staff and parents/guardians need to work together to ensure the child(ren)'s success with academic and social learning. As Nord, Lemon, Liu, and Chandler (2000) asserted that in particular, children from socially or economically disadvantaged families appear to benefit when the parent is involved in the child's school

life. Similarly, Cawelti (2000) suggested that in effective schools parents need to work together to share ideas and strategies with the school to resolve educational problems.

In an analysis of parental involvement, Noonan and Renihan (2005) found seven principles that were the foundation of a school's culture of successful parent involvement:

- The principle of flexibility: The opportunity for parents to invest and divest as circumstances permit;

- The principal of inclusiveness: The energetic pursuit of the involvement of all parents, no matter how peripheral;

- The principle of variety: The availability of different types and levels of involvement;

- The principle of opportunity: The organization of activities around parent schedules;

- The principle of openness: Receptivity to, and follow-up on, parent ideas;

- The principle of clarity: The provision of clear definitions of parent roles in relation to the school; definitions of parent roles in relation to the school; and

- The principle of monitoring: The continuous discussion and assessment of parent-school relationships. (pp. 10-11)

All stakeholders need to accept and believe in these seven principles to build a school's culture of successful parent involvement.

*Professional community*. Much research on school effectiveness has been devoted to the concept of teachers working as a community of professionals. In particular, careful attention is given to the nature of staff collaboration, the opportunities

for continuous teacher learning, and the extent of professional development initiatives. In recent years, writers on school effectiveness have devoted serious attention to the professional community within the school and its implications for collaborative cultures, as a significant enabling factor in school effectiveness. DuFour (2001) has done significant work in demonstrating the value and the nature of professional learning communities as vehicles for enhancing student learning.  DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2005) defined professional learning community as a "group of educators who work collaboratively with and learn from one another" (p. 9).

Eaker, DuFour, and DuFour (2002) identified that some key components of successful, effective professional learning communities include: future-oriented, shared decision-making, focus on learning, data driven, ongoing assessment, reflective and utilize effective teaching strategies.  Critical to the success of professional learning communities are the practices of collaboration and accountability, similar to the theory of communities of practice, described by Wenger (1999). Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wenger, 2004). According to DuFour and Eaker (1998), working collaboratively in a learning community includes setting goals, measuring their attainment, and monitoring for further or sustained improvement. Schmoker (2005) noted professional learning communities as self-managing teams, quality circles, team-based organizations, or, as found predominantly in education, communities of practice, continuous improvement teams, or collaborative communities.

*Student involvement*. Effective schools recognize the importance of high levels of student involvement in various aspects of school life.  The students in the school can

influence school effectiveness thorough greater participation. Shultz and Cook-Sather (2002) noted that student involvement in school creates an active learning environment that promotes learning.

Student participation in school life is measured by the extent to which students have input in the decisions affecting them. School effectiveness research indicates that student involvement in decision-making increases students' sense of responsibility, such as reported by Kohn (1993), he noted that student participation in decision making builds stronger relationships with teachers and enhances the learning process for student. Shultz and Cook-Sather (2002) found that involving students in school decision making process can reduce absenteeism and school suspensions.

Stone (1995) noted that student involvement develops student leadership skills, which leads students to identify positively with their school, and results in a more democratic school environment. Stone further explained that if teachers can control their professional lives and students control their learning, then both would ultimately be responsible for their outcomes. On this point, McDermott (1994) noted that teachers must work as partners with students, exploring what they want to learn. Teachers must create resource opportunities through creative problem solving and be advocates for students at every opportunity.

*Effective feedback*. Professionals in effective schools consider feedback on student work to be a core activity deserving of substantial time and effort. Gandal and McGiffert (2003) stated that "just as medical tests help diagnose and treat patients, rigorous and meaningful education assessments can help ensure the academic health of all students" (p. 39). Similarly, Bernhardt (2003) stated that "looking at student

achievement results in conjunction with the context of the school and the processes that create the results gives teachers and administrators important information about what they need to do to improve learning for all students" (p. 30). Furthermore, Cotton (2000) noted that monitoring the progress and achievement of students includes (a) the collecting, disaggregating, and analyzing of performance data used to inform instruction; and (b) the communication with parents regarding student progress. Cotton suggested utilizing a variety of assessments to gauge student achievement.

Stronge (2002) described assessment as "a central element of the teaching process" (p. 55). He further noted that effective teachers use assessment data to inform their instruction and to monitor student progress. In this regard, Brimijoin, Marquissee, and Tomlinson (2003) stated that the role of the teacher as "data collector" is three dimensional: "to determine students' understanding and achievement, to track their responses to moderate challenges, and to measure their outcomes against expected performance goals" (p. 71).

Schmoker (2001) reiterated the importance of data-driven decision making. He stated that "test-driven, measurable improvement, some caveats notwithstanding, is in fact always substantive improvement …when teachers regularly and collaboratively review assessment data for the purpose of improving practice to reach measurable achievement goals, something magical happens" (p. 1). Danielson (2002) also stated that assessment provides the expectation for what students are to learn, helps in identifying progress made toward these learning goals, and highlights any necessary improvement that must take place.

***Positive climate***. Attention to organizational climate and culture is important for effective schools. How people interact with each other on a daily basis sets the tone for the people in the school building. The school must promote a climate conducive to working and learning. Renihan and Sackney's (2001) model reflected this notion. They wrote "In effective schools, specific attention is given to the creation and maintenance of a climate which is conducive to learning. This includes the establishment of a safe, caring and attractive environment in which students can enjoy school and the relationships they experience within it" (p. 9). The climate of the school needs to be safe, positive, respectful, and supportive to result in a sense of pride and ownership among students and staff. It is important for the school to be safe and orderly. In this regard, Marzano (2003), stated, "If teachers and students do not feel safe, they will not have the necessary psychological energy for teaching and learning" (p. 53). Positive school climate enhances student learning processes. Regarding this quality, Short and Greer (2002) noted that climate of effective schools empowers students that results in them becoming more involved in their own learning process.

School climate relates, in turn, to the nature of school rules, school discipline, how people get along with each other, and the overall school spirit that prevails. Toward this end, the creation of a safe and orderly atmosphere begins with consensus by all staff members on rules governing student behavior (Cotton, 2000). Guidelines for behavior are established collaboratively by the staff and the students. Cotton stipulated that, as a result, the atmosphere created within the classroom is one that is conducive to learning, having as its foundation a genuine concern for student well-being.

***Physical environment***. Although Renihan and Sackney (2001) recognized that physical environment is not directly related to all activities of the school, it does affect the effectiveness of schools, they pointed out that, "[m]ost importantly, the appropriateness of the classrooms, and related space and environment, for the program offered is important" (p. 15). The physical environment is an important supporting condition by which the key qualities of school life can be enhanced. Bowers and Burkett (1987) asserted that student housed in newer, rather than older facilities, scored significantly higher in achievement tests. They further stated that up to date amenities in a school positively influence student achievement.

According to Stockard and Mayberry (1992), the quality of a physical plant or environment is related to non-cognitive outcomes, self concept, and social skills. A school's environment is a powerful influence on perceptions and thus significantly affects their behaviors (Pierce, 1994). Shultz and Cook-Sather (2002) also observed that student involvement in school decisions encourages respect for the school facility itself.

Researchers believe that if all these characteristics or correlates of school effectiveness are present in a school then the school must be effective, as noted by Renihan and Sackney (1992) who noted that these correlates are the indicators of school effectiveness. Levine and Lezotte (1990) also found in their study that "…[the effective schools'] correlates do distinguish between more and less effective schools" (p. 2). The degree of a school's effectiveness can be measured by the presence or absence of these school effectiveness indicators. To make sure that schools are effective and maintaining these correlates, they need to develop the capacity to bring about change. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) found that "the capacity to bring about change and the capacity to

bring about improvement (however) are two different matters. Change is everywhere, progress is not" (p. 345). All improvement requires making changes, but not all changes result in improvement. The next section contains a review of some of the relevant issues in school improvement.

## School Improvement

There is a considerable body of evidence to indicate that different schools impact pupil achievement differently. James and Connolly (2000) noted, "[t]he pressure of 'new public management' on schools, especially the obligation to manage their performance, is causing them increasingly to focus on ways of improving pupil achievement" (p. 42). The ultimate goal of school improvement is to enhance pupil progress, achievement, and development. In this section, I illustrate the literature related to school improvement. I begin by presenting the definitions of school improvement and by setting the dimensions of school improvement. Subsequently, I explore the different phases that school improvement has been through since the mid-1980s and consider school effectiveness and school improvement, particularly in different contexts.

### *What is meant by School Improvement?*

A definition of school improvement emerged from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) sponsored International School Improvement Project (ISIP), where Velzen, Miles, Eckholm, Hameyer, and Robin (1985) incorporated research findings into a comprehensive definition as follows:

> A systematic, sustained effort aimed at a change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively. (p. 48)

The University Of London Institute of Education School Improvement Network's Bulletin – *Research Matters* (1994) gave a detailed and useful breakdown of this widely accepted definition of school improvement. It set out the different dimensions of the school improvement approach.

The first dimension was *systematic,* which implies that school improvement needs to be carefully planned and managed and usually involves changes in school organization in order that it can be built into daily activity. Monitoring and evaluation are also essential. The second dimension was *sustained,* which entails that successfully implemented changes will not usually serve their purpose unless the initial drive behind them continues. Sustained change is a process and depends on innovations being built into the structure, until they are part of the school's natural behavior, not just in terms of school policy, budget, or staffing but also through procedures to pass innovations on to those who will be involved in the future.

Persistence is a critical attribute of successful change. The third aspect of school improvement was *effort*, which means that change not only requires the co-operation and commitment of staff, but also their willingness to recognize that internal turbulence is a healthy sign of genuine engagement with the initial problem. As every person views change subjectively, there is a great potential for conflict. But no one says that school improvement will be easy: smooth initial implementation is usually a sign of trivial change. Significant changes to the status quo will inevitably require initial sacrifices of time and careful management of what may be emotional responses to increases in uncertainty.

The fourth aspect of school improvement was *change*: not all change is improvement but all improvement is change. A common theme is of change giving the appearance that something substantial is happening when it is not. In all stages of the change process – identification of need, initiation, implementation, institutionalization, and continuation – people involved must recognize the need for change, be committed to the particular improvement focus, and feel that they have ownership of it, in order for the change to have any meaning. *Learning conditions* was another aspect of school improvement that may involve a series of changes or multiple innovations. Although the school may have a specific focus for its endeavors, the conditions that support learning must also be a focus for change. Successful school improvement is not restricted to teaching-learning activities but extends to some *other related internal conditions,* which include supporting roles, relationships, and structures. These need to be directly addressed. Perhaps most importantly, school improvement strategies usually fail if they do not directly address the distinctive culture or ethos that is to be found in each school. This ethos profoundly affects pupil motivation and achievement.

Another dimension of school improvement was that it should take place *in one or more schools*. Improvement must take place in the school because to be successful there must be a mutual adaptation of both the specific focus for change and the teachers, whose professional lives are often substantially altered by it. The school is also located within an educational system where there are great benefits to be reaped through collaboration and co-operation with other schools and through support from local authorities, universities, or external consultants. Finally, the ultimate aim of school improvement is to achieve a

range of goals that will enhance learning, achievement, and development amongst pupils (Institute of Education, 1994).

Definitions of school improvement highlight the fact that improvement strategies must be well planned and managed over a relatively long period. From the different phases of school improvement it is evident that if schools are to become effective, they need to focus their efforts on systematically enhancing their own ability to manage change and sustain the impetus for change.

*The First Phase of School Improvement*

According to Hopkins and Reynolds (2001), school effectiveness has a lengthy history, whereas school improvement has a relatively recent history that has already passed through three distinct phases. Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) described three distinct phases of school improvement, as documented throughout the past 40 years. The first phase of school improvement, recognized during the late 1970s to the early 1980s, was free floating, rather than representing a systematic and programmatic approach to school change. The main focus of this phase was organizational change, school self evaluation, and the ownership of change by individual teachers and schools. Most of these programs tended to be variable and fragmented in both conception and application. Consequently, these improvement practices did not have much impact upon classroom practice (Reynolds, 1999; Hopkins, 2001).

*The Second Phase of School Improvement*

The second phase of the school improvement started in the early 1990s. The prime focus of this phase was the interaction between school improvement and school effectiveness communities. In this regard, Desimone (2002) noted that the second phase of the school improvement was facilitated by more systematic interactions between school

improvement and school effectiveness research communities. According to Teddlie and Reynolds (2000a), this merged perspective brought large-scale changes, which represented a knowledge base about *what works* at the school level to enhance student achievement. In this phase, there was a greater focus on organizational and classroom change as reflected in approaches toward staff development premised upon models of teaching (Joyce & Showers, 1995).

### The Third Phase of School Improvement

Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) noted that the third phase of school improvement has been in existence from the mid- to late-1990s. They explained that the third phase of school improvement developed from limited success with regard to national educational reforms as reflected in various countries. Despite the remarkable increase in educational reform efforts, in most OECD countries, student achievement through these educational reform movements was not as successful as anticipated.

The third phase of school improvement practice and philosophy attempted to draw lessons from these apparently limited achievements of existing improvement and reform (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001). Hopkins and Reynolds further noted that limited success was reflected within a number of improvement projects in the UK, such as the Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA) Project, the High Reliability Schools (HRS) Project, and many of the projects associated with the London Institute of Education National School Improvement Network (NSIN). In Canada, limited success was experienced in the various phases of work conducted in the Halton (Ontario) Board of Education. Similarly, in the Netherlands, limited success was documented in the Dutch National School Improvement Project.

Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) described that there are some course variations or differences between these various programs or initiatives that make any global assessment difficult. However, if one were to compare these examples of third phase of the school improvement as a group with the groups of programs of initiatives in evidence in phases one and phase two of the school improvement enterprise, it is apparent that:

- there has been an enhanced focus upon the importance of pupil outcomes;
- the learning level and the instructional behaviors of teachers have been increasingly targeted for explicit attention, as well as the school level;
- there has been the creation of an infrastructure to enable the knowledge base, both 'best practice' and research findings, to be utilized;
- there has been an increasing consciousness of the importance of 'capacity-building';
- there has been an adoption of a 'mixed' methodological orientation;
- there has been an increased emphasis upon the importance of ensuring reliability or 'fidelity' in program implementation;
- there has been an appreciation of the importance of cultural change in order to embed and sustain school improvement;
- there has also been an increased focus on ensuring that the improvement programs relate to, and impact upon, practitioners and practices through the use of increasingly sophisticated training, coaching and development programs. (pp. 462-463)

These practices represent a new approach to initiating and sustaining improvement efforts in the context of substantial external pressures upon schools to improve, and of a more limited range of support for the initiatives. The development of the third age approach has not finished yet, as it is apparent that there are a number of areas where further improvement is required (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001). Developing context-specific school improvement is one of the most required areas.

### *Context-specific School Improvement*

Regarding local context in school improvement research, Reynolds (1998) stated that school effectiveness and school improvement research sat at the centre of educational discussion in many societies. He further noted, as the number of articles and books on

school effectiveness has multiplied, so have the misgivings about the current nature of the enterprise. Among the misgivings there were two major criticisms concerning context.

According to Hamilton (1998), the first criticism concerned *contextual relevance* – are the lists of characteristics that constitute an effective school universally valid? One contributor noted the trend for research to come up with a package of key characteristics or correlates and, "sponsored by powerful quasi-governmental agencies, this package is placed on global cash and carry market for educational panaceas. Bundled with a franchising deal and/or complementary of technical support, it is then disseminated around the world (e.g., east of Berlin, south of Rome and north of Euston)" (p. 16).

Hamilton (1998) further described such an approach as an ethnocentric pseudo-science. In fact, contextualization was recognized as problematic by members of the school effectiveness movement: "We also need more work on the extent to which school factors are universal and apply across all contexts in a country or may be context specific" (Reynolds, 1998, p. 20). On this issue, Harber and Davies (1997) said that judging the effectiveness of schools in developing countries, for example, may involve significantly different criteria from those in developed countries, given their differing contextual realities.

The second issue concerned the *ideological context* – the social and political values underlying the goals of education. The school effectiveness movement has been far too dismissive of the significance of the varied ideological purposes of schools: "Many have wanted to prolong our uniquely British love affair with the goals debate, rather than focus on means, as school effectiveness tries to do" (Reynolds, 1998, p. 20). Yet, concern with goals is hardly a uniquely British phenomenon – issues surrounding

education for a democratic society and democratic citizens, for example, have been part of a major international debate (Harber, 1997a). Moreover, it is impossible to ignore the questions: effective at what? effective for what? Ignoring or playing down the significance of goals and assuming a false consensus or homogeneity simply highlights prevailing orthodoxy. Means can only be judged in terms of the desired goals of schooling and these differ from context to context, from school to school and even from classroom to classroom (Harber & Muthukrishna, 2000).

Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) also noted that recent reviews of the impact of large-scale systemic reform of a performance oriented variety are additionally instructive, and draw rather analogous conclusions. For example, Leithwood, Jantzi, and Mascall (1999) identified seven explicit properties or characteristics of performance-based approaches to educational reform:

- a centrally determined, unifying vision and explicit goals for student performance based on the vision;
- curriculum frameworks and related materials for use in accomplishing the goals set for students;
- standards for judging the quality or degree of success of all students;
- coherent, well-integrated policies that reinforce these ambitious standards;
- information about the organization's (especially the students') performance;
- a system of finance and governance that devolves to the local school site responsibility for producing improvements in system and student performance;
- an agent that receives information on organizational performance, judges the extent to which standards have been met, and distributes rewards and sanctions, with significant consequences to the organization for its success or failure in meeting specified standards. (p. 8)

This approach to educational change has become widespread over the past 10 years and Leithwood's review examined, in a comparative manner, five cases of performance-based reform that were both well known and well documented – those in Kentucky, California, New Zealand, Victoria (Australia) and Chicago. On the basis of this review, two

conclusions were reached: the first was that on the available evidence there was no increase in student achievement in any case except Chicago, and even that was slow in coming (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 40); and the second was the "disappointing contribution that performance-based reforms have made to improve the core technology of schools" (Leithwood et al., 1999, pp. 61-63). In particular, these reforms did not adequately acknowledge the importance of *local context*, did not take support of the school site seriously, did not find incentives that worked, did not contribute to any significant increase in professional capacity and did not address and diagnose any opportunity costs.

Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) also indicated that, although there is substantial difference between schools in the contexts within which they exist, national educational policies and school improvement programs tend towards universal programs. Although there may have been some difference between schools in the particular detail of their experience of the programs listed earlier as representative of third phase of the school improvement, much of this was simply an end result of the programs' responses to local conditions rather than a built-in design feature of the particular programs themselves.

Gray et al. (1999) described that the need to move intellectually and practically in this area has been highlighted by a number of issues. First, a comprehensive analysis of the experience of schools enjoying different improvement routes over time revealed critical differences between the rapid improver schools in terms of specific improvement designs being followed. These differences were associated with the nature of their catchment areas. One school in a relatively wealthy catchment area achieved improvement through a sophisticated program involving the generation of a discourse

concerning effective teaching at the department level; whereas, another school in a more poor area generated equally striking improvement over time through an approach involving simple muscularity in the enforcement of core school rules and regulations relating to wearing school uniforms, free will in leaving the school site, and behavior within lessons.

The second body of evidence that suggested a need for context specificity in school improvement initiatives was that which showed contextual relevance in school effectiveness factors. Teddlie and Stringfield's (1993) extensive research on American schools suggested that effective schools in middle socio-economic status (SES) areas differed from equally effective schools in low socio-economic status areas in the following ways:

- external academic rewards were emphasized more in low SES schools;

- parental involvement was encouraged in middle SES schools but many low SES schools created boundaries to buffer their schools from their parents;

- headteachers in middle SES schools were effective mangers, whilst those in low SES schools tended to be initiators;

- curriculum focused on the basic skills in low SES schools, whilst effective middle SES schools had an expanded curriculum. (as cited in Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001, p. 470)

According to Hopkins and Reynolds (2001), the teacher effectiveness literature also showed evidence of context specificity in terms of what was appropriate to construct best teaching and learning. Although some factors applied across all social contexts, such as having high expectations of what children can achieve or lesson structure, certain

factors applied only in certain contexts. At the classroom level, an example might be that

the factor of proceeding in small steps with consolidation, if necessary, was important for

all children who were learning to read for the first time in all contexts, while in the

contexts inhabited by lower social class or lower achieving children, it seemed to be

essential to ensure high learning gain through the use of small steps for teaching *all*

knowledge and not just knowledge that was new, before moving on to other approaches.

Other hints of context specificity in the actions needed to gain effective schools

associated with urbanicity, the age phase of pupils in schools, the governance structure of

schools, and the district/local education authorities that schools are located in (Hopkins &

Reynolds, 2001)

A final critical contextual factor was the level of effectiveness of a school.

Rosenholtz (1989) described an effective school environment as a place that embraces

change in order to become a learning enriched school that not only motivates students,

but teachers as well. Rosenholtz's research classified schools into two categories, "stuck

schools" and "moving schools" on the basis of their orientation and capability to change

(as cited in Hopkins, Ainscow, & West, 1994, p. 90). The process of school improvement

and change became a matter of capitalizing upon the opportunities to move a school

toward the fulfillment of the characteristics of a "moving" school as opposed to that of a

"stuck" school.

Stoll and Fink (1996) found that if differentiated initiatives or programs were to

be utilized in different contexts, and if the different contexts were to be established in

terms of a number of dimensions such as catchment area, effectiveness level, and

improvement trajectory, then the assessment of where schools were in terms of their

existing states became critical. Educational researchers are devoting increasing attention to develop context-specific school improvement strategies. It is evident that there is a difficulty associated with applying a set of school improvement strategies in any context. School improvers are advised to pay attention to the unique features of the individual school situation and building strategies on the basis of an audit of that particular context. While implementing school improvement initiatives, school improvers are also advised to consider the issues of sustainability. The next section reviews issues of sustainability connected with efforts towards school improvement.

## Issues of Sustainability

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) noted that in education, where reform has been a persistent part of the landscape but has only rarely resulted in change that endures, educators often tend to adopt the attitude that this too will pass. In this regard, Fullan (2005) also said that

> All the dilemmas in education reform are coming home to roost: top-down versus bottom-up; short-term versus long-term results; centralization versus decentralization; informed prescription versus informed professional judgment; transactional versus transformative leadership; excellent versus equity. And how does one achieve large-scale reform, anyway; reform that is characterized by serious accountability and ownership? As it turns out, "sustainability" is at the heart of all these dilemmas.  (p. ix)

 Though sustainability is at the heart of all these dilemmas, its definition is not straightforward. Heargreaves and Fink (2000) noted that "Sustainability does not simply mean whether something will last. It addresses how particular initiatives can be developed without compromising the development of others in the surrounding environment now and in the future" (p. 30). Focusing on system thinking, Fullan (2005) argued that "sustainability is the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of

continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose" (p. ix). To

define sustainability, Copland (2003) stated that, "Becoming sustainable meant schools

needed to find ways to embed their reform work, and especially their inquiry process,

into the culture of the school" (p. 393). How do principals guide schools' efforts to

sustain school improvement until it becomes deeply embedded in the culture of the

school? To answer this question, DuFour (2004) suggested focusing on three main ideas:

- *Ensure that students learn*. Schools that are truly committed to the concept of learning for each student will stop subjecting struggling students to a haphazard education lottery.
- *Establish a culture of collaboration.* Schools should provide time and encourage all stakeholders to work collaboratively.
- *Keep focusing on result*. Of course, this focus on continual improvement and results requires educators to change traditional practices and revise prevalent assumptions. Educators must begin to embrace data as a useful indicator of progress. (pp. 9-10)

One of the most critical functions that principals play in developing and sustaining the

leadership capacity is to create conditions for regular and on-going professional learning.

Regarding building leadership capacity, Copland (2003) said that creating new structures

to support changes at school can provide a means for building leadership capacity, but the

ability to keep key people in those structures is equally important.

Valeriel (2005) conducted a study in four schools to examine educational change

and its sustainability. That study explored how schools and districts could bring about

student achievement and sustain that achievement when they were willing to examine

their practices and embrace change. Valeriel focused on teacher leadership, principal

leadership, and district leadership style. The result of his study also showed: (a) that

strong teacher leadership was apparent in each of the four successful sample schools; (b)

that principals at these schools were more likely to create time for teachers to collaborate

and to provide them with structured support; and (c) that district leaders in these schools provided more services than their counterparts in unsuccessful schools did.

According to Fullan (2001), the challenge for successfully implementing and sustaining a change effort is to address the cultural change that all stakeholders must work together in a collaborative way, while at the same time supporting and directing structural changes. He further stated that a successful principal aims first at addressing cultural change within the school, having structural change occur secondarily, as members of the collaborative culture discover that traditional structures no longer meet their needs, and inhibit the sustainability and growth of the emerging culture of collaboration. On this point, Schlechty (as cited in Cosner & Peterson, 2003) also stated "structural change that is not accompanied by cultural change will eventually be overwhelmed by the culture, for it is in the culture that any organization finds meaning and stability" (p. 12). To make any improvement effort sustainable, it is crucial to address both cultural and structural change.

As the struggle to achieve large-scale reform evolves, sustainability is becoming a rallying concept, one that contains the elaboration of strategies essential for whole-system capacity-building on an ongoing basis. According to Fullan (2005), sustainability is an adaptive challenge par excellence. As he saw it, there are at least eight elements of sustainability: (a) public service with a moral purpose; (b) commitment to changing context at all levels; (c) lateral capacity building through networks; (d) intelligent accountability and vertical relationships (encompassing both capacity building and accountability); (e) deep learning; (f) dual commitment to short-term and long-term results; (g) cyclical energizing; and (h) the long lever of leadership (p. 14). The following

is a description of these eight elements of sustainability with explanations as presented in the educational literature.

### *Public Service with a Moral Purpose*

Chapman (2003) acclaimed the new agenda for public value. Public value, he said, is increased when (a) the level of service provision is improved; (b) the quality of service is increased; (c) the equality or fairness with which service is delivered is increased; (d) the service provision is more sustainable and takes into account the needs of future generations; (e) the provision of the service is done in a way consistent with the expectations of a liberal diverse society; and (f) the service provision enhances the level of trust between government and citizens (p. 128). In this regard, Barber (2004) advocated the enabling state in which strong public services: are universal and diverse, respond to the needs and aspiration of citizens, and compete with the private sector on quality. In Barber's model, quality of implementation and short- and long- term outcomes are just as crucial as purpose.

In examining moral purpose, Fullan (2003b) explained about how it must transcend the individual people to become an organization and system quality in which collectivities are devoted to three aspects of moral purpose: raising the bar and closing the gap of student learning, treating people with demanding respect, and altering the social environment, as in other schools and districts, for the better.

### *Commitment to Changing Context at All Levels*

According to Fullan (2005), changing the whole system suggests changing the entire context. Researchers are fond of observing that context is everything, typically in reference to why a particular improvement succeeded in one situation but not another. He

further emphasized that if context is everything, then one must focuses on how it can be changed for the better. Change is not as impossible as it sounds, although it will take time and collective effort.

Fullan (2005) noted that contexts are the structure and cultures within which one works. In the case of educators, the tri-level contexts are school/community, district, and system. The question is, can one identify strategies that will indeed change in a desirable direction the contexts that affect the educators? On a small scale, Gladwell (2000) identified context as a key tipping point: "The power of context says that what really matters is the little things" (p. 150). And if a leader wants to change people's behavior, "You need to create a community around them, where these new beliefs could be practical, expressed and nurtured" (p. 173). Drawing from complexity theory, Fullan (2003a) made the case that if a leader wants to change systems, she/he needs to increase the amount of purposeful interaction between and among individuals within and across the tri-levels, and indeed within and across systems (Fullan, 2003a).

### *Lateral Capacity Building through Networks*

Fullan (2005) described capacity building as discovery because the sequence was as follows: greater accountability leading to the realization that support or capacity building was essential, which led to vertical capacity building with external trainers at the district or other levels, and then, in turn, to the realization that lateral capacity building across peers was a powerful learning strategy.

According to Hargreaves (2003), there are numerous benefits from lateral strategies: usually people learn best from peers if there is adequate opportunity for ongoing, purposeful exchange; the system is designed to foster, develop, and disseminate

innovative practices that work – discoveries, in relation to Heifetz's (2003) *adaptive challenges*; leadership is developed and mobilized in many quarters; and inspiration and ownership at the local level are deepened, which is a critical ingredient for sustainability of effort and engagement.

### *Intelligent Accountability and Vertical Relationships*

According to Fullan (2005), sustainable societies must resolve the persistent change problem of how to get both local ownership and external accountability, and to achieve this in the whole system. In this aspect, Bentley and Wilsdon (2003) noted that the problems have to be solved locally:

> Solutions rely, at least in part, on the users themselves and their capacity to take shared responsibility for positive outcomes. In learning, health, work, and even parenting, positive outcomes arise from a combination of personal effort and wider social resources. (p. 20)

The question is, what is going to inspire people to seek positive outcomes, and when it comes to the public good, how are people and groups to be held responsible? The answer is a mixture of collaboration and networks, on the one hand, and what Miliband (2004) called intelligent accountability, on the other hand. Networks and other learning communities (lateral capacity building) do build in a strong but not complete measure of accountability. As such communities interact around given problems, they create better practices, shared commitment, and accountability to peers (Fullan, 2005).

Fullan (2005) also noted that vertical relationships (state/district, district/school, and so on) must also be emphasized. One aspect of vertical relationships involves support and resources; the other concerns accountability. It will be hard to get the balance of accountability right in terms of vertical authority: Too much imposition demotivates people; too little permits drift, or worse. To address this problem, Fullan said that we

need to bring back a strategy that has been around for at least 20 years, namely, self-evaluation, or school self-review, as it has been called (Hopkins, 2001; Macbeath, Schratz, Meuret, & Jakobsen, 2000). One needs to conceive of self-evaluation and use it as a solution.

### *Deep Learning*

According to Fullan (2005), sustainability requires continuous improvement, adaptation, and collective problem solving in the face of complex challenges that keep arising. As Heifetz (2003) said, adaptive work "demands learning," "demands experimentation," and "difficult conversations" (p. 75). On this point, Kegan and Lahey (2001) and Perkins (2003) noted that deep learning is for all levels of the system. At schools and districts, it means collaborative cultures of inquiry that change the culture of learning organization away from dysfunctional and isolation toward the daily development of culture that can solve difficult or adaptive problems. Deep learning for the organization is an essential condition for fostering deep learning for students of the kind portrayed by Bereiter (2002), Claxton (2002), the National Research Council (1999), and others. It embraces a greater voice and role for students to shape their own learning and understanding.

Fullan (2005) also emphasized that learning from data and experience is not just for schools, but for all levels equally, district and government as well. For example:

> In reality, the system is truly transformed when its central bureaucracy is also transformed, itself becoming an example of the learning organization that it advocates for schools. (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 87)

### *Dual Commitment to Short-Term and Long-Term Results*

According to Fullan (2005), governments and schools could set inspirational targets, take action to get early results, and intervene in situations of poor performance,

all the while investing in the eight sustainability capacity-building elements. Over time, the system gets stronger, and fewer severe problems occur as the eight sustainability capacity-building elements are preempted by corrective action sooner rather than later.

Short-term results are also necessary to build trust with the public for longer-term investments. Barber (2004) argued that it is necessary to

> Create the virtuous circle where public education delivers results, the public gains confidence and is therefore willing to invest through taxation and, as a consequence, the system is able to improve further. It is for this reason that the long-term strategy requires short-term results. (p. 2)

This is the time to say that sustainability is resource hungry but in such a way that conserves, refocuses, and reduces waste, as well as yielding financial investment over time (Barber, 2004).

### *Cyclical Energizing*

Fullan (2005) noted that *sustain* comes from the Latin word *sustineo*, which means to keep up, but this meaning is misleading. Sustainability, on the contrary, is not linear. It is cyclical, for two fundamental reasons. First reason has to do with energy, and the second reason with periodic plateaus, where additional time and ingenuity are required for the next adaptive breakthrough. In this regard, Loehr and Schwartz (2003) argued that energy, not time, is the fundamental currency of high performance. They further explained that leaders need to observe energy levels for overuse and underuse. Sometimes collaborative cultures can become too intense and burn people out. What effective leaders need are combinations of full engagement with staff members, along with less rigorous activities that are linked with replenishment.

Cyclical energizing is a great new idea. In this regard, Fullan (2005) noted that researchers do not yet have the precision to know what cyclical energizing looks like in detail, but the concept needs to be a critical element of sustainability strategizing.

### The Long Lever of Leadership

Citing Archimedes's quotation "give me a lever long enough and I can change the world", Fullan (2005) noted that for sustainability, that lever is leadership – a certain kind of leadership that operates very differently than is the case in the present, that is valued differently by societies seeking greater sustainability, and that helps build other similar leaders to create a critical mass. This critical mass is the long lever of leadership. If a system is to be mobilized in the direction of sustainability, leadership at all levels must be the main engine. In their research, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) found seven characteristics of sustainable leadership:

- Depth. *Sustainable leadership matters*. We must preserve, protect, and promote in education what is itself sustaining as an enrichment of life. The first principle of sustainable leadership is leadership for learning and leadership for caring for and among others.
- Length. *Sustainable leadership lasts*. To make change last over time requires that reforms not be linked to one person's bright ideas. If you want continuity, you must distribute leadership to many.
- Breadth. *Sustainable leadership spreads*. Sustainable leadership is distributed leadership, which is both an accurate description of how much leadership is already exercised across a classroom, school, or school system and an ambition that encompasses what leadership can, more deliberately, become.
- Justice. *Sustainable leadership does no harm to and actively improves the surrounding environment*. Sustainable leadership is not self-centered; it is socially just.
- Diversity. *Sustainable leadership promotes cohesive diversity*. Sustainable leadership fosters and learns from diversity in teaching and learning and moves things forward by creating cohesion and net-working among its richly varied components.
- Resourcefulness. *Sustainable leadership develops and does not deplete material and human resources*. Sustainable leadership is prudent and resourceful leadership that wastes neither its money nor its people.

- Conservation. *Sustainable leadership honors and learns from the best of the past to create an even better future.* Amid the chaos of change, sustainable leadership is steadfast about preserving and renewing its long-standing purpose. (pp. 18-20)

Sustainable leadership takes initiatives urgently, learns from the past and from diversity, is flexible under pressure, waits tolerantly for results, and does not burn people out. The main work of these leaders is to help put into place the eight elements of sustainability..

## Conceptual Framework

Many educational researchers (Hamilton, 1998; Harber & Davies, 1997; Harber & Muthukrishna, 2000; Reynolds, 1998) raised the question, are the lists of characteristics constituting an effective school universally valid?  They concluded that judging the effectiveness of schools in developing countries, for example, may well involve substantially different criteria from those in developed countries, given their differing contextual realities. As a result, educational researchers are now devoting increasing attention to develop context-specific school improvement strategies.

The conceptual framework (see Figure 2.2) for this study has two main components:
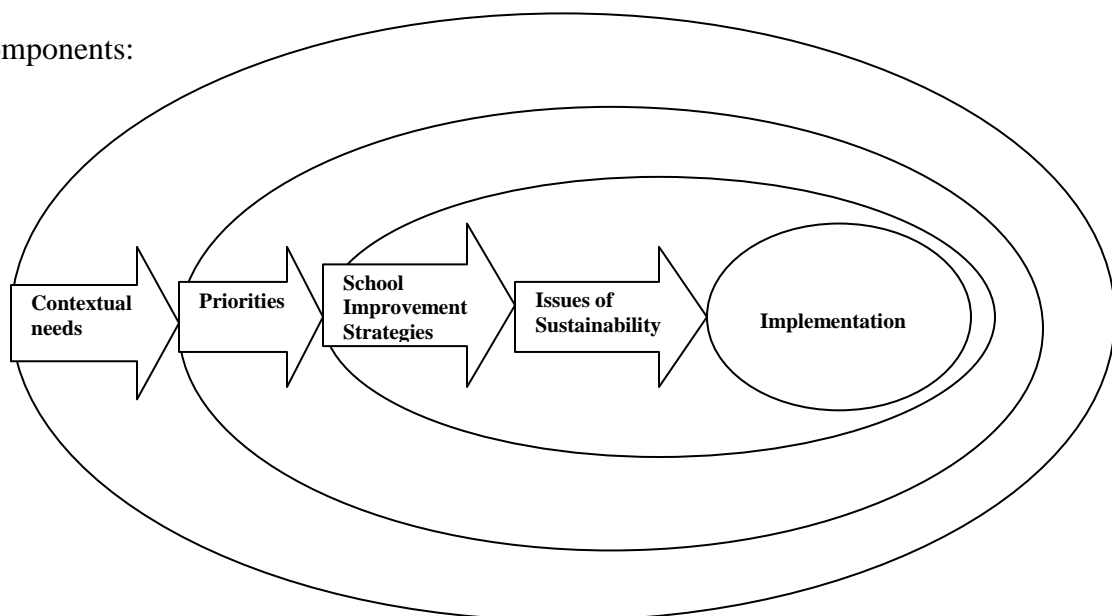


*Figure 2.2*. Conceptual Framework: Developing a School Improvement Strategy.

1.  *Identifying the improvement needs*. As referenced in the literature on effective
    schools, there is evidence of distinguishable characteristics and identifiable factors
    in a school deemed as effective. These factors (indicators or correlates) need to be
    context specific for Bangladeshi secondary schools.

2.  *Developing a suitable school improvement strategy*. Based on the needs assessment
    and priorities, a suitable school improvement strategy would be developed. As well,
    issues of sustainability and challenges of implementation would also be considered
    to identify the school improvement strategy for Bangladeshi secondary schools.

**Summary**

Reviewing the literature is an ongoing process of conceptualization that can not
be completed before data collection and analysis. Data that is gathered often suggest the
need to review previously unexamined literature of both substantive and theoretical
nature (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). It is productive to regard a review of the literature in
interactive terms. As such, this review has included relevant literature on change, school
effectiveness, school improvement, and issues of sustainability.

The review of the literature that I conducted in this chapter enables not only a
review of some topics related to this study to be made in a historical sense, but also to
provide an opportunity to become acquainted with new research, theories, and ideas that
may serve to restructure current thinking and practice related to school improvement and
change.

By examining the literature on school effectiveness and school improvement, I
have learned different characteristics of an effective school and specific improvements;
however, I still lack a clear understanding of contextual influences on educational change

and improvement practice. Some educational researchers are focusing much of their attention on developing context specific sustainable school improvement strategies. School improvers are advised to pay attention to the unique features of the individual school and build sustainable strategies for improvement on the basis of an audit of that particular context.

# CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to identify the major school improvement needs and related strategies for two Bangladeshi secondary public schools based upon the perceptions of in-school professionals, parents, and students.

Owens (1982) noted that the research design involves a critical decision making process. Researchers choose from two legitimate paradigms of systemic inquiry: a rationalistic paradigm, which embraces logical-positivistic views and deductive thinking, and a naturalistic paradigm, which embraces phenomenological views and inductive thinking to seek knowledge and understanding of social and organizational phenomena (Owens, 1982). According to Palys (1992), the most appropriate method depends on the nature of one's research objectives, the attributes of the phenomena under consideration, and the constraints of the situation. What is of paramount importance, is that the research perspective matches the purpose of the research conducted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b; Lather, 1991; Schulman, 1998).

In this chapter, I outline the paradigm of inquiry for the study, which addresses epistemological considerations of the research. I describe practical considerations, including research design and rationale, data collection and recording, trustworthiness, and data analysis. Finally, I examine the ethical considerations relating to the study.

## The Paradigm of Inquiry

Many writers, (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1999; Kuhn, 1970; and Licoln & Guba, 2000) have referred to the notion of paradigms to

describe the manner in which individuals and groups see their world. A paradigm is essentially a world view or ontology.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000a) described the main aspects in epistemological theorizing that influence different modes of research, categorizing them into traditional foundationalist or positivistic perspective, and new interpretive or qualitative perspective. White (1999) indicated that three modes of research, such as, explanatory, interpretive, and critical, are influenced by a corresponding philosophical position and logic, or epistemology. Explanatory research is influenced by the positivist tradition in the philosophy of science, interpretive research is mainly concerned with discovering meaning within a social phenomenon, and critical research deals with affecting political, social, or personal change.

White (1999) further explained that the explanatory approach is appropriate for the examination of a well-structured problem, in which there are "few decision makers or stakeholders, a limited number of alternatives, a well-defined problem, and agreed-on values to direct action" (p. 4). On the contrary, an interpretive approach is appropriate for the examination of ill-structured problems that are characterized by many decision makers or stakeholders, numerous possible alternatives, competing definitions of the problem, and conflicting values to guide decision making.

In this study, the participants' perceptions of school improvement needs and specific strategies or initiatives that are needed to improve school effectiveness for Bangladeshi secondary schools are the areas that deal primarily with ill-structured problems. According to this perspective, it was appropriate to employ interpretive

methods as the mode of inquiry. In the following section, I address the research problem and purpose of the study according to this interpretive orientation.

### Interpretive Naturalistic Framework

This study focused on identifying school improvement needs and related strategies for two Bangladeshi secondary public schools. According to my ontological and epistemological views, it seemed appropriate to adopt a naturalist paradigmatic orientation to this study.

Regarding naturalist paradigmatic orientation, Guba and Lincoln (1999) noted, "naturalists assume that there exist multiple realities which are, in the main, constructions existing in the minds of people…. [and] naturalist assumptions are more meaningful in studying human behavior" (p. 142). Unlike rationalistic orientation, that assumes that there exist a single, tangible reality fragmentable into independent variables and processes, any of which can be studied independently of the others, multiple realities are intangible and can be studied only in a holistic and idiosyncratic fashion. Guba and Lincoln also stated that,

> Naturalists do not deny the reality of the objects, events, or processes with which people interact, but suggest that it is the meaning given to or interpretations made of these objects, events or processes that constitute the arena of interest to investigators of social/behavioral phenomena. (p. 142)

The notion of multiple realities and social constructions of meaning or knowledge was fundamental to this study. Perceptions of different stakeholders on school improvement needs were of interest in this study. Meaning is of great concern to the qualitative enquirer because human participants do not live in neutral contexts; these people are largely influenced by events and their surroundings. Therefore, to arrive at the meaning people make of their world, interaction with them is necessary (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The constructivist paradigm advocates interaction as the primary channel of meaning making.

### *Constructivist Perspective*

Constructivist philosophy emphasizes the existence of varying standards of truth assertions and justification of knowledge, reflecting the belief that knowledge is the result of how the knower constructs reality from his/her experiences, interactions and perceptions (Hanley-Maxwell, Al Hano, & Skivington, 2007). In other words, constructivists hold the view that reality is constructed in the mind of the individual, rather than it being an exteriorly singular entity (Hansen, 2004). Constructivism assumes the relativism of social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Schwandt, 2000). According to Lincoln and Guba (2000), constructivism adopts a relativist ontology (relativism), a transactional epistemology, and a hermeneutic, dialectical methodology. Researchers in this paradigm are oriented to the production of reconstructed understandings of the social world.

According to Schwandt (1994), from the constructivist point of view, the researcher, along with the participants, creates a storyline, constantly checking whether his or her construction provides a fair reflection of the stories told by the participants. The enquirer is the co-author of the construction of the meaning. However, the meaning made by the participant is of major importance for the constructivist researchers (Schwandt, 1994). It provides the data that lead to a better understanding of events in time. It is from this orientation that I present the proposed methodological overview for this study. I do not attempt to develop a hypothesis by which the perceptions and experiences of in-

school professionals, parents, and students may be explained. Rather, the purpose is to develop insights through which the meaning of perceptions of participants under such circumstances may be more fully understood. To achieve this, the study design presents these perceptions as unique, ungeneralizable, and constructed through the dialectic interpretations, constructions and reconstructions of the participants, researcher, and reader (Van Manen, 1997; Von Glaserfeld, 1998) as a joint construction of meaning (Mishler, 1986). In the following section, I present the research design of the study.

## Research Design

Hatch (2002) and Creswell (1998) identified case studies as one of the qualitative research designs that interpretive/constructivist researchers utilize. These authors indicated that case studies are different from other types of qualitative studies (phenomenological studies, biographical studies, grounded theory, and ethnographical studies), because case studies are extensive verifications and intensive analyses and descriptions of a single unit or system bounded by space and time. According to Berg (2001), case study designs involve systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group, to permit the researcher to effectively understand how a single unit or system bounded by space and time operates and functions.

Stake (2000) advised, "case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied" (p. 435). By this observation, Stake implied that a researcher chooses a particular research design and method because of the intent of the study. In other words, the research purpose dictates the research design and method (McMillan & Wergin, 2002). My choice of the case study design was dictated by my intention to

identify the major school improvement needs and related strategies based upon the perceptions of stakeholders of two selected Bangladeshi high schools. According to Hancock and Algozzine (2006), after the researcher has identified the disciplinary orientation and design for the study, he/she then identifies the participants and the methods of data collection. In the following sections, I discuss the site selection and the research methods of the study.

### *Site Selection*

My role as a researcher within the constructivist framework was to construct interpretations against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, and language of the participants (Schwandt, 2000). According to McMillan (2000), "The participants … are selected because they have lived the experiences being investigated, are willing to share their thoughts about the experiences, and can articulate their conscience experiences" (p. 269). Regarding purposeful sampling, Gall, Borg, and Gall (2003), stated, "in purposeful sampling the goal is to select cases that are likely to be 'information rich' with respect to the purposes of the study" (p. 165). According to Merriam (1998), purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to find out, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which most can be learned. In other words, the researcher chooses specific cases to maximize the potential for learning from those cases (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Silverman, 2000; Stake, 2005). To gather thick and rich information from the respondents, I needed to ensure that the respondents were "influential, the prominent and the well informed people …selected … on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 83).

The participants in this study were in-school professionals, parents, and students from two selected secondary public schools of Rajshahi School Board. These schools were purposefully selected. In Bangladesh, there was no co-education system in secondary public schools, and that was why I chose one boys' school and one girls' school to provide a balanced representation.  Initially, I organized six Nominal Group Technique (NGT) meetings. For the purpose of NGT meetings, from each school one teacher group, one parent group, and one student group were organized. Each group was consisted of eight to 10 teachers, parents, or students. I requested each headmaster to choose participants for NGT meetings. The participant selection criteria were as follows: (a) all participants were volunteers; (b) participants would be aware of the education system of Bangladesh and their own school circumstances; (c) participant selection would consider cross-grade representation; and (d) the participants would have been involved with the schools for at least two years. After the completion of NGT meetings, one participant was selected from each NGT group for individual interview. Individual interview participants were chosen purposefully out of the focus group sample to provide a balanced representation of gender. I also interviewed two headmasters from the selected schools.

## Data Collection and Recording

Naturalistic researchers often use a multiplicity of data collection techniques and strategies. According to Stake (2000), the multimodal approach to data collection techniques can generate richer data and thicker description. Gathering information from a variety of sources and through various methods served as crystallization (Richardson, 1994), both broadening my understanding and enhancing the trustworthiness of the

findings. *This* is elaborated on later in this chapter. To provide a better understanding of stakeholders' perceptions on the school improvement needs and related strategies for Bangladeshi secondary public schools, I utilized a variety of qualitative methods of inquiry. In this study, I used document analysis, Nominal Group Technique (NGT), and individual interviews as data collection techniques. Following are the descriptions of each of the chosen methods.

### Document Analysis

Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that documents and records are singularly useful sources of information. Lincoln and Guba defined five reasons why documents and records are useful to naturalistic research: (a) normally they are available at a low-cost or free, (b) they are a stable source of information, (c) they are a rich source of information, and contextually relevant, (d) normally they are legally unassailable, and (e) they are, unlike human respondents, non-reactive (p. 276-277). Hodder's (2000) work supported Lincoln and Guba's (1985) assertions but added that documents and records may provide information that is not available in spoken form. Written text is an artifact and the writing down of words often allows language and meanings to be controlled more effectively and linked to strategies of codification (Hodder, 2000).

I used document analysis mainly for the purpose of the background and context of this study. For the purposes of this study, I reviewed Bangladeshi Government's educational policies and related documents. I also reviewed mission statements, policies, memos, training documents, newsletters, schedules, procedural handbooks, and other relevant documents that were available in each school.

*The Nominal Group Technique*

Initially, I organized six Nominal Group Technique (NGT) meetings. For the purpose of NGT meetings, for each school one teacher group, one parent group, and one student group were organized. Each group consisted of eight to 10 teachers, parents, or students. There were two purposes of these NGT meetings. The first was to identify school improvement needs and the second was to list the perceived priorities for strategies that would bring about sustainable improvement. In conducting the NGT meetings, I followed Delbecq, Van de Ven and Gustafson's (1982) guidelines. The guidelines for conducting an NGT meeting are described below:

*Step 1: silent generation of ideas in writing*. The first step in an NGT meeting was to have the group members write key ideas silently and independently. The benefits of this step were: providing adequate time for thinking and reflection; encouraging social facilitation (that is, the constructive tension created by observing other group members working hard); avoiding interruptions, and avoiding of undue focusing on a particular idea or train of thought; allowing sufficient time for search and recall; avoiding competition, status pressures, and conformity pressures; remaining problem-centered; and avoiding choosing between ideas prematurely. In this step, I asked group members to write down what they thought were the school improvement needs for each school.

*Step 2: round-robin recoding of ideas*. The second step of NGT was to record the ideas of group on a flip chart visible to the entire group. Round-robin recording means going around the table and asking for one idea from one member at a time. In this step, I wrote down an idea (school improvement need) of a group member on the flip chart and then proceeded to ask for one idea (school improvement need) from the next group

member in turn. The benefits of round-robin recording were: providing equal participation in the presentation of ideas; increasing problem-mindedness; promoting depersonalization – the separation of ideas from personalities; increasing the ability to deal with a large number of ideas; encouraging tolerance of conflicting ideas; and providing a written record and guide.

*Step 3: serial discussion for clarification*. The third step of NGT was to discuss each idea in turn. Serial discussion means taking each idea listed on the flip chart in order and allowing a short period of time for the discussion of each idea. In this step, I pointed to item 1 (school improvement need), read it out loud, and asked the group if there were any questions, statements of clarification, or statements of agreement or disagreement, which participants would like to make about the item. I allowed for discussion, and then moved the group on to Item 2, Item 3, etc. The purpose of serial discussion was to enhance clarification, while minimizing influences based on verbal prominence or status.

*Step 4: preliminary vote on item importance*. The average NGT meeting generates over twelve items in each group during its idea-generation phase. Through serial discussion, group members come to understand the meaning of an item, the logic behind the item, and arguments for and against the importance of it. In some manner, however, the group must aggregate the judgments of individual members in order to determine the relative importance of individual items.

In this step, I administered the simplest and most often used voting procedure in NGT which was a rank-ordering. At first, I asked the group to select from the entire list of ideas on the flip chart five most important items and to write them on a separate card. After members had their set of priority cards, I had them rank-order the cards, one at a

time; and then I collected the cards and shuffled them, and recorded the vote on a flip

chart in front of the group.

        ***Step 5: discussion of the preliminary vote***. In this step, I invited group members

to discuss the preliminary vote as recorded on the flip chart tally. The purposes of the

discussion were to: examine inconsistent voting patterns; and provide the opportunity to

rediscuss items, which were perceived as receiving too many or too few votes.

        ***Step 6: final vote***. Step 6 was the final NGT step. This vote combined individual

judgments into a group decision. The final vote: a) determined the outcome of the

meeting; b) provided a sense of closure and accomplishment; and c) documented the

group judgment.

        I used the questions outlined in the NGT interview protocol (see Appendix G) in

NGT meetings. With participants' permission, I audio-taped each session. Transcripts

were generated from the audio recording of the NGT group discussion and translated

from Bangla into English by myself, a native Bangla speaker.

        Although one of the main purposes of NGT meetings was to avoid group

thinking, in NGT group meetings, suggestions or ideas were: (a) restricted by the number

of people, (b) confined by the amount of time devoted to it, and (c) not discussed in

details or in a meaningful way. Due to these limitations, after the completion of NGT

meetings, I selected one participant from each NGT group for an individual interview.

Individual interview participants were chosen purposefully out of the focus group sample

to provide a balanced representation of gender. I also interviewed two headmasters from

the selected schools. I used the data obtained from these NGT meetings as a guide for the

individual interviews to follow. The purpose of individual interviews was to identify

specific strategies needed to improve school effectiveness for each school. Therefore, in this study, I included individual, in-depth interviews as a third perspective in *crystallization* of the data.

## *Qualitative Interviews*

According to an epistemological perspective in this study, qualitative interviewing focuses on gaining a better "understanding by means of conversations [that have a structure and a purpose] with the human beings" (Kvale, 1996, p. 11). Kvale further explained that the interview becomes "the interchange of views between … persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (p. 4). According to Holstein and Gubrium (1995), the qualitative interview is a dynamic, meaning-making occasion where the actual circumstance of the construction is important. Similarly, Seidman (1998) stated that,

> As a method of inquiry, interviewing is most consistent with people's ability to make meaning through language. It affirms the individual without denigrating the possibility of community and collaboration. Finally, it is deeply satisfying to researchers who are interested in others' stories. (p. 7)

Qualitative interviewing is a versatile research tool that provides the advantage to enter the world of the interviewee (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

I employed *semistructured interviews* in this study because I agreed with Hancock and Algozzine (2006) and Hatch (2002) that semi-structured interviews are especially well-suited for case study research. Hancock and Algozzine explained that semi-structured interviewing involves the use of:

> Predetermined but flexibly worded questions, the answers to which provide tentative answers to the researcher's questions. In addition to posing predetermined questions, researchers using semistructured interviews ask follow-up questions designed to probe more deeply issues of interest to interviewees. In this manner, semistructured interviews invite interviewees to express themselves

openly and freely and to define the world from their own perspectives, not solely
from the perspective of the researcher. (p. 40)

The advantages of semi-structured interviewing are the flexibility for the interviewer and

interviewee and the use of follow up questions to explore topics in detail. In addition,

semi-structured interviewing seldom proceeds with the same questions posed to

participants, as interviewees are expected to answer questions based on their unique

experiences (Silverman, 2004). Semi-structured interviewing matched my research

intention and design because of the possibility of gathering in-depth data by the use of

flexible questioning.

*The interview process*. All interviews took place in the offices or in chosen places

of the participants, so as to provide the natural environment for the interviewee. Each

interview lasted between 50 to 90 minutes and was recorded on audiotape. Seidman

(1998) recommended 90 minutes for an interview, because "rather than seeming too long,

it's long enough to make [respondents] feel they are being taken seriously" (p. 14).

According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), in qualitative research the "researcher

becomes the main instrument as he or she observes, asks questions, and interacts with

research participants" (p. 6). Keeping this in mind, I did not necessarily follow the order

in which interview questions were arranged on paper. Each interviewee was given a

chance to ask or add anything he or she felt relevant to this research. All interviews were

audio recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Copies of the interview transcripts were sent to the participants for member

checking. Participants had the opportunity to add, modify, or delete any parts of their

transcripts before the data were analyzed and used in this research. Participants approved

the use of their transcripts data by signing a Transcript/Data Release Form. This

Transcript/Data release Form is included in Appendix F. This process of checking

provided an opportunity for selected participants to recall new facts or include new

perceptions that might aid in the researcher's interpretation.

## Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the overall quality of the research. According to Glesne

(1999), trustworthiness is achieved when results reflect as accurately as possible the

meanings described by the respondents. The work of the researcher is to reduce

misinterpretation of findings, by showing the audience the procedures employed and

whether they reflect the truth of what was researched (Merriam, 1988; Denzin & Lincoln,

2005a). Denzin and Lincoln also pointed out that trustworthiness does not happen

naturally, it depends on the thoroughness of the data gathering, and the care the

investigator exercised during the data collection, analysis, and interpretation of data while

ensuring that the understanding of participants has been preserved. Trustworthiness of

research can be established through such naturalistic criteria as credibility, transferability,

dependability, and conformability. These criteria along, with corresponding empirical

procedures, were used to affirm the trustworthiness of this study.

### *Credibility*

Denzin and Lincoln (2005a) noted that credibility is presented as a replacement for

the paradigmatic criterion of internal validity.  Guba and Lincoln (1999) also explained,

"Credibility is seen as a check on the isomorphism between the enquirer's data and

interpretations and the multiple realities in the minds of informants" (p. 147). It means

that instead of centering attention on a presumed real reality out there attention has

shifted to establishing the match between the created realities of participants and those

realities as represented by the researchers and ascribed to various stakeholders (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It entails the plausibility and fairness of the study. For the pragmatic purposes of this particular study, I established credibility through the use of two means: crystallization and member checking.

For many years, triangulation has been generally suggested as a process of establishing credibility of the study (Janesick, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 2000). However, the idea of *crystallization* (Janesick, 2000; Richardson, 1994) was offered as a better lens through which to establish credibility of the study. Richardson also pointed out that unlike a triangle, the crystal "combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach" (p. 522). What we see when we view a crystal, depends on how we view it, from which angle or perspective, and in which conditions (Janesick, 2000). Postmodern and constructionist in nature, crystallization allows elaboration of the findings, not affirmation of them. Within this study, document analysis constituted of one perspective. Similarly, NGT meetings and individual interviews provided a different perspective and aided in adding credibility to the study.

*Member checking*, as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), is the evaluation of analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions by those participants from whom the data were originally collected. In other words, Merriam (2002) described it as "taking data and interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (p. 31). Within the context of this study, I accomplished member checking through the use of NGT meetings and interview transcript release

forms (see Appendix F). Participants were encouraged to comment upon findings and define terms as their judgment and comfort permitted.

### *Transferability*

The second naturalistic criterion of trustworthiness is transferability. Transferability, which parallels external validity as conventionally conceived, is the extent to which results of one study are applicable to other situations, (Merriam, 1988; Seale, 1999). Transferability is found in the context-embeddedness of a study. Leininger (1985) noted that "It is the researcher's responsibility to establish whether this criterion can be met in a similar context while preserving the original findings from a study" (p. 107). Qualitative data are not generalizable in paradigmatic terms and the exploratory nature of this study precludes any claims of generalization or transferability to other contexts. Thick, rich, and profound descriptions of the socially-constructed meanings (Seidman, 1998) in this naturalistic study allow the readers to formulate their own interpretations and make personal judgments regarding transferability to other contexts.

### *Dependability*

The third criterion of trustworthiness is dependability. To replace reliability, Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggested dependability. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), dependability "is concerned with the stability of the data over time" (p. 242). They suggested that dependability can be achieved by stating the investigator's position, using multiple methods of data collection and analysis, and describing in detail how data was collected. Merriam (1998) also suggested the use of an *audit trail*. Dependability for this study was sought through these means. I stated my position as a researcher, used crystallization of multiple methods of data collection and analysis, and performed an

*audit trail* in the later stages of research analysis to ensure that all data were accounted for within its final presentation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I conducted an audit trail through the cataloguing of participant data, analysis, findings, interpretations, and conclusions in a researcher journal.

### *Confirmability*

According to Guba and Lincoln (1999), confirmability deals with the objectivity of a study in terms of its procedures, orientation, and methodology rather than the objectivity of the inquirer. They explained, "Confirmability shifts emphasis from certifiability of the enquirer to the confirmability of the data" (p. 147). Confirmability assesses the accuracy of the data rather than the objectivity of the inquirer (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). Leininger (1985) also noted that confirmability refers to "obtaining direct and often repeated affirmations of what the researchers have heard, seen, or experienced with respect to the phenomena under study" (p. 105). Guba (1981) noted that one way in which a naturalistic researcher can ensure the confirmability of his or her work is by practicing *reflexivity*. I developed a research journal and audit trail as ways of validating my interpretation of the data to the perceptions of respondents. I also conducted peer reviews. According to Merriam (1988), peer reviews refer to "discussions with colleagues regarding the process of study, the congruency of emerging findings with the raw data, and tentative interpretations" (p. 31). The methods for establishing trustworthiness overlapped in some cases to meet the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in this study.

*Piloting the Processes*

Gall, Borg, and Gall (2003) advised "You should carry out a thorough pilot test of the questionnaire before using it in your study. The pilot test should include a sample of individuals from the population from which you plan to draw your respondents" (p. 230). In this regard, Cone and Foster (1999) also stated, "pilot work is important because what you plan to do may look good on paper but not work very well when you actually try it out with real subjects" (p. 201). Consistent with this advice, after designing the instruments, I piloted them with a group of Bangladeshi graduate students who were studying at the University of Saskatchewan. As a result of the pilot, necessary changes and adjustments were made.

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis can be defined as a process of giving meaning to findings obtained from data collection in the study. As Berg (2001) stated, although analysis is the most difficult aspect of any qualitative research project, it is also the most creative. Because of this creative component, it is impossible to establish a complete step-by-step operational procedure that will consistently result in qualitative data analysis. Hatch (2002) conceptualized general data analysis process as asking questions of data, because asking the right questions lead to the right interpretation of data. According to Hatch,

> Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison, and pattern finding. It involves … "mindwork". (p. 148)

It can be inferred from Hatch's words that data are replete with information and it is by systematically and carefully treating data and asking the right questions that information is discovered. In this study, qualitative data analysis was an inductive process "of inferring themes and patterns from examination of data" (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

The data analysis process also requires a balance of description and interpretation (Patton, 1990, as cited in Janesick, 2000). The analysis process requires careful thought, reflection, examination, and time from the researcher in order to gain understanding and meaning that is respectful of and does justice to the participants who were honest and open enough to share their thoughts, feelings, and worries. Through these procedures, I tried to balance description and interpretation of the data for the analysis process.

Data analysis can be accomplished step by step. In this regard, Merriam (1988) recommended that the first step is to read the material collected many times to familiarize oneself with the data and be able to hear and feel what the data have to offer. In the second stage the researcher inspects the data for patterns and themes. The goals are to identify data categories. Here the researcher will index, code, and classify the data to reflect on the research questions. Coding is very important for the qualitative data analysis (Glesne, 1999). Coding is grouping the responses into categories of similar themes, concepts, or ideas. Coding requires the researcher to analyze the text in the context of categories and "forces you to look at each detail, each quote, to see what it adds to your understanding" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 251). Finally, the researcher will use the themes to explain the study clearly and meaningfully. Effective and constructive recommendations, implications, and conclusions will be drawn from the analyzed, reflected, interpreted data.

Consistent with these recommendations, I analyzed the data in three phases. First, I reviewed and analyzed the data collected from document analysis. I coded the data and used the emerging issues as a supplementary guide for NGT meeting and interview questions. Second, I transcribed the audio recordings of the NGT group discussions. The NGT meetings transcripts were coded, indexed, and classified in order to find patterns and themes in the data (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The emergent themes and categories partly prompted individual interview questions. And finally, all audio records of participant interviews were transcribed and broken into manageable pieces of data based upon themes or trends that inductively emerged through a process of repeated reading, listening, and reviewing by the researcher. Similar or repetitive topics represented themes, which were coded. What emerged from these approaches to document and transcript analysis was a collection of important data pieces. All data were later translated from Bangla into English.

## Ethical Considerations

As the nature of this study demands interaction with human subjects in the information gathering process, the necessity to consider appropriate ethical procedures can not be overlooked. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) advised researchers to consider the effects of the participation in case study research during the planning and throughout the duration of the study. Two issues dominate traditional official guidelines of ethics in studies with *human subjects*: informed consent and the protection of participants from harm. These guidelines ensure that:

- Informants enter research projects voluntarily, understanding the nature of the study and the dangers and obligations that are involved.
- Informants are not exposed to risks that are greater than the gains they might derive. (Bogdan and Biklen, p. 48)

In this study, I followed ethical guidelines to ensure that all the participants of the study were treated with respect and consideration. Before proceeding with data collection and analysis, approval was sought from the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Sciences Research Ethics Board.

Permission was also obtained from the administrative personnel of the participating schools in Bangladesh. The participants were informed of the nature and procedures of the study. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Every effort was made to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, including removal of names and details from quotes and descriptions that might reveal the identity of an individual, and by using pseudonyms when quoting the participants' statements. Because some of the data were collected using NGT meetings, my ability, as a researcher, to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of data was limited. NGT group meetings participants were informed that there were limits to which the researcher could ensure the confidentiality of the information shared in focus groups. As a condition of participation, participants signed a consent form acknowledging responsibility and agreement to protect the integrity and confidentiality of what others in the group had said during the NGT meetings. After the completion of the NGT meetings and interviews, participants were given opportunity to review their responses and to make any changes to their statements in the transcripts.

## Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the research design of the study. This study identified school improvement needs and related strategies for two

Bangladeshi secondary public schools based upon the perceptions of in-school professionals, parents, and students. These areas dealt primarily with ill-structured problems, characterized by many decision makers or stakeholders, numerous possible alternatives, competing definitions of the problem, and conflicting values to guide decision making. Therefore, it was appropriate to adopt a naturalistic paradigm orientation to this study. To implement the study, I employed the constructivist/interpretive paradigm with qualitative case study as my research design.

In this study, I utilized document analysis, NGT meetings, and individual semi-structured interviews as the data collection techniques. I reviewed and analyzed Bangladeshi Government's educational policies and related documents. I also reviewed and analyzed mission statements, policies, memos, training documents, newsletters, schedules, procedural handbooks, and other relevant documents that were available in each school. Transcripts of all NGT group discussions and individual interviews were analyzed and important issues that emerged were grouped into themes. The use of these methods sought to provide the study with rich, descriptive, and generous amount of information required to identify school improvement needs and related strategies for Bangladeshi secondary public schools. The data analysis was an inductive process of inferring themes and patterns from examination of data.

To establish trustworthiness of the study, such naturalistic criteria as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability along with corresponding empirical procedures were addressed. Such techniques as crystallization of the data, member checking, audit trail, and peer review were used to affirm the trustworthiness of the study.

Furthermore, I followed the ethical guidelines to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the participants in this study.

**CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF DATA**

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze the major school improvement needs and related strategies for two Bangladeshi secondary public schools based upon the perceptions of in-school professionals, parents, and students. In this chapter a description of the two schools is provided, followed by a description of the data. The presentation begins with data related to school improvement needs as perceived by participants and an identification of specific strategies for sustainable school improvement. The final section of this chapter is a summary of the research data.

**The Schools**

The participants of this research were from two selected secondary publicly funded schools (hereinafter is referred to as School A and School B) located within the Chapai Nawabganj district, Bangladesh. In this section, I present a general description of the contexts and the physical environments of each school in turn.

*Context of the Schools/Communities*

Chapai Nawabganj is a district in Northern Bangladesh, and is a part of the Rajshahi Division. It became a separate district of Bangladesh in 1984. Chapai Nawabganj district with an area of 1744.33 square kilometers, is bounded by West Bengal of India on the north, south and west, and Rajshahi and Naogaon districts of Bangladesh on the east. The total population of this district is 1,419,534, the population density is 813.8 per square kilometers, and the literacy rate is 23.8%. This district contains land predominantly covered by plains with interspersed rivers. The entire district has fertile land and irrigation facilities. For the most part, the economy is dependent on

agriculture, but because of the existence of numerous rivers for economic reason, many people rely on fishing and its related activities. The main occupations of the people who live in this district fall in the areas of: agriculture (34.1%), commerce (16.6%), public service (4.0), agricultural laborer (24.3%), wage laborer (5.5%), construction (2.6%) and others (13.1%). (Banglapedia, 2007, retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nawabganj_District).

There are eight colleges and 11 high schools in the Chapai Nawabganj district. The two schools that are the focus of this study are two high schools among these 11 high schools, which are situated in the Nawabganj town, the largest town of Chapai Nawabganj district. The town has a population of 153,252; population density is 3313 per square kilometer. Literacy rate among the town people is 41.2%. Most of the people of this town are involved in small businesses and public or private services (Banglapedia, 2007, retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nawabganj_District).

In terms of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) results, both of these schools graduate a high proportion of their students (for example, 94.5% from School A, and 95.6% from School B in 2008). Because of this good reputation, most of the parents want to send their daughters/sons to any of these high schools upon completing elementary school. Once students are admitted to these high schools, their main focus becomes to achieve high scores on academic subjects in SSC examination. To achieve high scores, most of the students seek extra help from private coaching or tutoring before or after school. Private coaching or tutoring has long been a major phenomenon in Bangladesh. On average, 60% to 70% of students from all grades and from rich and middle class socioeconomic status seek extra help from private coaching or tutoring. Private coaching

or tutoring can be defined as tutoring in academic subjects (such as mathematics, social studies, science), and is provided by the tutors for financial gain, and is additional to the provision of mainstream schooling. It does not include extracurricular subjects such as soccer or drama, and it does not include extra lessons given by teachers or family members on a voluntary basis.

*School A:*

As stated in Chapter One, students in Bangladesh attend primary school for five years. Then they advance to high school from grade 6 to grade 10. At the end of the tenth grade, students must write the Matriculation/SSC Examination; students who successfully pass this examination go on to complete grade 11 and grade 12 in colleges. From the School Statistics (2007), I found that School A catered to students from grades 6 to 10, and was a secondary girls' school, established in 1951. Total land area of this two-storied school building was 1.25 acres. There were 48 classrooms, one library, one science laboratory, two staff rooms, one headmaster's office, and one playground in this school. At the time of the study, the total number of students enrolled in grade 6 to grade 10 was 512. Quantative data representing each grade highlights that in grade 6 there were 118 students, in grade 7 there were 102 students, in grade 8 there were 100 students, in grade 9 there were 101 students, and in grade 10 there were 100 students. In this school, students represented a variety of socioeconomic status groups with 15% students were from rich families, 54% were from middle class families, and 31% were from poor families. There were 22 teachers in this school (three Bangla literature teachers, four English literature teachers, seven social science teachers, one mathematics teacher, three science teachers, three religious studies teachers and one fine arts teacher). Most of the

teachers were local residents and had been teaching in the school for on average 12 to 15 years. In Bangladesh, on average, 12,000 to 15,000 Bangladeshi Taka[1] was the monthly salary of a public school teacher (Bangladesh Government, School Statistics, 2007).

*School B:*

From the School Statistics (2007), I found that School B catered to students from grades 6 to 10, and was a secondary boys' school, established in 1895. Total land area of this school building was 6.12 acres. There were 21 classrooms, one library, one science laboratory, one staff room, one headmaster's office, one computer laboratory and one playground in this school. At the time of the study, the total number of students enrolled in grade 6 to grade 10 was 628. Specifically, in grade 6 there were 136 students, in grade 7 there were 126 students, in grade 8 there were 136 students, in grade 9 there were 120 students, and in grade 10 there were 110 students. Students represented a variety of socioeconomic status groups with 17% students were from rich families, 50% students were from middle-class families and 33% students were from poor families. There were 21 teachers in this school (13 general teachers, two biology teachers, two mathematics teachers, two religious studies teachers, one agriculture teacher, and one physical instructor). Most of the teachers were local descendants and had been teaching in the school for on average 15 to 18 years. (Bangladesh Government, School Statistics, 2007).

**Nominal Group Participants**

I conducted three NGT meetings in each of the schools. The number of nominal group participants is shown in table 4.1.

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[1] 12,000 to 15,000 Bangladeshi Taka is equivalent to Canadian $200 to $250

Table 4.1

*Number and Categories of Participants from School A and School B*

| NGT Group | Number of participants School A | Number of participants School B |
|---|---|---|
| Teachers | 8 | 8 |
| Students | 12 | 12 |
| Parents | 8 | 11 |
| Total | 28 | 31 |

As illustrated in Table 4.1, in School A, the total number of participants for NGT meetings was 28; eight teachers, 12 students and eight parents were present in their respective NGT meetings. A total of 31 participants were present in School B's NGT meetings. Eight teachers, 12 students, and 11 parents were present.

**Data from NGT Process: School Improvement Needs for School A**

To reiterate the process described in Chapter 3, the first task I gave the participants of each NGT meeting was to identify the improvement needs of their school and write them down on pink paper. When they completed the task, using the round-robin recording system I recorded all their ideas. Following the listing of all items (in order of presentation), for the purpose of clarification, I read aloud the items in turn, and asked the group if there were any questions, statements of clarification or statements of agreement or disagreement which participants would like to make about each item. The discussion was designed to assist group members understand the meaning of the items, the logic behind the items, and arguments for and against the importance of each individual item.

Following the discussion, the participants listed the five most essential improvement needs according to their own view of the merit or importance from the entire list on a blue piece of paper. Once this task was completed, I assigned points 5 to 1 for each item in descending order for the purpose of a weighted score for each item. To determine the weight of an individual item, I added all the assigned points for that particular item, and counted the frequency of each item (Lists of all items and calculation tables for each group are attached in Appendix I).

Since, there were three NGT meetings, I summarized NGT data in three tables, and presented the items in descending order, in terms of weighted score and frequency.

*Teacher Group*

There were 8 teachers present in the School A's teachers' group meeting, and a total of 27 separate ideas were generated. Table 4.2, contains a representation of suggested improvement needs which emerged from the process, in terms of weighted score and frequency.

As listed in Table 4.2, according to the teachers in School A, the most essential school improvement need was *to provide effective leadership*. The weighted score of this item was 20 points. In the discussion and elaboration portion in the session, five teachers noted that to make this school more effective, the headmaster needs to be highly visible in the school and supportive of all staff members and students.

Table 4.2

*School Improvement Needs: Teacher group*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Provide effective leadership | 20 | 5 |
| 2. | Provide more specialized teachers and teacher training | 18 | 5 |
| 3. | Enhance teacher social value | 15 | 3 |
| 4. | Facilitate more parental involvement | 12 | 4 |
| 5. | Improve the relationships among teachers | 12 | 3 |
| 6. | Provide more teaching materials | 11 | 6 |
| 7. | Implement effective instructional methods | 8 | 3 |
| 8. | Decrease class size | 5 | 2 |
| 9. | Provide extra care for students who need extra help | 5 | 2 |
| 10. | Adopt a code-system for evaluating exam | 4 | 2 |
| 11. | Provide instructional supervision | 3 | 1 |
| 12. | Increase teacher salary | 3 | 1 |
| 13. | Arrange general knowledge classes | 2 | 1 |
| 14. | Facilitate student feedback with headmaster | 1 | 1 |
| 15. | Provide good textbooks | 1 | 1 |

*To provide more specialized teachers and teacher training* appeared as the second most essential item in this list. The weighted score of this item was 18 points. Five teachers noted this item as one of the most essential school improvement needs for the school. In the discussion, they explained that some of the teachers have B.A./B.Sc. or M.A./M.Sc degree but they do not have a B.Ed. or M.Ed. degree and also in the document analysis it was found that some of the teachers did not have a teaching degree. For example, in one school, out of 21 teachers seven teachers did not have a B.Ed. or

M.Ed. degree. In the discussion, it appeared that in Bangladesh, an individual teacher was responsible for teaching one subject area (such as, a mathematics teacher teaches mathematics in all grade levels, a history teacher teaches history in all grade levels). However, because of the shortage of specialized teachers, some teachers were asked to teach other courses, which were not within their specialized areas. To overcome this problem, teachers noted that *more specialized teachers and teacher training facilities were required* to improve the school.

The third most essential item of this list was *to enhance teacher social value*. The weighted score of this item was 15 points. Three teachers mentioned that in Bangladeshi society, the teaching profession is not a well-respected profession and when teachers are neither respected nor valued, they are not motivated to put their best efforts in teaching students. For this reason, these teachers believed that increasing teacher social value was one of the most essential needs to make this school (and schools in general) more effective.

Four teachers noted that to make this school more effective, there should be *more parental involvement*. The weighted score of this item was 12 points and this item was ranked fourth in the list. In the discussion, teachers mentioned that there is a belief among parents that once their daughters/sons are admitted to this school, the parents' responsibilities end. The teachers' response to this idea was that student progress is a shared responsibility– both parents and teachers need to work together. On a related theme, the fifth ranked idea for school improvement was *to improve the relationships among teachers*. The weighted score of this item was 12 points (ranked 5th because of lower frequency). Three teachers noted that to make the school more effective, all

teachers need to work together toward a common goal, which teachers identified as student success. The sixth item of this list was *to provide more teaching materials*; the weighted score of this item was 11 points. Six teachers noted that except for textbooks, they did not have any other teaching materials (e.g., computer, projector, manipulatives, etc.) that could enhance teaching and learning.

Other suggested (though lower ranked) teacher-perceived school improvement needs for this school were: *implement effective instructional methods*, *decrease class size*, *provide extra care for students who need extra help*, *adopt a code-system for evaluating exam papers*, *provide instructional supervision* (on this point, teachers noted that instructional supervision did not take place regularly), *increase teacher salary*, *arrange general knowledge classes*, *provide good textbooks,* and *facilitate student feedback with headmaster* (on this point, teachers said that the headmaster should arrange regular meetings with students, where students would get the opportunity to provide some feedback ).

### *Student Group*

There were 12 students present in the School A's students' group meeting and a total of 26 separate ideas were generated. In Table 4.3, I presented the items in descending order, in terms of weighted score and frequency.

Table 4.3

*School Improvement Needs: Student group*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Implement effective instructional methods | 29 | 9 |
| 2. | Provide fair treatment to all students | 23 | 6 |
| 3. | Adopt a code-system for evaluating exam papers | 20 | 6 |
| 4. | Provide more computer facilities | 19 | 7 |
| 5. | Decrease class size | 19 | 5 |
| 6. | Ensure strict and consistent discipline | 11 | 3 |
| 7. | Review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance | 8 | 2 |
| 8. | Improve the relationships among teachers | 8 | 2 |
| 9. | Listen to students' voices | 7 | 3 |
| 10. | Introduce general knowledge classes | 7 | 2 |
| 11. | Decorate classrooms with educational posters, maps, charts, or students' work | 4 | 2 |
| 12. | Arrange writing classes for students | 4 | 2 |
| 13. | Provide a well developed library | 4 | 2 |
| 14. | Provide effective and timely feedback | 4 | 1 |
| 15. | Arrange study tours for students | 3 | 2 |
| 16. | Provide more extracurricular activities | 3 | 1 |
| 17. | Provide more laboratory classes | 3 | 1 |
| 18. | Introduce weekly exams | 2 | 1 |
| 19. | Improve the school culture | 1 | 1 |
| 20. | Provide good textbooks | 1 | 1 |

As listed in Table 4.3, according to the students of the School A, the most essential improvement need was *to implement effective instructional methods*. The weighted score of this item was 29 points. Nine students noted that to improve their school, their teachers should adopt more engaging and effective teaching strategies. The

second most essential need of this list was *to provide fair treatment to all students*. The weighted score of this item was 23 points. Six students indicated that their teachers were not impartial in treating students and they believed that some teachers showed favoritism. These students thought that, as one means to address the above issue, and to improve the school culture, all teachers should provide fair treatment to all students. Six students thought that to make the school more effective and to avoid teacher favoritism, there was a need *to adopt a code-system for evaluating exam papers*. The weighted score of this item was 20 points and this item was ranked third in the list. In the discussion, students mentioned that some teachers show favoritism, and because of the favoritism other students were judged impartially in the exam papers and given lower mark than that of the teachers' favorite students.

In this group, seven students noted that in order to improve the school, *more computer facilities should be provided*. The weighted score of this item was 19 points, and this item was ranked fourth in the list. In the discussion, students mentioned that in their school, they had only six computers. Only a few grade 9 and grade 10 students who take computer as an elective course had the opportunity to enroll for computer class. In this school, students are required to choose one elective course, that being either Higher Mathematics, Biology, or Computer. Five students indicated that to improve this school, class size needs to be *decreased*. The weighted score of this item was 19 points, and this item was ranked fifth in the list (ranked 5th because of lower frequency of mention). In the discussion, they mentioned that for each grade level they have two sections with an average of 50 to 60 students in each.

Three students noted that to help this school progress, *school discipline needs to be strict and consistent*. The weighted score of this item was 11 and this item was ranked sixth in the list. The students explained that, because of teachers' favoritism all students were not treated equally. Two students indicated that to improve this school, there was a need *to review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance*. The weighted score of this item was 8 and this item was ranked seventh in the list. In the students' group discussion, they noted that the same curriculum was being followed for many years, and most of the topics were even not relevant to the current issues.

According to the Table 4.3, other suggested (though lower ranked) student-perceived school improvement needs for this school were to: *improve relationships among teachers, listen to students' voices* (on this point, students noted that they did not have a say in the decisions affecting them), *introduce general knowledge classes*, *provide effective and timely feedback to students on their work* (students said that some of the teachers took  an inordinately long time to correct the exam papers and that some of the teachers just gave a letter grade or marks on the exam paper but did not provide any formative feedback), *decorate classrooms with educational posters* (in the group discussion, students mentioned that there should be some maps, charts, students' work, or motivational posters on the walls of the classrooms), and *introduce writing classes for students*.

### Parent Group

There were eight parents present in the parents' group meeting for School A, and a total of 22 separate ideas were generated. In Table 4.4, the items are presented in descending order, in terms of weighted score and frequency.

Table 4.4

*School Improvement Needs: Parent group*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching | 22 | 5 |
| 2. | Provide more specialized teachers and teacher training | 20 | 6 |
| 3. | Provide  fair treatment to all students | 17 | 4 |
| 4. | Decrease class size | 12 | 4 |
| 5. | Provide more computer facilities | 11 | 5 |
| 6. | Improve the relationships among teachers | 9 | 4 |
| 7. | Increase teacher salary | 9 | 3 |
| 8. | Implement effective  instructional methods | 6 | 2 |
| 9. | Stop frequently changing textbooks | 4 | 1 |
| 10. | Provide more  extracurricular activities | 3 | 2 |
| 11. | Provide effective and timely feedback to students on their work | 3 | 1 |
| 13. |  Review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance | 1 | 1 |
| 14. | Arrange general knowledge classes | 1 | 1 |

As listed in Table 4.4, according to the parents of the School A, the most highly-ranked improvement need was *to address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching*. The weighted score of this item was 22 points. Five parents recorded this need on their lists. In the group discussion, they explained that although private tutoring or coaching helps to improve student learning, it has negative sides as well. For example, it puts pressure on students and sometimes tutors manipulate students. They further noted that manipulation is especially common in situations where mainstream teachers provide paid supplementary tutoring for their own mainstream pupils after school hours. Participants noted that in the worst cases, unethical situations arise in which the teachers teach only

half the curriculum during the school day and then require their pupils to pay for the other half during private lessons.

The second most highly prioritized item of this list was *to provide more specialized teachers and teacher training* and the weighted score of this item was 20. In the group discussion, parents noted that this school has a shortage of specialized teachers. Because of this shortage, sometimes teachers are asked to teach some subject areas that are not their specialized areas. In this process, students are deprived of specialized knowledge and expertise. In this case, to improve the school, they suggested providing more specialized teachers and teacher training. Four parents noted that to make this school more effective, there was a need *to provide fair treatment to all students*. The weighted score of this item was 17 points, and this item was ranked third in the list. Parents disapproved of the fact that some teachers favored certain students. In the group discussion, parents mentioned that because of favoritism, some students were not judged fairly in the exam papers and given lower mark than that of the teachers' favorite students.

The fourth item in this list was *to decrease class size*. The weighted score of this item was 12 points. Four parents noted that to make this school more effective, the number of students in each class should be reduced. The fifth item of this list was *to provide more computer facilities*; the weighted score of this item was 11 points, and five parents identified this item as one of the most essential needs for improving their school. In the discussion, parents noted that computer education needs to be mandatory in the Bangladeshi secondary education system and a computer teacher should be appointed in every school.

*To improve the relationships among teachers* appeared as the sixth item in the list; the weighted score of this item was 9 points. Four parents noted this item as one of the most essential school improvement needs for this school. In the group discussion, parents explained that because of the prevalence of private tutoring or coaching, some teachers used back-stabbing or talking negatively about other teachers as one of the strategies to attract more students. As a result, relationships among teachers are not pleasant and not much collaboration takes place among teachers. Three parents noted that to make this school more effective, there is a need *for an increase to teacher salary*. The weighted score of this item was 9 points and this item was ranked seventh in the list. In the group discussion, parents noted that on average, 12,000 to 15,000 Bangladeshi Taka[2] is the monthly salary of a public school teacher, which is very low compared to other professionals.

Other suggested (though lower ranked) school improvement needs for this school, identified in Table 4.4, were: *more extracurricular activities* should be provided for the students, ensure that teachers *provide effective and timely feedback* to all students on their work, and students should be taught with more *relevant curriculum*.

### *A Cross Group Summary of Improvement Needs*

To determine the common improvement needs among stakeholder groups at School A, I combined the data of three NGT groups (teacher, student, and parent). To establish the weight of an individual item, I added the assigned points for that particular item, and recorded the frequency of mention for each item. These are presented in Table 4.5. In this table, I once again presented the items in descending order, in terms of weighted score and frequency.

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[2] 12,000 to 15,000 Bangladeshi Taka is equivalent to Canadian $200 to $250

Table 4.5

*A cross group summary of improvement needs at School A*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Frequency of mention per Group | | | Frequency (Total) | Weighted Score (Combined) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Teacher | Student | Parent | | |
| 1. | Implement effective instructional methods | 3 | 9 | 2 | 14 | 43 |
| 2. | Provide fair treatment to all students | - | 6 | 4 | 10 | 40 |
| 3. | Decrease class size | 2 | 5 | 4 | 11 | 36 |
| 4. | Provide more computer facilities | - | 7 | 5 | 12 | 30 |
| 5. | Improve the relationships among teachers | 3 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 29 |
| 6. | Provide more specialized teachers and teacher training | 3 | - | 4 | 7 | 28 |
| 7. | Adopt a code-system for evaluating exam papers | 2 | 6 | - | 8 | 24 |
| 8. | Address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching | - | - | 5 | 5 | 22 |
| 9. | Provide effective leadership | 5 | - | - | 5 | 20 |
| 10. | Enhance teacher social value | - | - | 3 | 3 | 15 |

As listed in Table 4.5, according to the teachers, students, and parents of the

School A, the most essential improvement need was *to implement effective instructional*

*methods*. The weighted score of this item was 43 points. Fourteen participants (three

teachers, nine students, and two parents) of this school recorded on their lists that to make

the school more effective, there was a need to implement more effective and engaging

instructional methods.

The second most essential item of the list was *to provide fair treatment to all*

*students* and the weighted score of this item was 40 points. A total of 10 participants (six

students and four parents) noted this item on their lists as one of the most essential needs

to improve the school. Eleven participants (two teachers, five students and four teachers)

pointed out that to make this school more effective, there was a perceived need *to*

*decrease class size*, the weighted score of this item was 36 points and this item was ranked third in the list.

The fourth item in this list was *to provide more computer facilities*; the weighted score of this item was 30 points. Twelve participants (seven students and five parents) noted that to make this school more effective, students should be provided with more computer facilities. The fifth item of this list was *to improve the relationships among teachers*; the weighted score of this item was also 29 points, and nine participants (three teachers, two students, and four parents) identified this item as one of the most essential needs for improving their school. *To provide more specialized teachers and teacher training* appeared as the sixth item in this list; the weighted score of this item was 28 points. Seven participants (three teachers and four parents) noted this item as one of the most essential school improvement needs for this school.

Eight participants (two teachers and six students) noted that to make this school more effective, there was a need *to adopt a code-system for evaluating exam papers*; the weighted score of this item was 24 points, and this item was ranked seventh in the list. *To address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching* appeared as the eighth item in this list; the weighted score of this item was 22 points. Five participants (only five parents) noted this item as one of the most essential school improvement needs for the school. The ninth and the 10th items of this school improvement list were *to provide effective leadership* (only five teachers noted this item) and *to enhance teacher social value* (only three parents recorded this item).

**Strategies for Sustainable School Improvement: School A**

After the completion of NGT meetings, individual interviews were held with one participant randomly selected from each NGT group of School A. I also interviewed the headmaster of this school. Participants were asked to describe their perceptions of sustainable school improvement, specific strategies for sustainable school improvement, and challenges or barriers to implementing key improvement strategies.

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews throughout November–December, 2008. For the individual interviews, for the most part, I followed the questions as outlined in Appendix G.  However, because different school improvement needs emerged from each NGT group, during the individual interview with a teacher, a student, and a parent, I based some questions on the school improvement needs that their group identified during their NGT discussion.  Each participant was provided with the opportunity to review the transcripts and make any changes he/she considered necessary. The data from the approved transcripts were examined using the interpretational approach outlined in Chapter Three. From this analysis, several themes emerged.  Participants are distinguished by the pseudonyms Headmaster A, Teacher A, Parent A, and Student A.

The presentation of the interview data begins with an examination of the participants' understanding of sustainable school improvement.  It then continues with recurring themes about the specific strategies for sustainable school improvement, challenges or barriers to implementing key improvement strategies, and how these challenges or barriers might be overcome.

The first part of this section presents a description of the participants. The next part consists of an analysis of the research data and the final part of this section consists of a summary of the research data.

## Interview Participants

Headmaster A was the principal of School A. She had been teaching in this school for 30 years, but this was her fourth year as headmaster in this school; apart from being a classroom teacher, she had been involved in some extracurricular activities. She was just over 50 years old.

Teacher A was an English teacher. He had been teaching for 11 years, and since 2000, he had been in this school. In addition to teaching English Language Arts, Teacher A had been involved in coaching different sporting activities. At the time of the study, he was approximately 40 years old.

Parent A was a social worker. He was a respected and well-known person in the community because of the services he provided. He has been involved in many different social and community development activities. He was just over 60 years old, and had been living in this community throughout his life.

Student A was a grade 10 student. She had been studying in this school for 5 years. She was 15 years old. She was a member of Girls' Guide group and leader of the school debate team. Her father was involved in public service and she was not a local resident.

## Participants' Perceptions on Sustainable School Improvement

Regarding the perception of sustainable school improvement, participants of this school had different views. According to the Headmaster A, sustainable school

improvement was, "The development of the school without the help of other foreign methods and without the dependency on the government" (p. 1). She particularly emphasized considering contextual applicability before implementing any methods that other countries were using for their school improvement. However, Teacher A viewed sustainable school improvement being dependent on the enhancement of professionalism. He said:

> Sustainable school improvement is the process of coordination of encouraging everybody towards education, selecting proper persons for teaching profession, and enhancing professionalism in the schooling system. For sustainable school improvement, I think, selecting proper persons (those who are really interested in teaching) for teaching profession is the most important aspect. (p. 8)

In this comment, Teacher A emphasized enhancing professionalism as the key factor towards sustainable school improvement. Regarding sustainable school improvement, Parent A mentioned, "Sustainable school improvement is the holistic development of our schooling system" (p. 15). He further explained that sustainable school improvement is not only focusing on students' high academic achievement; rather, it is the improvement of the whole schooling system and people who are involved in the system. However, Student A viewed sustainable school improvement as the initiatives that were lasting for a long time. In this regard, she expressed:

> To me sustainable school improvement is the improvement that lasts long. I have been in this school for 5 years. At the beginning of each school year, our headmaster and teachers take some new initiatives; but I didn't see them to be lasting for long time. However, if initiatives come from our government, then they last for long time. (p. 22)

This comment implies that Student A viewed sustainability in terms of longevity.

Though the participants' perceptions regarding sustainable school improvement differed, they acknowledged that to achieve sustainable school improvement

administrators, teachers, parents, and students need to work collaboratively. In this regard, Headmaster A noted, "All teachers, parents, students, and administrators need to work collaboratively towards sustainable development" (p. 1). She further explained that sincerity, commitment, sacrifice, positive attitude, and devotion are the main factors in order to ensure sustainable development. In the same vein, Parent A mentioned, "In a school, sustainable improvement is only possible if teachers, students, parents, and school administrators work collaboratively" (p. 15). He added that, in fact, you need a good coordination of these stakeholders to achieve sustainable school improvement. In this regard, Teacher A also said that the role of the students, teachers, and guardians is the determining factor for sustainable improvement. Only Student A noted that the source of improvement initiatives is the main determining factor towards sustainability. However, she further indicated that if some initiatives are well accepted by all stakeholders, then there is a good chance that those initiatives will be sustainable.

In summary, participants at this school viewed sustainable school improvement as the development of the school *without the help of other foreign methods*, the process of *enhancing professionalism* in the schooling system, the *holistic development* of the schooling system, and the improvement that *lasts over a long time*. Though the participants' notions on sustainable school improvement differed, most of the participants acknowledged that to achieve sustainable school improvement administrators, teachers, parents and students need to *work collaboratively*.

### From Improvement Need to Improvement Strategy

I asked participants, "In your opinion, what specific strategies or initiatives are needed to improve effectiveness for your school?" In the response to my question, all of

the participants first reiterated the improvement needs that emerged from their NGT

discussions, and then they talked about some of the possible strategies to meet those

improvement needs. This process may appear to be a repeat of the former process, but it

was employed in order to have participants recall their NGT discussions as a basis for

discussion of strategies. The main intention of this stage was the elaboration of strategies.

Participants in this study expressed their views and experiences from different

perspectives. Specifically they explained how to: implement effective instructional

methods, decrease class size, provide more resources and computer facilities, enhance

collaboration among teachers, provide more specialized teachers and teacher training,

address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching, enhance teacher social value,

increase teacher salary, increase parental involvement, and review current curriculum to

ensure ongoing relevance and provide more extracurricular activities.

### *Implementing Effective Instructional Methods*

The majority of the participants of this school acknowledged that to improve their

school, there was a need to implement effective instructional methods. Participants also

suggested different strategies to implement effective instructional methods. On this point,

Student A noted that teachers need to make classroom teaching more engaging by

adopting varied teaching methods. She further added that to avoid boring and

monotonous classrooms, teachers should use different technological supports as, for

example, computers, televisions, and projectors. In this regard, Headmaster A suggested

that teacher training facilities need to be updated so that new teachers can be trained with

more effective and enjoyable teaching methods.

On a related theme, Teacher A noted that school administration should, "Increase the length of each class period, reduce to the number of classes, and increase the lunch hour for teachers" (p. 11). He insisted that if teachers get good rest during lunch hour, they would be more effective in classroom teaching. Furthermore, to enhance teacher efficiency, he suggested there should be frequent instructional supervision by the headmaster. Teacher A explained:

> For improving our classroom teaching and ensure teacher efficiency, our headmaster should frequently visit our classroom teaching. She can also meet with students and ask their opinions or feedback about any particular teacher's teaching strategies. And later on, she can talk with that teacher to provide some feedback regarding his or her teaching. (p. 12)

In a similar vein, Parent A also mentioned about frequent instructional supervision by the administrators to ensure teacher professional growth; however, he emphasized more on *informal supervision* rather than formal supervision. He explained:

> To improve teacher efficiency, we need to arrange more informal classroom visits by school based administrators and informal school visits by district office administrators. If you make formal class visits or school visits then all teachers are prepared to show their best performances, but if it is informal then you can find them in their natural settings. (p. 21)

To make teaching and learning enjoyable and meaningful, Parent A also suggested arranging study tours for sightseeing, visiting museums, visiting historical places, or visiting different factories all of which can increase student knowledge and provide the opportunity to make connection between what they study in textbooks and real life experiences.

### *Decreasing Class Size*

In the NGT group discussions, decreasing class size appeared as one of the most essential improvement needs. In the individual interviews, participants mentioned that for

each grade level, they have two sections with an average of 50 to 60 students in each. To

reduce class size, both Teacher A and Parent A suggested similar strategies, which

included creating more classroom space or initiating a two shift approach to school hours.

They said:

>  First of all, we need to build new classrooms and divide our students into more
> groups or sections. Secondly, we can introduce a shift system. Now, our school is
> operated only in one shift (day shift). To accommodate all students into a
> reasonable class size, we need to start two shifts: one in the morning and another
> one in the afternoon. (Teacher A, pp. 10–11)

> Strategically we can consider two options. The first option is to start double shifts,
> one in the morning and another one in the afternoon. The second option is
> building more classrooms upwards, as we don't have space left sideways. (Parent
> A, p. 20)

In a similar view, Headmaster A also noted that to reduce the number of students in each

class, "We need to start a shift system: first shift in the morning and second shift in the

afternoon" (p. 6). In this regard, Student A suggested that instead of two sections, we

need to divide all students into three or four sections.

### *Providing More Resources and Computer Facilities*

Most of the participants acknowledged that to improve the effectiveness of the

school, there was a great need to provide more resource materials and computer facilities.

On this point, Student A explained that only a few grade 9 and grade 10 students who

take computer as an elective course had the opportunity to enroll for computer class. In

this school, students are required to choose one elective course, that being either Higher

Mathematics, Biology, or Computer. She insisted that government should provide more

computer facilities in schools and make computer education as a required course for all

students.  Regarding the need of providing more resources and computer facilities,

Headmaster A restated:

> We have a library, but we don't have a librarian; we have girls' guide course, but we don't have a girls' guide instructor. In our school, we don't have support staff. We don't have an administrative assistant. We have only a janitor. Along with improvement to our school environment, improving our laboratory facilities is very much needed. For our lab classes, we don't have any instructor. (pp. 2-3)

She further mentioned that computer education should be compulsory in the Bangladeshi education system and a computer teacher should be appointed in every school. On these issues, she concluded, "We have no power over these issues; only the government can solve these problems" (p. 3). Similarly, Teacher A noted that in order to improve the effectiveness, this school required more teaching resources and teaching-aids (for example, more resource books, computers, televisions, videos, music system, and projectors). He added, "As we do not have technological supports, our teaching is always lecture type, and it is not student-focused" (p. 11). He suggested that government should budget more funding for the education sector and some of the NGOs that are involved with Bangladeshi education could also provide some funding to different schools to buy computers, projectors, and sound systems.

### *Enhancing Collaboration among Teachers*

All participants of this school acknowledged that the misuses of private tutoring or coaching should be addressed in order to enhance collaboration among teachers and to provide fair treatment to all students. In this regard, Student A mentioned that some teachers treat some of the students unfairly and give students lower marks because they do not partake in private tutoring or coaching. She explained:

> Some teachers self-praise about how effective they are as private tutors and how some of the students who take private lessons from them are successful in achieving high marks. Sometimes, these teachers even talk negatively about other teachers; they do that intentionally, so that students do not take private lessons from those teachers. (pp. 22–23)

Student A further stated that some teachers who were involved in private tutoring or coaching show favoritism to the students who take private lessons from them; because of the favoritism, other students were not judged fairly in the exam papers and given lower mark than that of the teachers' favorite students. Teacher A noted private tutoring as a *source of the devil*, he explained:

> In our school, collaboration among teachers is very limited. The main reason behind this is the private tutoring or coaching. For some teachers, private tutoring or coaching is a source of extra income; but to me, private tutoring or coaching is a source of devils. Let me explain to you the real picture: teachers who are involved in providing private tutoring always try to attract more students, so that they get more students in their private tutoring. For these teachers, back stabbing or talking bad about other teachers is one of the strategies to attract more students. Due to this fact, relationship among teachers is not pleasant and not much collaboration takes place among us. Furthermore, as some teachers are back stabbing or telling something bad about other teachers to students, the relationship between teachers and students also deteriorates, and teacher lose respect. (pp. 9–10)

This observation exemplifies the negative effects of private tutoring or coaching and how it affects the relationships among teachers. In a similar vein, Parent A and Headmaster A observed that the lack of collaboration among teachers was the result of the misuses of private tutoring or coaching. They explained:

> Private tutoring or coaching is prevalent among our students. Some teachers are involved in providing private tutoring or coaching for earning extra money. As they are providing private tutoring, they are not serious in their class teaching. Just to attract more students, these teachers also slander or say something bad about other teachers, which is very bad, because it hampers student-teacher relationship (teacher lose their respect). Teachers need to collaborate with each other. (Parent A, p. 17)

> Teachers should stop back stabbing (slandering other teachers); some teachers mainly do this to show their own credibility and intellectuality, so that more students come to them for private tutoring. Parents also don't need to believe all the things that students say. They need to come to school and verify the facts with teachers or headmaster. Teachers need to consider all the students as their own sons or daughter. (Headmaster A, p. 5)

These explanations imply that one of the major impediments to collaboration was the issue of private tutoring and related questionable practices. Participants believed that in order to enhance the collaboration among teachers and to ensure fair treatment to all students, the misuses of private tutoring or coaching should be addressed.

### *Providing More Specialized Teachers and Teachers Training*

Most of the participants acknowledged that to improve school effectiveness, they need more specialized teachers and more teacher training facilities. In this regard, Headmaster A criticized Bangladeshi Government's teacher recruiting policy and suggested to recruit more specialized teachers. She explained:

> There is a huge shortage of teachers. Because of this shortage, current teachers are having extra workload; they don't have any preparation time, and they become tired. In recruiting new teachers, our current government policy is that a teacher needs to teach all core subjects. I don't support this policy, because I think one teacher cannot be all rounded; it's not possible for one person to be specialized in all subjects. Due to this policy, our teaching and learning standards are falling behind; our students are passing the grades somehow, but they are not getting specialized knowledge, expertise, and skills to improve their own capacity. Government needs to provide more specialized teachers for all subjects; if government can do this, then our teachers' class load will be less, they will get some preparation time and some leisure hours. (pp. 1-2)

In this explanation, she implied that the government's teacher recruiting policy was not effective. Along with a change to teacher recruiting policy, she suggested that the government should recruit more specialized teachers to lower the teacher-student ratio. In terms of teacher training facilities, she also mentioned that government should provide more professional development facilities for teachers and administrators, for example arranging regular meetings for subject teachers and administrators from all the high schools of the district. Likewise, Teacher A said that one teacher cannot teach all core subjects. He commented:

> We have a shortage of specialized teachers. Because of this shortage, sometimes we are asked to teach some subject areas, which are not our specialized areas. In this process, our students are deprived of specialized knowledge and expertise. Our teachers also don't feel comfortable in teaching other subject areas, and they become bored. To solve this, our government needs to recruit more specialized teachers and distribute them equally in every school. (p. 10)

In this comment, Teacher A also emphasized that the government needs to recruit more specialized teachers. He further noted that school administrators should re-arrange teaching schedules to accommodate specialization. Regarding teacher training facilities, Teacher A stated that different teacher training and professional development programs provided by the government for the teachers were not effective. He further explained that training experiences could not be implemented in the classroom due to the large size of the classrooms and insufficient logistic facilities. Parent A also acknowledged that to improve the school effectiveness, the Bangladeshi government should employ more specialized teachers; however, with regard to teacher training facilities, he expressed a different view. He noted that if teachers were willing and sincere they could easily implement some of their training experiences, regardless of the limitations (such as, time constrains, or large class size) imposed upon them.  Laughing as he spoke, Parent A said:

> Bangladeshi government and different foreign NGOs (Non Government Organization) are providing different teacher training and professional development facilities. Teachers complain that these professional practices are not suitable in our context. The main reason is they show that they don't have enough time and resources to implement those practices in our classrooms. Yes, I agree with them to a certain extent, but still I think it also depends on individual; if some teachers are really interested, then obviously there will be some way to implement those practices in the classrooms. (p. 18-19)

In this comment, Parent A implied that Bangladeshi teachers had many opportunities to attend different professional development training but they were not serious and willing to put some efforts to implement new methods or approaches in their classes.

*Addressing the Misuses of Private Tutoring or Coaching*

All participants acknowledged that because the negative effects of private tutoring or coaching outweigh the positive outcomes, the misuses of private tutoring or coaching should be addressed. They offered some possible strategies to address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching. For example, Headmaster A noted that instead of coaching or private tutoring, school-based, one-to-one or group teaching can be emphasized. She further mentioned, "Our government needs to control private tutoring by imposing laws, as our neighboring country (India) has done it" (p. 4). In a similar light, Student A also stated that only the government can control private tutoring by imposing laws. However, Parent A noted that previously, the Bangladeshi Government had taken some steps to control private tutoring, but it did not work out well. He said that if all teachers taught each lesson sincerely and with great care then students would not need private tutoring or coaching. His proposed strategy to address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching was as follows:

> I think there is only one way to reduce the prevalence of private tutoring or coaching, which is more concentration or seriousness of individual teacher's class teaching. In other words, if all class teachers teach each lesson effectively and with great care, then students don't need to go for private tutoring or coaching. Teachers need to change their morality and recognize teaching as a noble responsibility. They need to change their mentality from believing that teaching is only a profession (way of earning money); rather, they need to consider teaching as both a passion and profession. (pp. 17–18)

In the above strategy, Parent A suggested to change teacher's morality and to recognize teaching as a noble responsibility. On this point, Teacher A expressed his concern about teacher salary. He noted:

> When some of our teachers are engaged in providing private tutoring or coaching, then some of their qualities like honesty and sincerity towards classroom teaching are curtailed. It degrades the moral of the teachers. Income level of the teachers

should be increased by ensuring them some kinds of part-time job in some private sectors or NGOs (Non Government Organizations). At the moment, university teachers are earning extra money by doing some part-time jobs in some private sectors or NGOs. If university teachers can do that then I think school teachers will also be able to do some of their jobs. (p. 8)

Teacher A emphasized to arrange supplemental income for the teachers in order to reduce the prevalence and misuses of private tutoring or coaching.

### *Enhancing Teacher Social Value*

From the NGT group discussions, the perception emerged that in Bangladeshi society, the teaching profession is not a well-respected profession and when teachers are neither respected nor valued, they are not motivated to put their best efforts toward teaching students. For this reason, participants of this school believe that enhancing teacher social value was one of the most essential needs to make this school more effective. In the individual interviews, participants identified some of the approaches that could enhance the social value Bangladeshi society places on teachers. On this point, Headmaster A noted that the lower salary structure and poor living conditions are the main reasons that our teachers are not valued and respected in the society. Hence to enhance society's perception of teachers, she suggested, "Government should increase teacher salary" (p. 2).

On this issue, Teacher A stated that first the teaching profession needs to be established as a noble and respected profession. In turn, those who are involved in this profession will be respected and valued. To make this happen, he suggested that the Bangladeshi Government should elevate the image of teaching profession. He noted:

> We need more social awareness and also government should take some steps to make the teaching profession more respected and rewarding. We have seen that our government has administered different campaigns on Family Planning, AIDS,

Tree Plantation, etc. I think government should also administer a campaign to make the teaching profession more respectable, rewarding, and attractive. (p. 14)

However, on this issue, Parent A was a little bit critical and advised promoting involvement in the wider community among teachers, as he commented:

[T]eachers are concerned about their social value. In my opinion, social value is something that you need to earn; it's not something that you can buy. To gain social value, you need to think the society as your own society; you need to follow societal norms and rules, and you also need to fulfill certain societal responsibilities. (p. 18)

In spite of being critical, he suggested that Bangladeshi government can take certain steps to enhance society's view of teachers. For example, teachers should be involved in various high official government functions, ceremonies, and meetings, so that others can see that teachers are also involved and valued. He further noted that school management, parents, and guardians are to be rational in dealing with teachers. He concluded that mutual respect is very much needed to enhance the dignity of the teachers.

### Increasing Teacher Salary

In the NGT group discussions, it emerged that teacher salaries in Bangladesh were very low compared to that of other professionals. In the individual interviews, headmaster, parent, and teacher acknowledged that teacher salaries need to be increased. On this point, Headmaster A suggested increasing teacher salary based on the relative cost of living and teacher performance. She said:

First of all government needs to increase teacher salary by considering the relative cost of living. Also, teacher salary can be increased by considering their teaching performance. I heard that government is trying to restructure teacher salary based on teacher performance. I am happy to say that I myself support this idea, because this will stimulate teacher efficiency. The second solution is that we can arrange after-school classroom coaching, where teachers can be engaged by helping weaker students, and because of this extra duty, teachers will be paid for their overtime. (p. 2)

Headmaster A's second strategy was consistent with her belief to alleviate the misuses of

private tutoring or coaching. She also emphasized the standard cost of living and teacher

performance as the basis upon which teacher salary should be increased. Parent A also

emphasized the cost of living but instead of teacher performance, he noted that teacher

academic qualifications should be the basis of salary increasing. Commenting on this

issue, Parent A said:

> I think our government needs to categorize the salary scale according to teacher academic qualifications, and also they need to consider the cost of living and set a salary scale for a teacher (four-member family unit). In our neighboring country, India, they followed this formula to set a teacher's salary, which is very reasonable; I think our government should use this formula to set our teacher salary. (p. 18)

In this comment, Parent A suggested that the Bangladeshi Government should follow

Indian Governmental policies pertaining to a teacher salary scale. Emphasizing teacher

accountability, Teacher A suggested a completely different approach:

> I don't like performance-based salary structure, because it will make divisions among teachers; some teachers will get more money, and others will get less money. Those who will be getting more salary, obviously they will be inspired; but those who will get less salary, their motivation will go down. In this respect, I think government should increase our salary equally. However, if the purpose of performance-based salary structure is to improve teacher performance, then I think there are other alternatives. For example, at the time of teacher recruitment, teachers should be given some criteria for accountability and from time to time school administrators will supervise them. Honestly speaking, in our context, I think we need to be more accountable. (pp. 8–9)

In this comment, Teacher A suggested that teacher salary should be increased equally.

However, he noted that teachers need to be more accountable in Bangladeshi context.

### *Increasing Parental Involvement*

Most of the participants of this school acknowledged that in order to improve the

school's effectiveness, there was a great need to increase parental involvement in

different school activities. Headmaster A noted that there was a lack of trust between

parents and school staff. She further explained that frequent and transparent

communication between parents and school staff could build trusting relationships. To

articulate her point, she said:

> Parents need to be more conscious about their sons or daughters. Parents should
> be more in-touch with school. There should be good communication between
> home and school. Good communication cannot be only from the teachers' side,
> parents are also responsible to come and check how their sons or daughters are
> doing. Nowadays, I see the lack of trust among all of us. For example, when we
> send students' report cards home, students are supposed to bring those report
> cards back after their parents put their signatures on them; however, in some
> cases, students themselves sign the report cards and bring those back to school.
> Some of these students were caught red-handed. So if both parents and teachers
> were concerned and maintained good communication, then all of these incidents
> could be avoided and good trust could be built. I think this trusting relationship is
> one of the most critical elements towards sustainable improvement. (pp. 3-4)

Through the above example, she implied that building trusting relationships not only

increases parental involvement, but it is also one of the most critical elements of

sustainable school improvement. Similarly, Teacher A suggested that continuous

communication between home and school is a means to increase the number of parents in

different school activities. However, to increase parental involvement, Parent A

proposed, "In our secondary education system, government should make at least one

monthly parent-teacher meeting mandatory" (p. 21). He further noted:

> Nowadays, we see that in most our business advertisements, they offer some sorts
> of token gifts or bonus points to attract more customers. To increase parental
> involvement, we can try similar business strategy, like offering some gifts or
> rewards for parents when they attend school activities. (p. 21)

In this comment, he emphasized external rewards as a motivational factor that can

increase parental involvement in different school activities.

*Reviewing Current Curriculum to Ensure Ongoing Relevance*

Participants concurred that in Bangladesh, the same curriculum had been followed for many years and most of the topics were even not relevant to the current issues. Comments from two participants represented the strong indication of this theme. In this regard, Teacher A suggested that the Bangladeshi Government should develop a curriculum that includes variety of topics and choices. He explained:

> We are approximately 30 years behind developed countries; in our present curriculum, we are studying what developed countries have discarded from their curriculum long ago. So in this case, my suggestion is that at first, our government needs to make a curriculum by including similar topic areas, which developed countries are following in their curriculum. After that, time to time we can insert different topics in that curriculum, and then there will be no need to frequently change the whole curriculum. (p. 12)

In this comment, Teacher A suggested Bangladeshi Government develop a curriculum with similar topics that developed countries are using in their curriculum. On this point, Parent A noted that the curriculum, which was being followed year-after-year, was a barrier for the professional development of teachers. He explained that because the curriculum was never revised or renewed, teachers used their same lesson plans year-after-year and they were not challenged. To overcome this problem, Parent A also suggested developing a curriculum that includes a wide variety of topic areas. He said:

> [W]hile making the curriculum, government should include a good number of topics or subject areas. Then while making a syllabus from those topics or subject areas, 10 or 12 topics or subject areas need to be chosen. These 10 or 12 topics will be taught for one or two years. Then from the broader curriculum, another 10 or 12 topics will be picked for the next two years' syllabus. If we follow this practice, then the problem of frequently changing and publishing textbooks will be stopped. At the same time, teachers will be challenged with new topics or subject areas, which eventually help them to learn and grow. (p. 15)

He further added that people (in the ministry of education) who are responsible for developing curriculum, need to base their decisions about which topics should be

included in the curriculum by considering the age and the level of intelligence of the students.

### *Providing More Extracurricular Activities*

All participants acknowledged that in order to improve the school, there should be *more extracurricular activities*. On this issue, Student A's comment provided a good picture about the availability of extracurricular activities in this school. She restated the need as follows:

> We don't have enough extracurricular activities in our school. We have a debate class only once in a week, and we do not have any gym facilities. There is no music class or music teacher in our school, but we have a music competition. Students who have music teachers at home, only those students participate in our music competition. Our school-level district wide volleyball, handball, and athletic competition are not regular. At the end of the school year, we have athletic competition in our school. As it happens, it is at the end of our school final exam, we really enjoy this event. (p. 25)

Through this comment, she suggested having regular sports and athletic competitions among all the schools of the district. On this issue, Headmaster A pointed out, "Because of the shortage of time and space, we cannot accommodate all students in different cultural and sports activities" (p. 7). She particularly emphasized to reduce the number of students in each class so that all students get the opportunities to participate in different extracurricular activities.

In this regard, Teacher A suggested that there should be a balance and control between academic emphasis and cultural activities. He noted that most of the students are in their early teen years and they are not matured enough to understand real life. So, if the students are given many opportunities for extracurricular activities, then some of the students will be so engrossed in those activities that it will hamper their concentration for academic subjects. He concluded that both teachers and parents should be cautious about

the balance between students' academic emphasis and their involvement in extracurricular activities. However, in this regard, Parent A holds a different view. He advocated extracurricular activities for students. He noted:

> Most of our schools don't have any opportunity for physical activity. However, in every school, there is a physical instructor or teacher, who is only limited in helping students to practice cricket and soccer. Traditionally, we think that doing physical activity is a waste of time, and students become tired of doing physical activities. But from my own personal experience, I want to say that this is wrong. I think the educational authority needs to take care of this and provide opportunity for physical activity to all students. There should be a gym (whether small or big) in every school. (p. 16-17)

In this comment, he implied that extracurricular activities are needed in order for students to develop holistically, and he suggested that district office administrators should provide more extracurricular activities for all students.

### Summary

In this section, I present a summary of the data from School A. Table 4.6 contains a cross-group summary of the most frequently mentioned strategies, and responsible actors to accomplish the needs for School A.  As illustrated in Table 4.6, to *implement effective instructional methods*, participants recommended adopting varied teaching methods, using more technological support among teachers, updating teacher training facilities, reducing the teachers' workload, arranging frequent formal/informal instructional supervision, and arranging study tours for students. Participants mentioned that teachers, teacher training authority, the Bangladeshi Government, school administrators, and district administrators have their respective roles in implementing effective instructional methods in Bangladeshi secondary schools.

Table 4.6

*Cross Group Summary: School A*

| Improvement Needs | Cross Group Summary: Most Frequently mentioned strategies | Responsible Actors to Accomplish the needs |
|---|---|---|
| Implementing effective instructional methods | • Adopting varied teaching methods<br>• Using more technological support among teachers<br>• Updating teacher training facilities<br>• Reducing the teachers' workload<br>• Arranging frequent formal/informal instructional supervision<br>• Arranging study tours for students | Teachers<br>Teachers<br>Teacher training authority<br>Bangladeshi Government<br>School administrators<br><br>School/Dist. Administrators |
| Decreasing class size | • Creating more classroom space<br>• Initiating a two shift approach to school hours | Bangladeshi Government<br>Bangladeshi Government |
| Providing more resources and computer facilities | • Making computer education as a required course for all students<br>• Providing more teaching resources and computer facilities | Bangladeshi Government<br><br>Bangladeshi Govt./ NGOs |
| Enhancing collaboration among teachers | • Addressing the misuses of private tutoring<br><br><br>• Creating a culture of respect | Bangladeshi Government, teachers, school staff, NGOs<br>School staff |
| Providing more specialized teachers and teachers training | • Reviewing  teacher recruiting policy<br>• Recruiting more specialized teachers<br>• Providing more professional development facilities for teachers<br>• Re-arranging teaching schedules to accommodate specialization<br>• Encouraging teacher use of  new teaching methods | Bangladeshi Government<br>Bangladeshi Government<br>Bangladeshi Govt./ NGOs<br><br>School administrators<br><br><br>Teachers |
| Address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching | • Arranging School-based one-to-one or group coaching<br>• Imposing laws to control private tutoring<br>• Encouraging greater teacher commitment to teaching classroom instruction<br>• Arranging supplemental income opportunities for teachers | School staff<br><br>Bangladeshi Government<br>Teachers<br><br>Private organizations or NGOs |
| Enhancing teacher social value | • Reviewing  teacher salary provisions<br>• Elevating the image of the teaching profession<br>• Involving teachers to government functions and ceremonies<br>• Promoting involvement in the wider community among teachers | Bangladeshi Government<br>Bangladeshi Government<br>Bangladeshi Government<br><br>Teachers |

Table 4.6 continued

| Improvement Needs | Cross Group Summary: Most Frequently mentioned strategies | Responsible Actors to Accomplish the needs |
|---|---|---|
| Increasing teacher salary | • Considering relative cost of living in salary calculation <br> • Paying teachers overtime for helping after-school coaching <br> • Considering teacher educational qualifications and performance in salary calculation <br> • Developing an equal salary structure across all levels of teaching <br> • Providing greater focus on teacher accountability | Bangladeshi Government <br><br> Bangladeshi Government <br><br> Bangladeshi Government <br><br> Bangladeshi Government Teachers |
| Increasing parental involvement | • Building trusting relationships among stakeholders <br> • Working towards frequent and transparent communication <br> • Raising parents' consciousness about their children's education <br> • Encouraging parents to be more in touch with schools <br> • Making one monthly parent-teacher meeting mandatory for schools and parents <br> • Arranging rewards for parental involvement | Parents and school staff <br> School Administrator <br><br> Parents <br><br> School staff <br><br> Bangladeshi Government <br><br> School Administrator |
| Reviewing current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance | • Developing a curriculum, which includes variety of topics and choices | Bangladeshi Government |
| Providing more extracurricular activities | • Providing more extracurricular facilities in each school <br> • Arranging regular sports and athletic competition among all the schools of district <br> • Reducing the number of students in each class so that all students get the opportunities to participate in different extracurricular activities | Dist. office administrators <br><br> Dist. Office administrators <br><br> Bangladeshi Government |

To *reduce class size*, participants identified two options. The first option was to initiate a two shift approach to school hours, and the second option was to create more classroom space. According to the participants of this study, only the Bangladeshi Government had the influence to initiate these approaches to reduce class size.

To *provide more resource materials and computer facilities,* both Headmaster A and Student A suggested that government should provide more computer facilities in schools and make computer education a required course for all students. On this point, Teacher A suggested that along with the government, some NGOs that are involved in education sector should provide funding for schools to buy computers, projectors, televisions, and sound system.

Participants acknowledged some teachers' unfair treatment of some students and poor collaborative relationships. To *enhance collaboration among teachers*, participants noted a need to address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching and to create a culture of respect among teachers. From the data analysis, I found the perception that to address this issue a collective effort was needed from the Bangladeshi Government, school staff, and different NGOs.

To provide *more specialized teachers and more teacher training facilities*, participants advised reviewing teacher recruiting policies, recruiting more specialized teachers, providing more professional development facilities for teachers, re-arranging teaching schedules to accommodate specialization, and encouraging teacher use of new teaching methods. Participants of this school acknowledged that a combined effort of teachers, school administrators, the Bangladeshi Government, and different NGOs was needed to address this issue.

Participants of this school identified that addressing the misuses of private tutoring or coaching was one of the most essential needs for their school. Participants also offered some of the possible strategies to address the misuses of *private tutoring or coaching,* which included emphasizing school-based, one-to-one, or group teaching,

imposing laws by the government to control private tutoring, encouraging greater teacher commitment to teaching classroom instruction and arranging supplemental income opportunities for the teachers. Participants suggested that school staff, the Bangladeshi Government, teachers, and different private organizations or NGOs were responsible actors who could help to control private tutoring or coaching.

To *enhance teacher social value*, participants suggested that the government should review teacher salary provisions, elevate the image of the teaching profession, and involve teachers in government functions and ceremonies. While analyzing the data, another strategy emerged that suggested teacher social value could be enhanced by promoting teacher involvement in the wider community. Participants concurred that both the Bangladeshi Government and teachers were capable and responsible in the enhancement of the social value that Bangladeshi society places on teachers. To *increase teacher salary*, participants advised considering relative cost of living, teacher educational qualifications, and teacher performance in salary calculation, paying teachers overtime for helping after-school coaching, developing an equal salary structure across all levels of teaching, and providing greater focus on teacher accountability. Though participants had different views on how to increase teacher salary, they acknowledged that increasing teacher salary solely depended on the Bangladeshi Government. However, on this issue, Teacher A expressed the necessity for *teacher accountability*. While talking about different ways of increasing teacher salary, he noted that teachers should be paid equally across all levels of teaching; however, at the time of teacher recruitment, teachers should be given some criteria for accountability and from time to time school administrators need to supervise them.

To *increase the parental involvement*, participants suggested building trusting relationships among stakeholders, working towards frequent and transparent communication, raising parents' conscience about their children's education, encouraging parents to be more in touch with schools, making one monthly parent-teacher meeting mandatory for schools and parents, and arranging reward for parental involvement. Participants noted that school administrators, parents, school staff, and the Bangladeshi Government were the responsible actors who could play important roles to increase parental involvement. *To review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance,* both Teacher A and Parent A suggested that the Bangladeshi Government should develop a curriculum that includes variety of topics and choices.

To provide *more extracurricular activities*, participants advised providing more extracurricular facilities in each school, arranging regular sports and athletic competition among all the schools of district, and reducing the number of students in each class so that all students get the opportunities to participate in different extracurricular activities. Participants of this school mentioned that both the Bangladeshi Government and district office administrators were responsible to address this issue.

**Challenges or Barriers to Implementing Key School Improvement Strategies**

Implementing anything new into the existing system is not an easy process. That is, there is bound to be some tension and barriers during the implementation of key school improvement strategies. Participants were asked about challenges or barriers to implementing key school improvement strategies and how might these challenges or barriers be overcome.

In this regard, Headmaster A noted that the biggest challenge was the *lack of collaboration*. She explained that private tutoring or coaching was the main reason for not having good collaborative relationships among school staff. In her opinion, if the misuses of private tutoring or coaching can be addressed, then definitely the relationships among school staff will improve. She also mentioned *political pressure* as one of the challenges. She cited two examples to explain her point:

> Local MPs (Members of Parliament) and some other political leaders put pressure (with student admission requested) on us and interfere with school management. Even though some students fail in their annual examination, some of their influential parents or relatives use threat to make us promote students from one grade to the next grade. Requests and orders are not the same things. Another example is about our school lunch program. Normally, we buy our lunch for all students and staff from outside restaurants by contracting for the whole year and we do this by following proper rules and regulations. But some of the local influential political leaders compel us to get that service from their own restaurant. (pp. 5-6)

Upon citing these examples, she noted, "We need autonomy to work freely" (p. 6). She further mentioned that *not including teachers' voices in educational policy making* was another challenge towards sustainable school improvement. She explained:

> Our policy making is top-down. Those who are sitting on the top, they forget about their past, that they also graduated from these types of schools. Teachers are not called for any departmental meeting or board meeting; in fact, they don't have any chance to provide their inputs. Our policymakers make education policies without considering the real picture of the field or having input from ground-level people. Policy-makers don't even think about the applicability of these policies. (p. 6)

In this comment, she implied that in educational policy-making, teachers' voices should be heard. To overcome the above barriers or challenges, Headmaster A noted that a combined effort is required, parent/guardian attitude should be positive towards school, and social respect and financial security of the teachers must be secured.

On the related theme, Teacher A noted the *misuses of private teaching or coaching* was the "source of devils" (p. 9). He also pointed out that *improving the relationships* among students, teachers, and parents was the greatest challenge towards sustainable school improvement. He compared this relationship as a triangle. To overcome the challenge, he mentioned that society needs to place greater importance and value on teachers. He further explained that if the teaching becomes a well-respected profession, then teachers will be respected and valued in the society, which will motivate them to put their best efforts in teaching students.

In this regard, Parent A noted that the main challenge towards sustainable school improvement was *changing teachers' mentality*. He explained that teachers always complain about time, and they are not serious about teaching; teachers need to change their mindset and recognize teaching as a noble responsibility. He concluded that teachers need to change their view that teaching is only a profession; rather they need to consider teaching as both a passion and profession.

In summary, participants identified lack of collaboration, political pressure, not including teachers' voices in policy making, misuses of private tutoring or coaching, and lack of seriousness among teachers as the challenges or barriers to implementing key school improvement strategies. Participants noted that by addressing the misuses of private tutoring or coaching, elevating the image of teaching profession, raising teacher professionalism, including teacher input in educational policy-making, and providing autonomy to school administration aforementioned challenges or barriers could be overcome.

**Data from NGT Process: School Improvement needs for School B**

To reiterate the process described earlier in this chapter, the first task I gave the participants of each NGT meeting was to identify the improvement needs of their school and write them down on pink paper. When they completed the task, using the round-robin recording system I recorded all their ideas. Following the listing of all items (in order of presentation), for the purpose of clarification, I read aloud the items in turn, and asked the group if there were any questions, statements of clarification or statements of agreement or disagreement which participants would like to make about each item. The discussion was designed to assist group members understand the meaning of the items, the logic behind the items, and arguments for and against the importance of each individual item.

Following the discussion, the participants listed the five most essential improvement needs according to their own view of the merit or importance from the entire list on a blue piece of paper. Once this task was completed, I assigned points 5 to 1 for each item in descending order for the purpose of a weighted score for each item. To determine the weight of an individual item, I added all the assigned points for that particular item, and counted the frequency of each item (Lists of all items and calculation tables for each group are attached in Appendix I).

*Teacher Group*

There were 8 teachers present in the School B's teachers' group meeting and a total of 36 separate ideas were generated. In Table 4.7, I presented the items in descending order, in terms of weighted score and frequency.

Table 4.7

*School improvement needs: Teacher group*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Improve the schools' physical state | 19 | 4 |
| 2. | Decrease class size | 18 | 4 |
| 3. | Provide more specialized teachers and teacher training | 15 | 5 |
| 4. | Enhance teacher social value | 14 | 4 |
| 5. | Facilitate more parental involvement | 6 | 2 |
| 6. | Improve the relationships among teachers | 6 | 2 |
| 7. | Provide more extracurricular activities | 5 | 2 |
| 8. | Engage teachers in educational policy making | 5 | 1 |
| 9. | Increase teacher salary | 4 | 3 |
| 10. | Provide more central office support | 4 | 2 |
| 11. | Provide good textbooks | 4 | 2 |
| 12. | Provide fair treatment to all students | 4 | 1 |
| 13. | Establish children's right | 3 | 1 |
| 14. | Provide effective leadership | 3 | 1 |
| 15. | Implement effective instructional methods | 2 | 2 |

As listed in Table 4.7, according to the teachers of the School B, the most essential improvement need was *to improve the school's physical state*. The weighted score of this item was 19 points. Four teachers particularly emphasized the importance of renovating the school building. The second most essential item of the list was to *decrease class size*; the weighted score of this item was 18 points. Four teachers indicated that to improve this school, the number of students in each class should be reduced. They further explained that because of the large class size students that sat on the back benches in the classroom could not hear the lecture well. Five teachers noted that to make this school

more effective they need *more specialized teachers and teacher training*. In the discussion, teachers noted that some of the teachers had been teaching for more than 14 years, but did not receive any kind of training or professional development opportunities. The weighted score of this item was 15 points and this item was ranked third in the list. Four teachers noted that to make this school more effective, *teacher social value needs to be enhanced*; the weighted score of this item was 14 points and this item was ranked fourth in the list in terms of perceived importance.

Two teachers also indicated that to improve this school, there was a need *to facilitate more parental involvement*; the weighted score of this item was 6 points, and this item was ranked fifth in the list. In the group discussion, teachers noted that the amount of parental involvement in different school activities was very poor and the same group of parents (though small in numbers) attended all school activities. Two teachers also noted that in order to improve the effectiveness of this school, the *relationships among teachers* needs to be improved. Though the waited score of this item was also 6 points, for the purpose of putting all the items in sequential this item was ranked sixth in this table. Two teachers also indicated that to improve this school, there should be *more extracurricular activities*. Teachers noted that they have a debate class only once in a week and they do not have any gym facilities. The weighted score of this item was 5, and this item was ranked seventh in this table.

According to the Table 4.7, other suggested (though lower ranked) teacher-perceived school improvement needs for this school were to: *engage teachers in educational policy making* (in the group discussion, it emerged that in Bangladesh, policy making was top-down; however, teachers noted that in educational policy making

teachers' voices should be heard), *increase teacher salary*, *provide more central office support*, *provide good textbooks*, and *improve the relationship between teachers and students* (on this point, teachers noted that in this school, the relationship between teachers and students was very formal and was not friendly).

### Student Group

There were 12 students present in the School B's students' group meeting, and a total of 36 separate ideas were generated. In Table 4.8, I presented the items in descending order, in terms of weighted score and frequency.

Table 4.8

*School improvement needs: Student group*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Provide more specialized teachers and teacher training | 28 | 9 |
| 2. | Provide good textbooks | 21 | 5 |
| 3. | Address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching | 12 | 4 |
| 4. | Decrease class size | 11 | 4 |
| 5. | Facilitate more parental involvement | 10 | 4 |
| 6. | Improve the relationships among teachers | 10 | 3 |
| 7. | Review the current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance | 10 | 2 |
| 8. | Provide effective and timely feedback to students on their work | 9 | 4 |
| 9. | Provide fair treatment to all students | 8 | 2 |
| 10. | Ensure that teachers come to the class on time | 8 | 2 |
| 11. | Abandon guide books and put more focus on textbooks | 6 | 2 |
| 12. | Arrange study tours for students | 5 | 2 |
| 13. | Provide more encouragement to students by all school staff | 5 | 1 |
| 14. | Improve school culture | 5 | 1 |
| 15. | Provide more extracurricular activities | 4 | 2 |
| 16. | Provide more computer facilities | 3 | 2 |

As listed in Table 4.8, according to the students of the School B, the most essential need of this list was *to provide more specialized teachers and teacher training* and the weighted score of this item was 28 points. Nine students thought that to make this school more effective, there was a need *to provide more specialized teachers and teacher training*. In the group discussion, students noted that because of the shortage of specialized teachers, some of our teachers were asked to teach courses that were not within their specialized areas. In those cases, these teachers came to class and spent class time discussing different irrelevant topics without teaching the actual subject. The second most essential improvement need was *to provide good textbooks*. The weighted score of this item was 21 points. In the written form five students commented that they needed proper textbooks. In the group discussion, students noted that their textbooks were changed almost every year, and because these textbooks were printed in a very short period of time they were full of mistakes.

Four students noted that to make this school more effective, there was a need *to address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching*; this item was ranked third in the list. In the group discussion, students explained that some teachers self-praise about how effective they are as private tutors and how some of the students who take private lessons from them are successful in achieving high marks. Sometimes, these teachers even talk negatively about other teachers; they do that intentionally, so that students do not take private lessons from those teachers. Students also noted that this was very bad practice and in order to improve the school, this issue should be addressed.

The fourth item of this list was *to decrease class size*; the weighted score of this item was 11 points with a frequency of four. *To facilitate more parental involvement*, *to*

*improve the relationships among teachers*, and *to review the current curriculum to ensure the ongoing relevance* – the weighted score of these items was similarly 10 points each; however, as their counted frequencies were 4, 3, and 2, they ranked as the fifth, sixth and seventh item in the list.

Other suggested (though lower ranked) school improvement needs for this school, identified in Table 4.8, were: teachers should *provide effective and timely feedback* to students on their work, school staff should *provide fair treatment to all students*, school administrators should *ensure that teachers come to class on time* (on this point, students noted that some of their teachers were regularly 10 to 15 minutes late for their classes. Even though they were late, after coming to the class they did not start teaching immediately; they then wasted a little bit more time on irrelevant issues. These teachers were not sincere and they were not responsible), and school authority should *arrange study tours* for students.

### *Parent Group*

There were 11 parents present in the School B's parents' group meeting, and a total of 18 separate ideas were generated. In Table 4.9, I presented the items in descending order, in terms of weighted score and frequency.

Table 4.9

*School improvement needs: Parent group*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Provide more specialized teachers and teacher training | 37 | 11 |
| 2. | Increase teacher salary | 30 | 7 |
| 3. | Enhance teacher social value | 27 | 6 |
| 4. | Decrease class size | 16 | 6 |
| 5. | Provide more effective teaching materials | 14 | 5 |
| 6. | Improve the relationships among teachers | 10 | 4 |
| 7. | Collaborate more on knowledge sharing | 10 | 3 |
| 8. | Facilitate more parental involvement | 8 | 4 |
| 9. | Review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance | 7 | 3 |
| 10. | Provide effective and timely feedback to students on their work | 6 | 4 |
| 11. | Implement effective instructional methods | 4 | 2 |

As listed in Table 4.9, according to the parents of the School B, the most essential improvement need was *to provide more specialized teachers and teacher training*; the weighted score of this item was 37 and 11 parents noted this item on their lists. In the group discussion, parents noted that there is a huge shortage of specialized teachers; and in terms of teacher training facilities, they suggested contextualizing the professional development or teacher training programs. The second highly-prioritized need was *to increase teacher salary*; the weighted score of this item was 30 points. Seven parents noted this need on their lists.

The third most essential school improvement need was *to enhance teacher social value*; the weighted score of this item was 27 points. Six parents indicated that to improve the school, teacher social value needs to be enhanced. In the group discussion, parents

explained that in Bangladeshi society, in terms of salary and social dignity, the teaching profession was neglected; therefore, teachers were not valued in the society. Although the same number (six) of parents recorded that to make this school more effective, they need *to reduce class size*, the weighted score of this item was 16 points and this item was ranked fourth in the list in terms of perceived importance.

Five parents indicated that to improve the school, they need *more effective teaching materials*; the weighted score of this item was 14 points, and this item was ranked fifth in the list. In the group discussion, parents noted that to enhance teaching and learning more computers, projectors, and more hands-on materials are needed. Four parents indicated that to improve this school, there should be *improvement of the relationships among teachers*; the weighted score of this item was 10, and this item was ranked sixth in the list. In the group discussion, parents noted that there is an unexpressed clash between old teachers and new teachers, which deteriorates the relationships among teachers.

According to the Table 4.9, other suggested (though lower ranked) school improvement needs were: *more knowledge sharing* should occur among teachers (on this point, parents noted that in this school, teachers did not collaborate with each other; most of the teachers worked in isolation, even some of the teachers talked negatively about their colleagues to students), *more parental involvement* should be encouraged, students should be taught with more *relevant curriculum*, and teachers should *provide effective and timely feedback to students on their work*.

*A Cross Group Summary of Improvement Needs of School B*

  To determine the common improvement needs among stakeholder groups at

School B, I combined the data of three NGT groups (teacher, student, and parent). To

establish the weight of an individual item, I added all the assigned points for that

particular item, and recorded the frequency of mention for each item. These are presented

in Table 4.10. In this table, I once again presented only the first 10 items in descending

order, in terms of weighted score and frequency.

Table 4.10

*A cross Group Summary of Improvement Needs of School B*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Frequency per Group | | | Frequency (Total) | Weighted Score (Combined) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | (Teacher) | (Student) | (Parent) | | |
| 1. | Provide more specialized teachers and teacher training | 5 | 9 | 11 | 25 | 81 |
| 2. | Decrease class size | 4 | 4 | 6 | 14 | 45 |
| 3. | Enhance teacher social value | 4 | - | 6 | 10 | 41 |
| 4. | Increase teacher salary | 3 | - | 7 | 10 | 34 |
| 5. | Improve the relationships among teachers | 2 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 31 |
| 6. | Provide good textbooks | 2 | 5 | - | 7 | 25 |
| 7. | Facilitate more parental involvement | 2 | 4 | 4 | 10 | 24 |
| 8. | Improve the schools' physical state | 4 | - | 1 | 5 | 21 |
| 9. | Review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance | - | 2 | 3 | 5 | 17 |
| 10. | Provide effective and timely feedback on students' work | - | 4 | 4 | 8 | 15 |

As listed in Table 4.10, according to the teachers, students, and parents of the School B, the most essential improvement need was *to provide more specialized teachers and teacher training*. The combined weighted score of this item was 81 points. Twenty five participants (five teachers, nine students, and 11 parents) of this school recorded on their lists that to improve this school, there was a great need to provide more specialized teachers and teacher training. The second most highly prioritized need was *to decrease class size*. The weighted score of this item was 45 points. Fourteen participants (four teachers, four students, and six parents) of this school noted on their lists that to make this school more effective, numbers of students should be reduced in each classroom. The third most essential item of the list was *to enhance teacher social value* and the weighted score of this item was 41 points. Ten participants (four teachers and six parents) noted that to enhance teacher efficiency, there was a need to enhance teacher social value. The fourth item in the list was *to increase teacher salary*; the weighted score of this item was 34 points and10 participants (three teachers and seven parents) noted this item on their lists.

*To improve the relationships among teachers* appeared as the fifth item in the list; the weighted score of this item was 31 points. Nine participants (two teachers, three students, and four parents) noted this item was one of the most essential school improvement needs for the school. *To provide good textbooks* appeared as the sixth item in the list; the weighted score of this item was 25 points. Seven participants (two teachers and five students) noted this item on their lists. Ten participants (two teachers, four students, and four parents) of this school noted that to make the school more effective, there was a need *to facilitate more parental involvement*; the weighted score of this item

was 24 points, and this item was ranked seventh in the list. *To improve the school's physical state* was the eighth ranked item in the list; the weighted score of this item was 21 points. Five participants (four teachers and one parents) emphasized the importance of renovating the school building.  The ninth ranked need was to *review the current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance*; the weighted score of this item was 17 points. Five participants (two students and three parents) noted this item on their lists. A total of eight participants (four students and four parents) recorded that to make the school more effective, there was a need *to provide effective and timely feedback on students' work*; the weighted score of this item was 15 points and this item was ranked tenth in the list.

### Strategies for Sustainable School Improvement: School B

The findings from the interview data of School B are presented in this section. The same interview protocol used for School A was used for School B.  I selected one individual participant from each teacher, student, and parent NGT group, and I interviewed the headmaster.  The questions for the semi-structured individual interviews with the teacher, student, and parent are documented in Appendix G.  Based on the school improvement needs identified during each NGT focus group, some individual questions were adapted accordingly.

The presentation of the interview data begins with an examination of the participants' understanding of sustainable school improvement.  It then continues with recurring themes about the specific strategies for sustainable school improvement, challenges or barriers to implementing key improvement strategies, and how might these challenges or barriers be overcome. The first part of this section presents a description of

the participants. Participants of this school are distinguished by the pseudonyms Headmaster B, Teacher B, Parent B, and Student B.

## Interview Participants

Headmaster B had had over 14 years experience as a teacher. His leadership qualities projected him on a quick trajectory for school leadership positions. He was assistant headmaster for over 3 years in another school. He had been acting as headmaster in this school from June, 2006. Headmaster B had over 600 students in his school and did not have elementary school teaching experience. He was just over 40 years old.

Teacher B was a Fine Arts teacher from School B. He had been teaching over 15 years, and, since 2005, he had been teaching in this school. Besides teaching Fine Arts, Teacher B had been involved in music. At the time of the study, he was around 40 years old.

Parent B was a teacher. She had been teaching for 20 years. In particular she had been teaching in School B for approximately 8 years. Her elder son was in grade 10 and her younger son was in grade 8 in this school. She was just over 50 years old.

Student B was a grade 10 student. He had been studying in this school for 5 years. He was 15 years old. In addition to his academic focus, he was involved in sports activities (such as, cricket, soccer, and volleyball).

## Participants' Perceptions on Sustainable School Improvement

Regarding the perception of sustainable school improvement, participants of this school had different views. According to the Headmaster B, sustainable school improvement was "Not the development of the school building; rather it is the

development of teaching and learning" (p. 27). Teacher B viewed sustainable school

improvement as the development of the main structure of the education system.

He explained:

> Sustainable improvement is never sustainable, because the meaning and function of sustainability also changes as time passes. However, the main structure of improvement remains same; and there should be only some addition or subtraction of different programs in the main structure. (p. 36)

In this comment, Teacher B implied that enhancement of the main structure of the

education system was the most valuable aspect of sustainable improvement. Parent B

cited, "Sustainable development doesn't depend only on the students' academic

successes; rather it depends on the overall development of the learners" (p. 44). In this

regard, Student B noted, "Sustainable school improvement is a holistic improvement that

remains forever" (p. 50).

To achieve sustainable school improvement, Headmaster B explained, "We can

achieve sustainable improvement if our trained teachers provide effective instruction to

our students by following the board's curriculum" (p. 27). He further noted that the most

important factor for sustainable school improvement was the proper coordination of

teachers, parents, and students. To achieve sustainable school improvement, Teacher B

suggested prioritizing the problems and solutions of the schooling system and making

decisions on the basis of the opinions of all stakeholders. He said:

> For sustainable development of our schooling system, first of all we need to prioritize the problems and the solutions of those problems. When the decisions are made on the basis of the opinions of all parties (particularly, teachers and students) those who are related with education, only then sustainable development is possible. (p. 36)

In this comment, Teacher B emphasized inclusive decision-making towards sustainable

school improvement. On this point, Parent B noted that sustainable school improvement

is only possible if some initiatives in the education system help to develop a child as a

good human being or a good citizen who feels responsibilities for the country or for the

society. In this regard, Student A noted that just by implementing different new

programs, sustainable improvement is not possible. He further explained that

> In our school, for the last couple of years, we were trying to follow SBA (School Based Assessment). Our teachers told us that this was an Australian program. For the first few months, teachers tried to follow that program then they gave up. I think this program was not successfully implemented because of our big class size. (p. 50)

This comment implied that before implementing any new program, contextual

applicability needs to be examined.

In summary, participants of School B viewed sustainable school improvement as

the development of teaching and learning, improvement of the main structure of the

education system, overall development of the learners, and holistic school improvement

that remains forever. From data analysis, I found perceptions that proper coordination of

teachers, parents, and students, inclusive decision-making, initiatives that foster

developing good citizens, and examination of contextual applicability before

implementing new initiatives were the means to achieve sustainable school improvement.

### From Improvement Need to Improvement Strategy

I asked participants: In your opinion, what specific strategies or initiatives are

needed to improve effectiveness for your school? In the response to my question, all of

the participants first reiterated the improvement needs that emerged from their NGT

discussions and then they talked about some of the possible strategies to meet those

improvement needs. As I noted earlier in the chapter, this process may appear to be a

repeat of the former process but it was employed in order to have participants recall their

NGT discussions as a basis for discussion of strategies. The main intention of this stage was the elaboration of strategies. Participants in this study expressed their views and experiences from different perspectives. They particularly explained how to: provide more specialized teachers and teacher training, decrease class size, enhance teacher social value, increase teacher salary, enhance collaboration among teachers, stop frequent changing of textbooks, increase parental involvement, address the misuses of stop private tutoring or coaching, implement effective instructional methods, and provide more extracurricular activities. In the following section, I discuss these strategies.

### *Providing More Specialized Teachers and Teacher Training*

Participants acknowledged that to improve the school effectiveness they need more specialized teachers and teacher training facilities. Regarding the need of specialized teachers, Teacher B noted that according to Bangladeshi Governmental policies, all teachers are supposed to be teaching all subjects. He further explained:

> Our government's teacher recruiting policies are very frustrating. I am an art teacher. Is it possible for me to teach science or mathematics? Yes, I can go to the mathematics or science class and somehow spend 40 minutes, but students will not gain or learn anything. Government has special administrative wing to look after this matter. But I don't know what they do. I think sustainable improvement is not possible until our government recruits more specialized teachers and distributes them equally to all schools. (p. 41)

In this comment, Teacher B criticized the government's current teacher recruiting policy and suggested to recruit more specialized teachers. Likewise, both Headmaster B and Student B said that to ensure sustainable school improvement Bangladeshi Government needs to recruit more specialized teachers. Regarding teacher training facilities, Teacher B, Headmaster B and Parent B suggested contextualizing teacher training and professional development programs. They explained their experiences as follows:

> Nowadays, we are getting many teacher training programs from different NGOs (Non Government Organization), but I think other countries are experimenting with different teaching strategies on us through these training programs. These teacher training or professional development programs are useless and not applicable in our context. It's a total waste of time. (Teacher B, pp. 39-40)

> I encourage our teachers to participate in different short courses. Now, regarding the application of different strategies that our teachers learn from these training programs or short courses, I like to say that yes, some of them are possible and it's happening in our school; however, in most of the cases teachers are not able to apply their training knowledge because of the shortage of time and because of the large number of students in one classroom. (Headmaster B, pp. 27-28)

> After finishing one of the training courses, I tried to implement some of the ideas in one of my grade 8 classes. There were 75 students in that class. I divided them into seven groups. The whole thing was very chaotic. In my 45 minutes class, I was able to evaluate only three groups. I shared this experience with other teachers, and they also said that they had similar experiences. I am not saying that these trainings are not good, but most of them are not applicable in our education system, because we have completely different context. (Parent B, p. 48)

These experiences implied that because the current teacher training and professional development programs were not contextualized, they were not very effective. To make them effective and applicable in a Bangladeshi context, Teacher B noted that the infrastructure of Bangladesh's education system needs to be changed, and, to do that, government needs to consult with ground-level (those who are directly related with teaching-learning) people. He emphasized that ground-level people know better than anybody about what works and what doesn't work in actual teaching and learning in classrooms.

### *Decreasing Class Size*

In the NGT group discussions, decreasing class size appeared as one of the most essential improvement needs. In the individual interviews, participants explained that because of the large class size students that sat on the back benches in the classroom could not hear the lecture well. Participants of this school suggested mainly two strategies

to address this issue, which included creating more classroom space and initiating a two

shift approach to school hours. They noted:

> Our class size is another problem. Our class size is too big. Some of the classrooms consist of even 100 students. Can you tell me how much a teacher can do in a 40 minutes class instruction with this large number of students? We need to start double shifts to reduce the number of students in each class. This will also reduce the pressure on teacher. (Teacher B, p. 41)

> At present, teacher-student ratio is very irrational. It should be arranged at a rational level (maximum up to 1:30). To lower the teacher-student ratio, we need to expand our school building and build more classrooms. (Headmaster B, p. 27)

> Our class size is too big. As we have limited land and a large population, my suggestions to overcome this problem are to build more classrooms or to introduce double shift-system. (Parent B, p. 47)

> A couple of years ago, we heard that our school is going to build more classrooms, but nothing happened. I think we need more classrooms. School authority should think positively and with the help of our district education board build more classrooms. (Student B, p. 54)

In the above quotations, to reduce the number of students in each classroom, participants

mainly suggested two options. The first option was to start double shifts and the second

option was to building more classrooms. These strategies from participants of School B

were extremely similar to the suggested strategies from participants of School A.

### *Enhancing Teacher Social Value*

Enhancing teacher social value was one of the most essential school improvement

needs for School B. Comments from Teacher B and Parent B were representatives of this

theme. To enhance teacher social value, Teacher B noted that the Bangladeshi

Government has a major part to play in elevating the image of the teaching profession.

He shared:

> Most of our teachers have a Masters degree. They start their careers as teachers, and at the same time, they also try to find other jobs [e.g. BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service)]. The main reason for this is that the teaching profession is not well-paid

and well-respected. If our teaching profession is well-paid and well-respected, then these teachers would not try for other professions and more other talented students would come to join in this profession. Our government needs to take some positive steps to make our teaching profession more respected and make sure that our teachers are well-paid. (p. 39)

In this comment, Teacher B implied that in order to enhance teacher social value, the Bangladeshi government needs to take some positive steps to make the teaching profession more respected and valued. In the same vein, Parent B noted that in Bangladesh, "The teaching profession is not welcomed by the job seekers, since, in terms of salary and social dignity, the teaching profession is neglected" (p. 44). To enhance teacher social value, she suggested the need for a change of attitude of the education authority, society, parents, and government toward education and taking a positive stance on the teaching profession. That is educating future generation is a noble responsibility of all stakeholders.

### *Increasing Teacher Salary*

Most of the participants of this school concurred that increasing teacher salary was one of the most essential needs towards sustainable school improvement. Regarding increasing teacher salary, Headmaster B noted that teachers need to be paid based on their work; teachers who work hard and put extra efforts should be paid more. However, on this issue, Teacher B and Parent B recommended considering the relative cost of living and teacher educational qualifications in salary calculation. They said:

> Regarding increasing teacher salary, my suggestion is that it needs to be increased by considering current market prices and educational background of a teacher. For example, in India if you have a Masters Degree, whether you are a primary school teacher, or a secondary school teacher or a college teacher, your salary scale will be same. If our government follows Indian policy on a teacher's salary scale, our teachers will be happy working in their own places; they will not look for another profession to join in. Regarding teacher salary increase, performance is another criterion. But I don't support this, because there is not any perfect instrument

available for measuring teacher performance. Every teacher has his or her own way of teaching, so how can you measure and evaluate teacher performance? (Teacher B, p. 39)

I heard the government is thinking to increase teacher salary based on teacher performance. I don't support this idea. If teacher salary is increased based on their performances, then some teachers will get 20,000 Taka and some teachers will get 10,000 Taka as their salary; I think it will create a discrimination and chaos among teachers. To run a school smoothly, we need equality, not discrimination. That's why I think, teacher salary should be increased considering the cost of living. (Parent B, p. 47)

These comments implied that both Teacher B and Parent B were in favor of increasing teacher salary based on cost of living and teacher educational qualifications.

### *Enhancing Collaboration among Teachers*

Enhancing collaboration among teachers was one of the essential needs to improve the effectiveness of School B. To enhance collaboration among teachers, Parent B advised changing teachers' attitudes by being more open minded. She noted:

In our school, there is an unexpressed clash between old teachers and new teachers. Teachers who are in the schools for many years don't like new ideas and don't cooperate with new teachers. I have no hesitation to tell that some of these old teachers don't perform their duties properly. The main reason behind this is that they are doing government jobs, and they don't have a fear to lose their jobs. In this case, I think teachers need to change their mentality. (p.46)

In this comment Parent B implied that in order to work collaboratively, teachers need to change their attitude. On this issue, Headmaster B recommended adopting a collaborative decision-making process. He shared one of his successful strategies to run the school. He said:

One of my strategies to run this school is that I follow collaborative decision making procedures. I believe that everybody has some sorts of capacity or talent or experience. Before taking any initiative, I call for a general meeting, where we all sit together and discuss that initiative. Without the help of other teachers, you cannot do anything in the school. In different school activities, I involve teachers and delegate their duties and responsibilities. For example, last year before the final SSC exam, to help our SSC examinees, we divided them into different small

groups, and, for each group, I assigned a teacher as the group leader. The group leaders were responsible to look after the groups and report to me. Our combined efforts on this were very effective. I have experienced that collective decisions work better than individual decisions. If you promote your own decisions, then it's difficult to convince and involve other teachers. However, if it's a collective decision, then everybody comes to help you willingly. (pp. 30-31)

Through this comment, to enhance collaboration, he suggested to adopt a collaborative decision-making practice. Teacher B also cited the above example to show how they worked collaboratively in the school. He particularly emphasized teacher professional commitment as the key towards working collaboratively.

### *Maintaining Consistency in Textbooks*

In individual interviews, all participants addressed this issue, but Student B and Parent B emphasized that in order to improve the school effectiveness, frequent changing of textbooks should be stopped. In this regard, Student B suggested Bangladeshi Government developing a curriculum including a variety of topic areas and choices. He said:

I am very frustrated about our textbooks. Every year, our government is changing our textbooks and there are many printing mistakes in these textbooks. Every year, buying new textbooks is a burden for our parents. So, I think our government needs to take positive steps about this issue. If they think carefully and include important topics in our curriculum, then there is no need to change our textbooks so frequently. (p. 50)

In this comment, Student B suggested that the Bangladeshi government should include all the important topics in the curriculum so that they do not need to change textbooks so frequently. On this point, Parent B advised Bangladeshi Government to keep education out of political influence. She explained:

There is a huge influence of our political parties on our education. The ruling political party controls our education system and tries to implement their agenda. Due to the implementation of the ruling party's agenda, they change the curriculum and publish new textbooks. (p. 46)

In this comment, Parent B implied that if the government is willing to keep education out of politics, then there should not be any need to change textbooks so often. She also mentioned that in Bangladesh, teachers needed to strictly follow the curriculum; they cannot add anything or discuss any topics outside the curriculum. She further emphasized that if the Bangladeshi education system follows this tradition, then the goals of an ideal education will not be met and sustainable improvement will never occur.

### *Increasing Parental Involvement*

Most of the participants of this school concurred that in order to improve the school effectiveness, there was a great need to increase the parental involvement in different school activities. In this regard, Parent B suggested making one monthly parent-teacher meeting for schools and parents. She commented:

> In our school, we see very limited amount of parental involvement. We see some parents are coming to school only when their sons or daughters don't do well in the exams. They come to school, because our headmaster calls them to come and talk with the class teacher. I think family can play a very important role in our students' learning. There is a tradition in our culture that schools and teachers are solely responsible for our students' learning. Students can learn lot of things from their families. Parents can help students to do their homework, or at least can check whether they are doing homework regularly or not. We need to break this cultural tradition and encourage our parents to be more active in our students' learning. To increase parental involvement, my suggestion is to arrange a parents' day at least once in a month, where we all get chance to meet and discuss students' problems with their parents. (pp. 44-45)

In this comment, in order to increase parental involvement, Parent B suggested to have a monthly parent day. To increase the parental involvement, Teacher B noted that there should be regular meetings where teachers, the headmaster, parents, and district education officials meet and discuss student problems and how to resolve those problems.

On the related theme, Headmaster B suggested that it is important to have more frequent communication between home and school.

### *Addressing the Misuses of Private Tutoring or Coaching*

All participants acknowledged that to improve the school effectiveness, the misuses of private tutoring or coaching should be addressed; however, Headmaster B, Parent B, and Teacher B shared some of the ways to address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching. Headmaster B emphasized that the government must impose laws to control private tutoring. To control private tutoring, he suggested the Bangladeshi Government should follow the policy that the Indian Government adopted. He further added, "In some cases, if our students need some extra help then we can arrange school coaching after the school hours" (p. 29). On this issue, Parent B noted that teachers were involved in private tutoring or coaching in an effort to survive financially. She explained, "In our country, the teacher salary is very low, compared to the salary of other professions. I don't think teachers are doing private tutoring willingly; in fact, they don't have any other options to earn extra money, which they need to sustain their families" (pp. 46-47). She concluded that increasing teacher salary was the only way that could reduce the prevalence of private tutoring or coaching. On the related theme, Teacher B suggested encouraging greater teacher commitment to classroom instruction. He noted:

> [W]e need to control private tutoring or coaching. Some of our teachers are doing this in such a way that it's their main business, and teaching in school is auxiliary. For parents and students, this private tutoring or coaching became a tradition. Most of the students think as their other friends are having private teaching, they also need private teaching. In our socio-economic situation, all parents cannot afford to send their sons or daughters for private coaching or tutoring. We need to break this tradition. In our school, we are all qualified teachers and if students face any difficulties or problems, they can come to us for help. I don't think that there will be one among us who will not be willing to help them. Then what is the point of private tutoring or coaching? We need to stop this tradition or fashion. If

our students are attentive in our class instruction and do the home work regularly, then I think they don't need private coaching. Because of this private coaching, our students are not having any leisure hours, and they are always in tremendous psychological stress, which is bad for their holistic development. (p. 38)

In this comment, Teacher B implied that because of the different socio-economic conditions, all parents cannot afford private tutoring or coaching for their children. In this situation, he emphasized that all teachers should be attentive and serious toward providing effective classroom instruction. He also advised that it was necessary to motivate students to be more attentive in class.

### *Implementing Effective Instructional Methods*

Most participants acknowledged that to improve their school, there was a need to implement effective instructional methods. Regarding implementing effective instructional methods, Teacher B noted that subject matters and teaching contents need to be practical and life-oriented, and, to do so, Bangladeshi teachers need to use more modern technological supports in their classroom teaching. To explain this point, he shared an example:

To make our teaching more meaningful and practical, when we are teaching about the jungle and wild animals, along with our textbooks, we can show some documentary film related to the jungle and wild animals. Similar examples can be drawn from physics, chemistry, or biology. In our time, we didn't have this option, but now it's possible. Our government is emphasizing more on using modern technological supports. In fact, nowadays almost all government secondary schools have projector and computer facilities (though limited in numbers). However, it depends on us (teachers) whether we use it or not. In my opinion, I think students understand easily if we use technological supports in our teaching strategies. (pp. 36-37)

Teacher B further mentioned that to make teaching and learning enjoyable there was a need to arrange some study tours or excursions for each grade level students. He

explained that field trips are the activities or programs in which students can find out the connection between the reality and what they study in textbooks.

On the related theme, Parent B also noted that to make teaching and learning engaging, Bangladeshi teachers should use technology in their classrooms. Furthermore, Headmaster B suggested that new teachers can visit experienced teachers' classrooms and learn the best practices in teaching and learning. Besides this, he noted that there should be more books on effective teaching strategies available in school library.  He concluded that most of the teaching materials were not easily available and they were also not provided by the district education office, so to make teaching and learning effective, availability of teaching aids should be ensured.

### *Providing More Extracurricular Activities*

All participants acknowledged that in order to improve the school, there should be more extracurricular activities. In this regard, Student B mentioned that they did not have enough free time to be involved in extracurricular activities. He explained:

> We are always busy with our studies. For example, in my case, in the morning from 7 am to 9 am, I take private lesson from our mathematics teacher. Then I attend classes in the school from 10 am to 5 pm. After school for 3 days (from 6pm to 8 pm), I take private lesson from our English teacher, and then for another 3 days at the same time (from 6 pm to 8 pm), I take private lesson from my science teacher. This is the typical routine for almost all students, and this has become very traditional in our education system. In my opinion, we need some leisure hours. Our government should concentrate on improving this issue by including more extracurricular activities in our curriculum. (p. 53)

In this statement, Student B asked the Bangladeshi Government to include more extracurricular activities in the curriculum. On this point, Headmaster B noted that though students did not have many opportunities for extracurricular activities, they regularly tried to arrange some sports activities and cultural activities. He added, "We

need more governmental funding to improve our extracurricular activities" (p. 30).

However, both Teacher B and Parent B pointed out that some of the religious beliefs and cultural superstitions were the main reasons behind limited availability of extracurricular activities in Bangladeshi schools. They explained:

> Due to some religious factors, we have some limitations on sports and cultural activities in our schools. We have also some cultural superstitions regarding co-curricular activities. But for greater benefit, we need to overcome these religious bindings and cultural superstitions and practice more co-curricular activities in our schools. Co-curricular activities help our students' mental growth. In every school, co-curricular activities should be a must, must, must---. (Teacher B, p. 42)

> Religious superstition is another hindrance for sustainable education. To me, culture and religion are two different things. We should not mix them. But in our country, some religious fundamentalists oppose the practice of some of the extracurricular activities in our schools. So we need to overcome these superstitions through raising social and cultural awareness of our people. (Parent B, p. 46)

To increase more extracurricular facilities, both Teacher B and Parent B suggested to overcome religious and cultural superstitions, and, to overcome these superstitions, Parent B asked to raise social and cultural awareness of the people.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

In this section, I present a summary of the data for School B. Table 4.11 illustrates the school improvement needs, cross group summary: most frequently mentioned strategies, and responsible actors to accomplish the needs.

Table 4.11
*Cross Group Summary: School B*

| Improvement Needs | Cross Group Summary: Most Frequently mentioned strategies | Responsible Actors to Accomplish the needs |
|---|---|---|
| Providing more specialized teachers and teachers training | <ul><li>Reviewing teacher recruiting policy</li><li>Recruiting more specialized teachers</li><li>Contextualizing teacher training and professional development programs</li></ul> | Bangladeshi Government Bangladeshi Government Bangladeshi Govt./ NGOs |
| Decreasing class size | <ul><li>Creating more classroom space</li><li>Initiating a two shift approach to school hours</li></ul> | Bangladeshi Government Bangladeshi Government |
| Enhancing teacher social value | <ul><li>Elevating the image of the teaching profession</li><li>Changing the attitude of the education authority, society, parents, and government towards education and having a positive stance</li></ul> | Bangladeshi Government Bangladeshi Govt., society, parents, education authority |
| Increasing teacher salary | <ul><li>Considering relative cost of living and teacher educational qualifications in salary calculation</li><li>Developing an equal salary structure across all levels of teaching</li></ul> | Bangladeshi Government Bangladeshi Government |
| Enhancing collaboration among teachers | <ul><li>Changing teacher attitude to be open-minded</li><li>Adopting a collaborative decision-making practice</li><li>Promoting teachers' professional commitment</li></ul> | Teachers School administrators Teachers |
| Maintaining consistency in textbooks | <ul><li>Developing a curriculum, which includes variety of topics and choices</li><li>Keeping education free of political influence</li></ul> | Bangladeshi Government Bangladeshi Government |
| Increasing parental involvement | <ul><li>Making one monthly parent-teacher meeting for schools and parents</li><li>Encouraging parents to be more active in students' learning</li><li>Working towards frequent communication between home and school</li><li>Arranging regular meetings among teachers, school administrators, parents and district education officials</li></ul> | School administrators School staff School administrators District education officials |
| Addressing the misuses of private tutoring or coaching | <ul><li>Arranging school coaching after school hours</li><li>Imposing laws to control private tutoring or coaching</li><li>Reviewing teacher salary provisions</li><li>Motivating students to be more attentive in class instruction and to do homework regularly</li><li>Encouraging greater teacher commitment to classroom instruction</li></ul> | School staff Bangladeshi Government Bangladeshi Government Students Teachers |

Table 4.11 continued

| Improvement Needs | Cross Group Summary: Most Frequently mentioned strategies | Responsible Actors to Accomplish the needs |
|---|---|---|
| Implementing effective instructional methods | • Making teaching contents practical and life-oriented<br>• Using more technological support among teachers<br>• Arranging study tours for students<br>• Providing more resources | Teachers<br><br>Teachers<br><br>School/Dist. administrators<br>Bangladeshi Government |
| Providing more extracurricular activities | • Including more extracurricular activities in the curriculum<br>• Allocating extra funding to provide more extracurricular facilities in each school<br>• Raising social and cultural awareness of the people to overcome religious and cultural superstitions about extracurricular activities | Bangladeshi Government<br><br>Bangladeshi Government<br><br>Bangladeshi Govt., NGOs, school staff |

As listed in Table 4.11, to provide *more specialized teachers and more teacher training facilities*, participants recommended reviewing teacher recruiting policies, recruiting more specialized teachers, and contextualizing teacher training and professional development programs. Participants acknowledged that the Bangladeshi Government and different NGOs were responsible actors to address these issues.

To *decrease class size*, participants identified mainly two strategies. The first strategy was to initiate a two shift approach to school hours, and the second strategy was to create more classroom space. According to the participants of this school, only the Bangladeshi Government could initiate these strategies to reduce class size.

In this study, enhancing teacher social value appeared as one of the key school improvement needs. To *enhance teacher social value*, participants suggested that the Bangladeshi government should elevate the image of the teaching profession. Participants

also noted that in order to enhance the social value that Bangladeshi society places on teachers, the education authority, society, parents, and the Bangladeshi Government needed to change their attitude towards education by having a more positive stance toward it. That is educating future generation is a noble responsibility for all stakeholders. Participants of this school concurred that increasing teacher salary was one of the most essential needs towards sustainable school improvement. To *increase teacher salary*, participants advised considering the relative cost of living, teacher educational qualifications, and teacher performance in salary calculation and developing an equal salary structure across all levels of teaching. Participants acknowledged that the Bangladeshi Government was solely responsible for increases to teacher salary.

Enhancing collaboration among teachers was one of the essential needs to improve the effectiveness of School B.  In order to *work collaboratively*, participants suggested changing teacher attitude to be open-minded, adopting a collaborative decision-making practice, and promoting teachers' professional commitment. Participants noted that school administrators and teachers were liable to enhance collaboration among teachers. All participants acknowledged that in order to improve school effectiveness, the number of students in each class should be reduced. To *maintain consistency in textbooks*, participants suggested the Bangladeshi Government develop a curriculum that includes variety of topics and choices and also that education be kept outside the realm of political influence.

To *increase the parental involvement*, participants recommended making one monthly parent-teacher meeting for schools and parents, encouraging parents to be more active in students' learning, working toward frequent communication between home and

school, and arranging regular meeting among teachers, school administrators, parents, and district education officials. Participants noted that school administrators, school staff, and district education officials were the responsible actors who could play important roles to increase parental involvement.

Participants shared some of the ways to *address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching*, which included arranging school coaching after school hours, imposing laws to control private tutoring or coaching, reviewing teacher salary provisions, motivating students to be more attentive in class, and encouraging greater teacher commitment to classroom instruction. Participants noted that the Bangladeshi Government, school staff, and teachers were responsible actors to address this issue.

Participants of this school acknowledged that to improve their school, there was a need to implement effective instructional methods. To *implement effective instructional methods*, participants suggested making teaching contents practical and life-oriented, using more technological support among teachers, arranging study tours for students, and providing more resources. Participants mentioned that teachers, the Bangladeshi Government, school administrators, and district administrators have their respective roles in implementing effective instructional methods in Bangladeshi secondary schools.

To *provide more extracurricular activities* participants advised including more extracurricular activities in the curriculum, allocating extra funding to provide more extracurricular facilities in each school, and raising social and cultural awareness of the people to overcome religious and cultural superstitions about extracurricular activities. Participants also noted that a combined effort from the Bangladeshi Government, school staff, and different NGOs was needed to address this issue.

**Challenges or Barriers to Implementing Key School Improvement Strategies**

Participants were asked about challenges or barriers to implementing key school improvement strategies and how might these challenges or barriers might be overcome. In response, Headmaster B emphasized that the main barrier or challenged was related with curriculum. To elaborate this point, he explained:

> Our curriculum is very complex, and it changes very frequently. For example, in 2006 our curriculum was changed three times. At this moment, we are following SBA (School Based Assessment, it's an Australian program); but it's not working well. This assessment has six criteria: 30% teacher evaluation, regular home work, classroom presentation, classroom participation, group work, and final assignment. With our limited time, it is really difficult to follow all six criteria. Previously, for the assessment purpose, we used to administer one tutorial test every month; in my opinion these tutorial tests were very effective, because it ensured regular students' attendance and more concentration. (p. 32-33)

In this comment, Headmaster B pointed out that it was not possible to complete the whole curriculum within the allocated time-frame. He further mentioned that those who were involved in curriculum development did not consider the practicality and applicability of the curriculum. To clarify his view, he provided the following example:

> When I was a student, we had two separate subjects for English: English grammar and English literature. For the last few years, instead of English grammar, the government introduced Communicative English. Now, tell me without English grammar how can you communicate correctly? So, nowadays, students are learning English without proper grammatical use. To me, Communicative English is not very effective. (p. 33)

In this regard, Headmaster B suggested that the Bangladeshi government needs to take some ground-level suggestions from school headmasters and teachers. Similarly, Parent B noted, "Before implementing any new strategies or programs in our education system, I think our policy makers should consult with ground-level people (teachers and students)" (p. 48).

On the related theme, Teacher B identified that the main challenge or barrier of sustainable improvement was, "We are not considering our own context in implementing improvement strategies" (p. 40). To explain his view in detail, he said:

 We all want educational improvement. There is no doubt about this. We talk, seek, and debate about our educational improvement, but we don't take any positive action. Sometimes we tried to implement foreign strategies, but it didn't work out well. I think the main reason of this failure was that we didn't consider whether these strategies were applicable in our country or not. Before implementing anything we should consider our country context, our economical factors, our social factors, even our local school context. (p. 40)

He also mentioned that lack of proper coordination was another important problem towards sustainable improvement. On this point, he explained:

What I mean by lack of proper coordination is that we (teachers) are in the field of actual teaching. We know better about what are the problems or difficulties in teaching, and we know what is good for students and what is not. However, those who are on the top make educational policies based on just imitating some good practices from foreign countries. But they need to consult with us (teachers) before making any educational policies. Top educational officials who are sitting in our educational ministry need to include teachers to make educational decisions. I think if they consider teacher advice or suggestions in making strategies for educational improvement, then sustainable improvement is possible. (Teacher B, p. 41)

In these comments, Teacher B suggested that while making educational decisions, the Bangladeshi Government should be listening to the teachers' voices. He further noted that the misuse of coaching or private tutoring was a big barrier in achieving sustainable development in Bangladeshi education. He suggested that by increasing teacher salary and through collective efforts the misuses of private tutoring or coaching system can be alleviated.

In summary, participants identified complex curriculum, lack of time, the misuses of private tutoring or coaching, implementing school improvement strategies without considering local context, and not including all stakeholders' voices in policy making as

the challenges or barriers to implementing key school improvement strategies.

Participants noted that by addressing the private tutoring or coaching, including all

stakeholders' inputs in educational policy making and contextualizing school

improvement strategies aforementioned challenges or barriers could be overcome.

### Commonalities and Comparisons: Data from School A and School B

As this chapter draws to a close, it is appropriate to offer a section that discuses

the commonalities and comparisons of data from both School A and School B. The first

part of this section presents a synopsis of similarities and differences of the data of NGT

groups from both School A and School B. The next part consists of a summary analysis

of the data from individual interviews between School A and School B.

*A Cross Groups Summary: Improvement Needs for both School A and School B*

The data of NGT groups highlighted that participants from both School A and

School B had similar responses. Most of the participants form both schools noted that

providing more specialized teachers and teacher training, decreasing class size,

improving the relationships among teachers, increasing teacher social value and salary,

providing fair treatment to all students, implementing effective instructional methods,

facilitating more parental involvement, and addressing the misuses of private tutoring or

coaching as the major school improvement needs for their schools. These needs appeared

on top of their lists in terms of weighted scores and frequency. To determine the common

improvement needs of both School A and School B, I combined the data of Table 4.5 and

Table 4.10. To establish the weight of an individual item, I added all the assigned points

for that particular item and recorded the frequency of mention for each item and

presented them in Table 4.12. In this table, I presented only the first 10 items in

descending order, in terms of weighted score and frequency.

Table 4.12

*Common Improvement Needs for School A and School B Combined*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Frequency per NGT group (Teacher) | | Frequency per NGT group (Student) | | Frequency per NGT group (Parent) | | Freq. (Total) | Weighted Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | School A | School B | School A | School B | School A | School B | | |
| 1. | Provide more specialized teachers and teacher training | 5 | 3 | - | 9 | 6 | 8 | 31 | 102 |
| 2. | Decrease class size | 2 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 25 | 81 |
| 3. | Improve the relationship among teachers | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 18 | 61 |
| 4. | Enhance teacher social value | - | 4 | - | - | 3 | 6 | 13 | 56 |
| 5. | Provide fair treatment to all students | - | 1 | 6 | 2 | 4 | - | 13 | 52 |
| 6. | Implement effective instructional methods | 3 | 2 | 9 | - | 2 | 2 | 18 | 49 |
| 7. | Increase teacher salary | 1 | 3 | - | - | 3 | 7 | 14 | 46 |
| 8. | Facilitate more parental involvement | 4 | 2 | - | 4 | - | 4 | 14 | 36 |
| 9. | Address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching | - | - | - | 4 | 5 | - | 9 | 34 |
| 10. | To provide more computer facilities | - | - | 7 | 2 | 5 | - | 14 | 33 |

As listed in Table 4.12, according to the teachers, students, and parents from both

School A and School B, the most essential improvement need was *to provide more*

*specialized teachers and teacher training*; the weighted score of this item was 102. A total of 31 participants (five teachers and six parents from School A and three teachers, nine students, and eight parents from School B) noted this item on their lists. The second most essential item of the list was *to decrease class size*. The weighted score of this item was 81 points. Twenty five participants (two teachers, five students, and four parents from School A and four teachers, four students, and six parents from School B) recorded on their lists, that to make their school more effective, the number of students in each classroom should be reduced. A total of 18 participants (three teachers, two students, and four parents from School A and two teachers, three students, and four parents from School B) noted that to make their school more effective, there was a need *to improve the relationship among teachers*; the weighted score of this item was 61 points and this item was ranked third in the list.

The fourth item in this list was *to enhance teacher social value*. The weighted score of this item was 56 points. Thirteen participants (three parents from School A and four students and six parents from School B) noted that to make their school more effective, teachers' social value in the society should be increased. *To provide fair treatment to all students* appeared as the fifth item in this list; the weighted score of this item was 52 points. Thirteen participants (six students and four parents from School A and one teacher and two students from School B) noted this item as one of the most essential school improvement needs for their school. The sixth item of this list was *to implement effective instructional methods*; the weighted score of this item was 49 points. A total of 18 participants (three teachers, nine students, and two parents from School A

and two teachers and two parents from School B) recorded this item as one of the most essential needs for improving their school.

*To increase teacher salary* appeared as the seventh item in this list; the weighted score of this item was 46 points. Fourteen participants (one teacher and three parents from School A and three teachers and seven parents from School B) noted this item as one of the most essential school improvement needs for their school. The eighth item of the list was *to facilitate more parental involvement*; the weighted score of this item was 36 points. A total of 14 participants (four teachers from school A and two teachers, four students, and four parents from School B) recorded this item as one of the most essential school improvement needs for their schools. *To address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching* appeared as the ninth item in the list; the weighted score of this item was 34 points. Nine participants (four students from School B and five parents from School A) noted this item on their lists. The $10^{th}$ item of the list was to *provide more computer facilities*; the weighted score of this item was 33 points. A total of 14 participants (seven students from School A, and two students and five parents from School B) recorded on their list that in order to improve the school effectiveness, more computer facilities should be provided in schools.

The participants' responses during the NGT meetings only differed in a few areas; however, these items were lower ranked in the lists in terms of frequency and weighted scores. For example, participants from School A recorded providing effective leadership, adopting a code-system for evaluating exam papers, initiating a general knowledge class, and decorating classrooms with educational posters, maps, charts, and students' work as school improvement needs for their school; yet, these items were not mentioned by the

participants from School B. As well, participants from School B noted improving the school's physical state, establishing children's right, providing more central office support, ensuring that teachers come to class on time, providing effective and timely feedback on students' work, and abandoning guidebooks and putting more focus on textbooks as school improvement needs for their school, and these points did not surface during the NGT discussions for School A.

*Interview Data*

This section begins with an examination of the participants' understanding of sustainable school improvement.  It then continues with recurring themes about the specific strategies for sustainable school improvement. The last part of this section contains a discussion of challenges or barriers to implementing key improvement strategies and how might these challenges or barriers be overcome.

***Understanding of sustainable school improvement***. Regarding the understanding of the sustainable school improvement, most of the participants from both School A and School B noted that *the overall development of the schooling system that lasts longer* could be regarded as sustainable school improvement. With regard to how to achieve sustainable school improvement, most participants from School A acknowledged that to achieve sustainable school improvement, all stakeholders need to *work collaboratively*. Similarly, Headmaster B mentioned *proper coordination* among stakeholders as the key catalyst towards sustainable school improvement; however, on this issue, Teacher B identified *inclusive decision-making* and Parent B noted *initiatives that foster developing good citizens* as the important vehicles to achieve sustainable school improvement. On the related theme, Headmaster A and Student B mentioned *considering contextual*

*applicability before implementing new initiatives* as the most important factor towards achieving sustainable school improvement.

**School improvement strategies**. When reviewing the strategies identified by the participants of this study, most of the participants' comments were quite similar; only a few participant comments were subtly different.

To provide *more specialized teachers and more teacher training facilities*, participants from both schools recommended similar strategies, which included reviewing teacher recruiting policies, recruiting more specialized teachers, and providing more professional development facilities for teachers. However, only participants from School A noted that re-arranging teaching schedules to accommodate specialization, and encouraging teacher use of new teaching methods could be ways to address these issues. Furthermore, to increase the applicability of teacher training, only participants of School B advised contextualizing teacher training and professional development programs. Nevertheless, participants from both schools acknowledged that a combined effort of teachers, school administrators, the Bangladeshi Government, and different NGOs were needed to address this issue.

To *decrease class size*, participants of this study supplied two dominant options. The first option was to initiate a two shift approach to school hours and the second option was to create more classroom space. According to the participants of this study, only the Bangladeshi Government had the influence to initiate these approaches to reduce class size.

To *enhance collaboration among teachers*, participants from School A and School B suggested quite different strategies. Participants from School A advised to

address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching and to create a culture of respect among teachers. In order to work collaboratively, participants from School B recommended changing teacher attitude to be open-minded, adopting a collaborative decision-making practice, and promoting teachers' professional commitment.

To *enhance teacher social value*, participants from both schools suggested that Bangladeshi Government elevate the image of the teaching profession and promote greater involvement in the wider community among teachers. Pertaining to this concern, only participants from School A recommended that the Bangladeshi Government review the teacher salary provisions. Participants from School B advised all the stakeholders needed to change their attitude towards education by having a more positive stance toward it. That is educating future generation is a noble responsibility for all stakeholders.

To *implement effective instructional methods*, commonly identified strategies for the participants of both schools included making teaching contents practical and life-oriented, using more technological support among teachers, and arranging study tours for students. Participants from School A noted that adopting varied teaching methods, updating teacher training facilities, reducing the teachers' workload, and arranging frequent formal/informal instructional supervision as the strategies to implement effective instructional methods. With that stated, participants from both schools believed that teachers, teacher training authority, Bangladeshi Government, school administrators, and district administrators were the responsible bodies to address this issue.

To *increase teacher salary*, participants from both School A and School B proposed similar strategies. They advised reviewing teacher salary provisions, developing

an equal salary structure across all levels of teaching, and considering the relative cost of living, teacher educational qualifications, and teacher performance in salary calculation. All participants of this study noted that the Bangladeshi Government was solely responsible for increases to teacher salary. On this issue, only participant from School A expressed the need for teacher accountability in a Bangladeshi context.

Participants from both schools proposed analogous strategies to *increase parental involvement*, which included making one mandatory monthly parent-teacher meeting for schools and parents, raising parents' consciousness about their children's education and encouraging them to be more in touch with school activities, and working toward frequent communication between home and school. Only participants from School A suggested that arranging regular meeting among teachers, school administrators, parents, and district education officials and arranging rewards for parental involvement could be considered as the strategies to increase parental participation in different school activities. However, participants from both schools noted that school administrators, school staff, parents, and district education officials were the responsible actors who could play important roles to increase parental involvement.

*Addressing the misuses of private tutoring or coaching* was one of the most essential school improvement needs for both School A and School B. On this issue, participants from both schools identified similar strategies, which included arranging school-based, one-to-one, or group teaching, imposing laws to control private tutoring or coaching, encouraging greater teacher commitment to teaching classroom instruction, enhancing students' motivation, and reviewing teacher salary provisions. Participants from both schools suggested that school staff, Bangladeshi Government, teachers, and

students were responsible actors who could help to control private tutoring or coaching. Only participants from School A suggested that different private organizations and NGOs could arrange supplemental income opportunities for teachers.

To provide *more computer facilities and resource materials,* participants from School A suggested that government should provide more computer facilities in schools and make computer education a required course for all students. Participants of this school noted that along with the government, some NGOs that are involved in the education sector should provide funding for schools to buy computers, projectors, televisions, and sound systems. Pertaining to this issue, participants of School B did not mention a particular strategy.

To *review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance* and *to stop frequent changing textbooks*, participants from both schools suggested that the Bangladeshi Government develop a curriculum including a variety of topics and choices. To stop the frequent changing the textbooks, only participants from School B advised that education should be kept outside the realm of political influence. To *provide more extracurricular activities*, participants from both schools recommended that the Bangladeshi Government should include extracurricular activities in the curriculum and allocate extra funding to provide more extracurricular facilities in each school. One this issue, only participants from School A suggested reducing the number of students in each class so that all students get the opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities. On the related theme, only participants from School B noted that it was important to raise social and cultural awareness of the people in an effort to overcome religious superstitions about extracurricular activities.

***Challenges or barriers to implementing key school improvement strategies***. Participants of this study identified some important challenges to implementing key school improvement strategies; participants also suggested some of the strategies to address these challenges. Two dominant points that reflected the opinions of participants from both schools emerged from the data. First, participants believed that neglecting to listen to the voices of all stakeholders during policymaking negatively affected school improvement. Second, participants stipulated that the misuse of private tutoring or coaching was a main challenge to implementing school improvement strategies. They also noted that by addressing the misuses of private tutoring or coaching and including all stakeholders' voices in educational policy-making these barriers could be overcome.

Only participants from School A noted lack of collaboration, political pressure, and lack of professional commitment among teachers as the challenges to implementing key school improvement strategies. To overcome these challenges, participants of this school suggested elevating the image of the teaching profession, raising teacher professionalism, and providing autonomy to school administration. Only participants from School B identified complex curriculum, lack of time, and implementing school improvement strategies without considering local context as the challenges to implementing school improvement strategies. To overcome these challenges, participants of this School B recommended that the Bangladeshi Government needed to contextualize school improvement strategies.

**CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The topic of school effectiveness has a lengthy history, whereas school improvement has a relatively short history (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001). These writers further explained that, even with a limited history, school improvement has already passed through three distinct phases of development. The first phase of school improvement emphasized organizational change, school self-evaluation and the ownership of change by individual schools and teachers. The second phase of school improvement introduced the promotion of knowledge about what works at the school level to positively affect student outcomes (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000a). The main focus of the third phase of school improvement was to develop context-specific improvement. Many educational researchers (e.g., Hamilton, 1998; Harber, 1997a; Harber & Davis, 1997; Harber & Muthukrishna, 2000; Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001; Reynolds, 1998) noted it is difficult to apply a set of school improvement strategies across diverse school contexts. Those concerned with school improvement have been advised by the school improvement researchers and practitioners to pay attention to the unique features of the individual school situation and build strategies based on an audit of that particular context.

In the case of the Bangladeshi educational context, Bangladesh has made significant progress in terms of public access to primary and secondary education; however, issues of educational quality and relevance to students remain major concerns (Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2003; Bangladesh Government, 2005; UNICEF, 2000; World Bank, 2004). The Bangladeshi Government has recently devoted attention

to the mitigation of problems associated with management and quality of education (Ministry of Education, 2005). Consistent with researchers' suggestions to develop context-specific school improvement strategies, and the Bangladeshi government's concern to improve the quality of public education, in this study, I focused on identifying and analyzing the major school improvement needs and related strategies for two Bangladeshi secondary public schools based upon the perceptions of in-school professionals, parents, and students.

## Conclusions and Discussion

The following section aligns the major conclusions that emerged from the analysis of the research data with the research literature. The major conclusions which emerged include: pressure to improve, factors critical to sustainability of improvement efforts, improvement efforts, and addressing barriers as an initial improvement strategy.

### *Pressure to Improve*

In Bangladesh, national educational outcomes or goals reflect a pressure to improve. This study revealed that the catalyst for improvement was exerted through *market mechanisms* and *educational policies*. Market mechanisms created competition between schools. Competition incorporates a need to present a good image to potential customers and, consequently, this can be the stimulus for school improvement. From document analysis, it was also found that in Bangladesh, school improvement was promoted by educational policies that exerted external pressure on schools to change.

*Market Mechanisms*

It emerged from this study that in terms of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) results, both School A and School B graduate a high proportion of their students (for

example, in 2008 94.5% from School A, and 95.6% from School B). Because of this good reputation, most parents want to send their daughters/sons to these high schools upon completing elementary school. Parents' proclivity toward getting their children enrolled in these schools offers an impetus for further improvement. This point is congruent with Cuban's (2003) findings that, in many countries, *market mechanisms* (for example, freedom of school choice for parents and students, community involvement in school) create competition between schools. Competition is likely to intensify the need to present a reputable image to potential customers and, in turn, can be the stimulus for school improvement. However, the critics of public school choice claim that competition between schools may stimulate inequalities in education and reinforce the inequities between schools for the elite and schools for the masses (Hirsch, 1994; OECD, 1994). Moreover, better educated families are better informed and more likely to actively use school choice than their less advantaged counterparts (de Jong, 2001; Fuller & Elmore, 1996). Therefore, yearly publication of schools' outcomes with an added value measurement could be one of the most effective means of control.

### *Educational Policies*

From document analysis, it was found that in Bangladesh, the Ministry of Education is the main external agent who designs and initiates improvement efforts. During individual interviews, participants also mentioned that there was a huge influence of political parties on Bangladeshi education. They explained that the ruling political party controls the education system and tries to implement its agenda. Due to the implementation of the ruling party's agenda, educational policies are changed frequently, and as a result so are the texts. Participants of this study emphasized that if the

Bangladeshi education system follow this tradition, the goals of an ideal education will not be met and sustainable improvement is unachievable. Similarly, Reezigt and Creemers (2005) noted that school improvement can be promoted by educational policies that exert external pressure on schools to change; with that stated, the stability of educational policies is still important. Reezit and Creemers explained that when educational policies change too rapidly, schools can experience initiative overload, which can be counterproductive. Therefore, some stability in educational policies appears necessary to prevent schools from struggling with an imbalance between measures that reflect aspects of centralization and decentralization.

In Bangladesh, market mechanisms created competition between schools. Competition is likely to intensify the need to present a good image to potential customer. This point can be a catalytic process for school improvement. In Bangladesh, school improvement efforts were also promoted by educational policies that exerted external pressure on schools to change.

### *Factors Critical to Sustainability of Improvement Efforts*

This study identified two factors critical to sustainability of improvement efforts: *considering contextual relevance* and *fostering collaboration*. Regarding the understanding of the sustainable school improvement, most of the participants noted that the overall development of the educational system that lasts longer could be regarded as sustainable school improvement. This common view reflected by most respondents confirms Hargreaves' (as cited in Marge, 2006) observation that in education, when reform has been a persistent part of the school landscape it only rarely results in a change that *endures*. His research on high-performing schools gives credibility to his view that

positive, lasting change is possible. To define sustainability, Copland (2003) also stated that, becoming sustainable means schools need to find ways to embed their reform work, (especially the inquiry process) into the culture of the school.

Most of the participants of this study mentioned considering contextual applicability before implementing new initiatives as the most important factor towards achieving sustainable school improvement. Participants also identified that to achieve sustainable school improvement, all stakeholders need to work collaboratively.

### *Considering Contextual Relevance*

The most significant finding of this study was the fact that considering contextual applicability before implementing new initiatives is the most important factor towards achieving sustainable school improvement in Bangladeshi context. Regarding this, Harber and Davies (1997) said that judging the effectiveness of schools in developing countries, for example, may well involve substantially different criteria from those in developed countries given their differing contextual realities. Many educational researchers (e.g. Hamilton, 1998; Harber, 1997a; Harber & Davis, 1997; Harber & Muthukrishna, 2000; Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001; Reynolds, 1998) noted that there is great difficulty associated with applying a set of school improvement strategies across contexts. Those concerned with school improvement have been advised by these school improvement researchers and practitioners to pay attention to the unique features of the individual school situation and build strategies on the basis of an audit of that particular context.

While studying school improvement in the context of Thailand, Hallinger and Kantamara (2001) observed that as globalization intensifies, proposals for the local

adaptation of school reform initiatives are demanding greater attention. Cultural and institutional differences in the context of schooling make "global dissemination" of school improvement programs and training designs a questionable proposition. Similarly, the findings of my study acknowledged that globalization had led the Bangladeshi Government to adopt global educational reform policies, including school-based assessment, parental involvement, student-centered learning, and so on, in a desire to increase school effectiveness. However, despite their *global seal of approval*, these empowering educational reforms conflicted with the normative practices associated with traditional Bangladeshi culture. This finding is congruent with Evans' (1996) observations on Asian schools. Evans' research has shown that in Asian schools the need for school reform is acute, but local conditions create a very different context for change.

To design context specific school improvement programs in developing countries, Hallinger and Kantamara (2001) highlighted the importance of taking into account the macro level context, both in the sense of structural and cultural conditions. In this regard, Scheerens (2001) also emphasized the importance of culturally-embedded contextual conditions and asked for a prudent approach and careful study of the existing customs and practices. This study revealed some of the cultural norms and practices that sway school improvement in Bangladeshi context. Here, I chose three dimensions of Hofstede's (1980) framework to extend these findings into a discussion of how Bangladeshi culture influences school improvement. Based on Hofstede's framework, the following discussion pertains to three dimensions on which national cultures differ: power distance, individualism-collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance.

*Power distance*. Power distance refers to "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organization within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 28). Bangladesh is a high power distance culture. This is reflected in its strongly hierarchical and bureaucratic society.

According to Hallinger and Kantamara (2001), in the world of schools, the change process is complex, protracted, and only partially acquiescent to implementation by mandate. Although this has been recognized as a major factor in implementing policies in Western societies, *centralized mandates* have remained the preferred approach to change in Bangladeshi schools (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Like other areas of public administration in Bangladesh, the educational system is highly centralized. Participants of this study noted that orders from above are orders for all concerned and should be followed accordingly. The Bangladeshi approach to leading change by orders or mandate has long been culturally viable. People accept it as a normal part of life in Bangladeshi society and schools. Hallinger and Kantamara (2001) noted that this compliance culture may carry over to school improvement in both overt and covert ways; however, policymakers should develop school improvement strategies that honor the local culture while meeting the underlying requirements of the global initiatives.

*Individualism-collectivism*. The second dimension in Hofstede's framework contrasts individualism with collectivism. Collectivism pertains to "societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 51). In contrast, nations such as the United States, England,

and Australia are highly individualistic. In these societies, "the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 51). Bangladesh, like other South Asian nations, is a highly collectivist culture. In this study, perceptions of the participants showed that they seldom think in terms of *I*; rather their primary point of reference in any social or work-related venture is *we*, for example, *our* salary needs to be increased, *we* need a career continuum, and *our* students need more extracurricular activities, and so on.

According to Hallinger and Kantamara (2001), in a collectivist culture, change is fundamentally a group process. Although change must still take place at the individual level, in a collectivist culture individuals filter all changes through the lenses of their key reference groups. Change is moderated through the *eyes* of the group. Fear of not meeting the expectations of one's peers takes precedence over fear of personal failure. Moreover, the group's spirit must be engaged and social harmony maintained if real change is to take place. Thus, overt conflict is avoided at all costs, even at the expense of the innovation.

*Uncertainty avoidance*. The third dimension of Hofstede's framework is uncertainty avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance reflects the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations and tries to avoid these situations by providing greater career stability, establishing more formal rules, not tolerating deviant ideas and behaviors, and believing in absolute truths and the attainment of expertise (Hofstede, 1980). The results of this study revealed that Bangladesh ranks high on uncertainty avoidance. For example, participants of this study, asked for such things as a teacher career continuum, clear criteria for accountability system, and more specialized teachers.

In general, Bangladeshi people prefer to maintain things the way they are than to take initiatives that bring about change. In this regard, Evans (1996) and Fullan (1993) have noted that people, in general, find change disruptive. Almost all individuals and organizations tend to seek stability and feel most comfortable with standard practices, routines, and traditions. The differences that exist on the dimension of uncertainty avoidance across cultures are, therefore, a matter of degree.

In conclusion, there are culturally-grounded differences in people's responses to change. These different responses suggest potential differences in the types of strategies that foster school improvement. The type and strength of the social hierarchy, the role of the individual versus the group, and the degree to which people are comfortable with uncertainty all appear relevant in analyzing how Bangladeshi culture influences school improvement.

### *Fostering Collaboration*

This study highlighted that creating a collaborative culture is a critical strategy in implementing sustainable school improvement in Bangladeshi context. In fact, collaboration in school was perceived by the majority of respondents as a critical and essential component for existence of any school organization. Moreover, it was compared as the main *catalyst* or *mechanism* towards sustainable school improvement. Collaboration became one of the core requisites of the postmodern society (Fullan, 1993) and a cornerstone of postmodern organizations in which problems are unpredictable, solutions are unclear, and expectations are intensifying (Hargreaves, 1994). Teacher collaboration was deemed by all participants to be an integral component of collaboration among all stakeholders in the school.

The data analysis revealed a variety of strategies to enhance collaboration among students, among teachers, between students and teachers, and between teachers and parents. All participants acknowledged that to enhance collaboration all participants need to work together like a family. From the participants' responses, it emerged that improving communication, developing collegiality, promoting professional commitment, and valuing others opinions are significant vehicles to foster collaboration among the stakeholders.

*Power of communication*. This study revealed that effective communication among home, school, and staff was one of the most vital aspects to enhance collaboration. Participants particularly emphasized the power of communication as the main strategy to enhance parental involvement. Regarding effective communication, Gardner (1990) observed, "Unhappy is a people that runs out of words to describe what is happening to them. Leaders must find the words" (p.18). He further stated that a principal must not only find the words, but must be able to communicate them in a polite and respectful manner to teachers, students, and parents. In this regard, Covey (1998) also described communication as "the most important skill in life" (p. 237).

*Developing collegiality*. The majority of the participants pointed out that collaboration can be fostered through developing collegiality. They also mentioned that promoting good relationships among teachers and between teachers and students can be critical in building collegiality. This was reflected in Sergiovanni's (1995) proposal that collegiality entails high levels of collaboration among members of a group, such as schools principal, teachers, and staff members. Collegiality is characterized by mutual respect, shared work values, cooperation, and specific conversations about teaching and

learning. In this regard, Deal and Peterson (1990) also suggested that within the process of collegial culture building, a principal and staff members can transform a school population from a collection of *'I's' to 'we's'*.

  *Promoting professional commitment*. Teachers in this study agreed that there is an unexpressed clash between old teachers and new teachers, which deteriorates the general climate among teachers. They further mentioned that to overcome this problem, teachers' work ethics and professional commitment need to be promoted and headmasters need to treat all school staff as professionals. This commonly identified theme concurred with Speck's (1999) comment that a principal, being the leader of the professional learning community, must base all actions on the premise that all teachers and educational assistants are professionals and treat them as such. Similarly, Lambert (1988), spoke of the importance of "authentic relationships fostered by personal conversations, frequent dialogue, shared work, and shared responsibilities" (p. 79). He further stated that if staff members interact and work with one another, they come to understand and respect each others' experiences, values, and aspirations.

  *Valuing people*. Another important finding of this research was the need for headmasters to foster collaboration among stakeholders by valuing others' opinions, contributions and endeavors. The importance of valuing the personnel of a school is also evident in the literature concerning instructional leadership. Sarkus (1996) noted that much of the current literature that supports serving and valuing people has been presaged by Greenleaf's (1977) work on servant-leadership, where the central idea of servant-leadership is to humbly serve without expectation to be served by constituents. Greenleaf's model of servant-leadership established service as the quality of the leader

that attracts followers who in turn pass along this same quality to others (Spears, 1996; Nixon 2005).

However, many participants in this study raised concerns about teacher collaboration. First of all, material wealth of teachers and financial instability had a significant negative influence on the willingness and ability of many teachers to collaborate with their colleagues. This study revealed that many school teachers were involved in private tutoring or coaching for financial survival and for providing for their families rather than for professional reasons. Moreover, the increased socioeconomic differentiation in society was instrumental in transforming relationships among teachers from being close and friendly to distant and competitive.

Secondly, participants in this study mentioned the lack of cooperation between older and younger generations of teachers. Collaboration among these entities was perceived to suffer due to the differences in systems of values and beliefs, attitudes, and approaches to instruction. There seems to be a contradiction with the argument that in a postmodern organizational context "persons are able to approach one another freely through *the recognition of difference*" (Murphy, 1988, p. 612). Despite the fact that differences between generations of teachers were recognized, they appeared to be too great to overcome for establishing effective collaboration among the parties in the school environment.

Thirdly, the data analyses showed that collaboration in the participating schools was seen to be *unsystematic* or *random* in nature and occurred only if there was an urgent need to get things done, such as, preparing students for SSC examination, organizing an annual school picnic, or organizing sports activities, and so on. There seemed to be no

formal system that would encourage teachers to collaborate, share experiences, and, thereby, increase the level of professional growth. Moreover, one of the participants in this study noted that schools did not have a formal or informal supervision system that would coordinate teachers' collective work in the instructional process. Effective collaboration needs to be based on mutual goals – specific and important enough to maintain teachers' shared commitment (Friend & Cook, 2000).

To sum up, participants perceived a need to foster collaboration towards ensuring sustainable school improvement. Their responses reflected some of the concerns and challenges in the process of collaboration. However, from their responses, it emerged that improving communication, developing collegiality, promoting professional commitment, and valuing others' opinions are influential in fostering collaboration among all stakeholders.

### *Improvement Efforts*

This study determined that in a Bangladeshi educational context, school improvement efforts consist of two main components: *identifying the improvement needs* and *developing the strategies* to meet those needs. The results of the data analysis showed that the school improvement needs for Bangladeshi schools can be grouped into *providing the resources* and *improving the school culture*. In the following part of this section, I discuss the participants' perceptions regarding the improvement needs along with the proposed strategies to meet those needs.

#### *Providing the Resources*

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this study was recognizing there was a great need of resources to enhance the effectiveness of Bangladeshi schools. In order to

make school improvement effective, the resources made available by the educational context are very important. Research by the World Bank had shown that human and material resources have an even stronger relationship with academic achievement in low-income countries than in high-income countries (Heyneman & Loxley, 1983). Such resources can be material, but there are also other resources (or support) that assist in implementing effective school improvement. In Bangladeshi context, these resources included: autonomy granted to schools, human resources, and material resources.

***Autonomy granted to schools***. The influential aspects of centralization or decentralization on school improvement is one of the focuses of school improvement research. In this regard, Sun, Creemers, and de Jong (2007) noted that if decentralization is the decisive factor, the implication would be that there would be no effective school improvement at all in a centralized system. In the history of education, school innovations and school improvement do occur in countries with different educational systems, either centralized or decentralized. This was the case in Europe and in other highly centralized countries and areas as well, such as, Japan, China, and Singapore. According to Caldwell (1996) and Slater (1996), the most significant fact about centralization and decentralization is that they are about power and the distribution of authority.

One of the main findings of this study was related to the dilemma between centralization and decentralization. The educational system in Bangladesh is highly centralized. In this structure, the central government is responsible for such things as formulating policies, financing resources and employee wages, and setting, monitoring, and evaluating educational standards, while lower levels of government are responsible

for administering the system (Ministry of Education, 2005). However, school administrators and teachers of this study advocated for more autonomy to work freely. As the local political leaders interfere with school management, participants of this study mentioned that political pressure was one of the challenges disabling efforts of school improvement. Teachers in this study also noted that they need to adhere strictly to the curriculum; they cannot add anything or discuss any topics outside the curriculum. They advocated for more teacher autonomy in the classrooms, as they emphasized that, due to experience, teachers know better than anybody about what works and what does not work in classrooms.

To address this dilemma, the Bangladeshi Government needs to follow Sun, Creemers, and de Jong's (2007) suggestions. Based on 31 case studies and a literature review, these researchers argued that the educational goals, objectives, policies, time frames, and standards for national evaluations should be established at national level. In addition, they stated that setting curriculum frameworks and accreditation and allocating resources in an equitable way should be centrally controlled. However, the means for achieving the goals should be authorized through individual schools. That is, aspects of how, when, and in what way to teach should be decentralized.

*Human resources*. Most of the participants of this study noted that in order to improve school effectiveness, Bangladeshi schools need to recruit more specialized teachers, who, in turn, would implement effective instructional methodologies, elevate the image of the teaching profession, and provide teacher-led professional development.

*Providing more specialized teachers*. With regard to providing more specialized teachers, Carter (2003), said "Teacher effectiveness is the single biggest factor

influencing gains in achievement – an influence many times greater than poverty and per-pupil expenditures" (p. 1). Quality education is about employing high quality teachers to play a key factor in students' achievements. In this regard, Scheurich et al. (2010) noted "To succeed, schools must recruit and retain high-quality teachers and staff" (p. 665). Licklider (2004) also identified that quality teachers know their subjects very well, are prone to keep up-to-date in their subject area, acknowledge differentiated learning styles, and incorporate student group work in an effort to create demanding learning for their students. However, in Bangladeshi schools, because of the shortage of specialized teachers, some teachers are asked to teach courses which are not within their specialized areas. To overcome this problem, most of the participants recommended the Bangladeshi Government review their employment policy and recruit more specialized teachers.

Participants in this study also mentioned that in recruiting more specialized teachers, the biggest challenge for the Bangladeshi Government was allocating extra funding in the education budget. Regarding education budget, Chowdhury, Samir, Chowdhury, and Ahmed (2002) noted that the total budget for education in Bangladesh is only 2% of the GDP, which is lower than any other country in South Asia. However, half of Bangladesh's entire education budget goes towards primary education. Furthermore, 96% of revenue for education in government schools goes towards teachers' salaries. In turn, little money is left to recruit, train, and supervise new teachers (Kabeer, Geetha, & Ramya, 2003).

*Implementing effective instructional methods*. Regarding implementing effective instructional methods, the most commonly identified strategies articulated by the participants of this research included making subject content practical and life relevant,

using more technological support among teachers, arranging study tours for students, adopting varied teaching methods, updating teacher training facilities, reducing the teachers' workload, and arranging frequent formal/informal instructional supervision. Similarly, from various research (Bergman, 1980; Pellicer, 1984; Porter & Brophy, 1988; Ralph, 1998) it emerged that to be effective, teachers need to know their subject knowledge and adopt a variety of teaching methodologies, classroom management skills, motivational strategies, and assessment procedures. Participants believed that teachers, teacher training authority, Bangladeshi Government, school administrators, and district administrators were responsible for addressing these issues.

***Elevating the image of teaching profession***. One of the major conclusions that emerged from this study was that in order to improve Bangladeshi schools, there was a great need to elevate the image of the teaching profession. Participants of this study mentioned that in Bangladeshi society, the teaching profession is not a well-respected profession and when teachers are neither respected nor valued, they are not motivated to put forth their best efforts in teaching students. Similarly, according to Reynolds, Creemers, Stringfield, Teddlie, and Schaffer (2002), it became apparent that an effective education system level can (but not necessarily will) create effective schools and classrooms; however, that depends partly on the value society places on the educational system and the teaching profession.

Participants of this study noted that low salary, poor living conditions, lack of social dignity, and limited career advancement opportunities were the main reasons that the teaching profession was not highly popular among Bangladeshi job seekers. These identified reasons were congruent with the findings of a United States survey conducted

by Peter Hart and Associates (1999). In their study, the majority of high school students in United States viewed teaching as a profession that was unsafe, lacking in esteem, subject to low salaries, and provided limited opportunities for career advancement. In order to attract, retain, and motivate high caliber individuals to teach and remain in teaching, participants of this study suggested recruiting high-quality teachers, establishing a teacher career continuum, and increasing teacher salary.

*Recruiting high-quality teachers*. Participants noted that in order to attract high-quality teachers, the Bangladeshi government should administer advertisements and campaigns to make the teaching profession more respectable, rewarding, and attractive. Similarly, Alverez's (1991) study documented that aggressive advertising, which portrayed companies in a positive light, was the highest ranked recruitment strategy by top-flight applicants. It is important to recognize that recruitment strategies such as competitive compensation, career advancement, collaborative work environments, and aggressive advertising are micro-economic tactics. According to Milken's (2002) research findings, micro-economic approaches help to elevate the teaching profession such that it is on par with other entry-level professional jobs, and this point may attract and retain human capital in both good and bad economic times.

*Establishing a teacher career continuum*. Teachers of this study recommended the establishment of a career continuum in teaching profession. They mentioned that in Bangladeshi public schools, there is no promotion system for teachers. The Bangladeshi Government recruits assistant headmasters and headmasters directly. Teachers do not have any opportunity to become an assistant headmaster or a headmaster via their performance, education, or experience; all teachers generally hold the same position.

Interestingly, this kind of organizational structure found in Bangladeshi schools can be described using *the egg carton analogy* (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Like an egg in a carton each teacher remains in his/her classroom working in isolation while surrounded by a dozen other colleagues, separated only by paper-thin walls. The egg carton analogy shows quite well that in the majority of Bangladeshi schools, teachers with one year of experience or 20 generally hold the same position, are engaged in the same activities, and have similar authority and responsibilities (Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001; Tyack & Hansot, 1980).

To overcome this situation, Hawley and Rosenholtz (1984) and Murphy and Hart (1986) suggested that by explicitly defining different teaching positions that carry different roles, responsibilities, authority, and pay, all schools should organize their staff into a career continuum consisting of inductee teacher, teacher, specialist teacher, mentor teacher, and master teacher. They further explained that this teaching career continuum not only focuses support on effective teaching and meaningful student learning, but also provides opportunities for the most competent teachers to assume leadership positions. Participants of this study recommended the Bangladeshi Government providing a career continuum for school teachers.

*Increasing teacher salary*. It emerged that teacher salary in Bangladesh was very low compared to other professionals. In the individual interviews, headmaster, parent, and teacher acknowledged that teacher salary needs to be increased. To increase teacher salary, they advised reviewing teacher salary provisions, developing an equal salary structure across all levels of teaching, and considering relative cost of living, teacher educational qualifications, and teacher performance in salary calculation. These

suggested strategies are comparable with Odden and Kelley's (2002) research findings

that in over 95% of American public schools, teachers are paid based on a salary schedule

where pay increases as years of experience and education credits accrue.

Solmon and Podgurky's (2000) study also confirmed that in most of the school

systems, all teachers with the same experience and credits no matter what they teach, how

well they teach, or how much their students learn, are paid the same. Headmasters in this

study also advised that teachers involved in school coaching after regular school hours

should be paid overtime or extra money.  In a study, Schacter and Thum (2004) found

that schools where principals and superintendents have the flexibility to compensate

teachers differently based on their position, such as, master, mentor, specialist, teacher,

and inductee and their performance, such as, student achievement gains and teaching

skills and knowledge, were successful in terms of student achievement. All participants

of this study noted that the Bangladeshi Government was solely responsible for increases

to teacher salary.

*Providing teacher-led professional development*. Another striking finding of this

study was that in order to enhance school effectiveness, the Bangladeshi government

needs to contextualize teacher training and professional development programs.  Writing

about the link between teachers' professional development and school improvement,

Newmann, King, and Youngs (2000) argued that professional development in schools

needs to address multiple aspects of the school's organizational capacity, which they

defined as ''the collective power of the full staff to improve student achievement

schoolwide'' (p. 261).  In particular, they insisted that ''professional development should

be designed to fit the specific capacity needs of a school at a particular point in time'' (p. 265).

A majority of the participants mentioned that they were having many teacher training and professional development programs from different NGOs; however, in most of the cases teachers were not able to apply their training knowledge because of the shortage of time and because of the large number of students in one classroom. To make teachers effective and relevant in a Bangladeshi context, participants noted that the infrastructure of Bangladesh's education system needs to be changed, and, to do that, the government needs to consult with ground-level educators (those who are directly related with teaching-learning).

Participants explained that ground-level educators know better than anybody about what works and what does not work in actual teaching and learning in classrooms; in this case, they emphasized the importance of teacher-led professional development. This recommendation was congruent with Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, and Birman's (2002) and Newmann, Bryk, and Nagaoka's (2001) research findings. Based on two large-scale studies of effective teacher professional development, these researchers showed that teacher-led professional development is very beneficial when groups of similar teachers can iteratively identify and concentrate on teaching and student learning needs in the content and context of their own classrooms. Most of the participants of this study acknowledged that a collaborative effort of teachers, school administrators, the Bangladeshi Government, and different NGOs is needed to address this issue.

*Material resources*. Other suggested school improvement needs were: low student-teacher ratio, good textbooks, more extracurricular activities, and more

instructional materials (e.g., computers, projectors, televisions, sound system, etc.). While emphasizing the need of material resources to enhance the school effectiveness, Scheerens (2001) stated that resource-input factors appear to have a larger impact on student achievement in developing countries.

Large-scale studies of schooling in low-income countries emphasized the importance of human and material resources in achieving better schooling outcomes, including factors such as school infrastructure, class size, teachers' experience and qualifications, and the availability of instructional materials (Fuller & Clarke, 1994). In a study, Willms and Somers used information from the Primer Estudio Internacional Comparativo (PEIC; UNESCO, 1998), which includes data for 13 Latin American countries, with samples of approximately 100 schools in each country. The authors concluded that the effects associated with school-level variables indicated that the most effective schools, gauged by their schooling outcomes after taking into account of students' family background, are high levels of school resources, including a low pupil-teacher ratio, more instructional materials, a large library, and well-trained teachers. From the data analysis, for this study, I propose that along with the Bangladeshi Government, some NGOs involved in education sector should work on strategies to provide funding for schools to buy computers, projectors, televisions, sound system, and other instructional materials.

### *Improving School Culture*

This study identified the fact that in order to improve school culture, collaboration among teachers is crucial. This view shared by most of the participants of this study concurred with that of Little (1982), who recognized collaboration as a critical practice in

effective schools. During the past decade, ideas from Senge (1990) have influenced schools to foster team learning, rather than learning in isolation. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) also provided further support for the benefits of collaborative cultures in schools such as increased teacher efficacy, teacher job satisfaction, and student performance.

The data analysis of this study showed that the process of school improvement should be focused on both structural and cultural changes. Regarding this, Louis, Kruse, and Raywid (1996) said, "[B]y emphasizing needed changes in the culture of the schools and the daily practice of professionals, the reform movement can concentrate on the heart of the school– the teaching and learning process" (p. 9). To support this point, Fullan (2001) also suggested that successful principals aim first at addressing cultural change within the school, having structural change occur secondarily, as members of the collaborative culture discover that traditional structures no longer meet their needs, and inhibit the sustainability and growth of the emerging culture of collaboration.

In conclusion, in a Bangladeshi educational context, the improvement efforts mainly consisted of two components: identifying the key school improvement needs and developing the strategies to meet those needs. The data analysis revealed that the identified school improvement needs can be grouped into providing the resources and improving the school culture. The data analysis of this study revealed that autonomy granted to schools, human resources, and material resources constitute the concept of resources. Participants proposed that teachers should have more autonomy to work freely in schools and suggested that the Bangladeshi Government should create a balance between centralization and decentralization. This study revealed that to enhance the school effectiveness, Bangladeshi schools need to recruit more specialized teachers,

implement effective instructional methodologies, elevate the image of teaching profession, and provide teacher-led professional development. In order to improve Bangladeshi schools, other respondents noted that there need to be a lower student-teacher ratio, better textbooks, more extra-curricular activities, and more instructional materials, such as, computers, projectors, televisions, sound system, and so on. This study revealed a strong perception that the role of collaboration in improving school culture is crucial.

### *Addressing Barriers as an Initial Improvement Strategy*

There was a strong indication from this study that in order to successfully implement improvement initiatives, major barriers to the process need to be addressed. Participants of this study identified three important barriers to implementing key school improvement strategies in Bangladeshi context, and suggested strategies to address these challenges. First, participants believed that neglecting to listen to the voices of all stakeholders during policymaking negatively affected school improvement. Second, participants stipulated that the misuse of private tutoring or coaching was one of the main challenges to implementing school improvement strategies in Bangladeshi secondary schools. Third, the data analyses revealed the perception that some of the Bangladeshi teachers were not committed and serious in their classroom teaching. Participants also noted that by including all stakeholders' voices in educational policy-making, addressing the misuses of private tutoring or coaching, and making teachers more accountable these barriers could be overcome.

*Inclusive Policy Making*

One of the major conclusions that emerged from this study was the need of inclusive policy making. Regarding inclusive policy making, Vlachou (2004) noted inclusion has become a global issue; in different countries, there are a number of stated intentions and written policies to move towards its achievement. In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Education is concerned with policy formulation, planning, monitoring, evaluation and execution of plans and programs (Ministry of Education, 2005). Bangladeshi policy-makers influence educational policy by finding examples of successful international practice and then develop policy proposals that might encourage new practices to implement. This process raises two questions. First, can meaningful educational change be accomplished through the policy process? And second, what are the best practices for quality education? The findings of this research answers these questions, as the participants of this study noted that in the process of educational policy-making, root-level professionals' voices need to be heard; the Bangladeshi Government needs to consult with individuals who are directly involved with teaching-learning. Most of the participants emphasized that ground-level professionals know better than anybody about what works and what does not work in actual teaching and learning in classrooms. This finding is congruent with Gutmann (1987) that all stakeholders should be empowered to make educational policies.

In Bangladesh, the traditional model of policymaking is constructed by the techniques of governance set out across a range of top-down directives. However, according to Ball's (1990), Fulcher's (1993) and Armstrong's (2003) perspectives, educational policies are essentially constructed through the wider fabric of social

practices, where individuals engage in the struggle to make their voice heard, to take social actions, and to insert their moral and political values into the existing social relations of power. The findings of this study support the idea that policy-making should take its initiatives from a grassroots level through the acts of listening and discovering the everyday practices of students and teachers in their school life. In political terms, the configuration of policy-making from a grassroots level that is concerned with individual engagement and participatory practices manifests the meanings of deep democracy (Young, 2000). In pedagogical terms, Paulo Freire's (1970) critical perspective can be used to assert that in order for educational practices to become a truly empowering process, teachers and students must be enabled to engage in the political praxis through the provision of a dialogical approach that opens up new ways of thinking and acting about education and social justice.

### *Addressing the Misuses of Private Tutoring or Coaching*

A significant theme of this study was the suggestion that to enhance the school effectiveness of Bangladeshi schools, there was a great need to address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching. According to Bary (2000), private coaching or tutoring has long been a major phenomenon in Bangladesh, as in many other Asian countries. On average, 60%-70% of students from all grades and from rich and middle class socioeconomic status seek extra help from private coaching or tutoring in Bangladesh.

A majority of the participants mentioned that the Bangladeshi education system was one of the factors that fostered private tutoring or coaching. They explained that once students are admitted to the high schools, their main focus is to achieve high scores on academic subjects in the SSC examination. To achieve high scores, most of the students

seek extra help from private coaching or tutoring before and/or after school. Participants'

views were congruent with those of Bray (2000), who noted that private tutoring seems to

be more evident in systems in which success in examinations can easily be promoted by

investment in private supplementary tutoring and private supplementary tutoring

becomes more necessary in systems that are teacher-centered rather than child-centered,

and/or are intolerant of special needs students.

In the NGT group discussions, it emerged that salary of teachers in Bangladesh

was very low compared to other professionals. Therefore, in the individual interviews,

participants noted that Bangladeshi teachers were involved in private tutoring or coaching

in order to survive financially. In this regard, Foondun (2002) and Shafiq's (2002)

findings also exemplified that in some countries, teachers are paid so poorly that they and

their families would be unable to subsist if they had to depend on a teacher's salary.

Teachers, therefore, have to secure additional incomes, with tutoring becoming a major

form of income. This point is a major factor behind the rise of tutoring in Bangladesh and

Kenya, for example.

Participants mentioned that because of the different socioeconomic conditions,

parents cannot afford private tutoring or coaching for their children, which creates the

discrimination among students. Private supplementary tutoring seems to be a mechanism

that maintains and perhaps increases social inequalities. Some research findings showed

that children in higher socioeconomic groups generally receive more supplementary

tutoring than do children in lower socio-economic groups (Foondun, 2002; Montgomery,

Agyeman, Aglobitse, & Heiland, 2000; Stevenson & Baker, 1992; Yi, 2002). In 1998,

expenditure on private tutoring by the richest 10% in a sample of urban households in the

Republic of Korea was 12 times the amount spent by the poorest 10% of households (Yi, 2002, p. 14).

It emerged from this study that Bangladeshi students and teachers are busy (both in schools and in private coaching); in fact, they have little to no leisurely time; they are tired and mentally/emotionally stressed. Similarly, some other research findings also acknowledged that supplementary tutoring leads to fatigue. The ones who are most obviously affected are the pupils who go straight from mainstream school to supplementary classes; but also affected are the tutors, especially when they are also mainstream teachers. With reference to Sri Lanka, de Silva (1994) lamented, "Continuous teaching-learning process going on from morning until evening on weekdays and during week-ends and school holidays denies both teachers and students sufficient rest and recreation (p. 5)." Not only does this produce fatigue in both teachers and pupils, he stated, it makes them tired when at school, thereby reducing the productivity of that part of each day. Similar remarks have been made in Malta by Fenech and Spiteri (1999).

Most of the participants of this study also mentioned that manipulation is especially common, in situations where mainstream teachers provide paid supplementary tutoring for their own mainstream pupils after school hours. Participants further noted that in the worst cases, unethical situations arise in which the teachers teach only half the curriculum during the school day and then require their pupils to pay for the other half during private lessons. Likewise, Foondun (2002) and Shafiq's (2002) research findings have shown that some teachers abuse their positions by teaching only half the syllabus during official hours and then declaring that if the students want to receive teaching in the second half, then they must come to the after-school tutoring classes. According to

Klitgaard (1988), in this unethical situation, illicit behavior flourishes as teachers have monopolized power over students. Biswal (1999a) also pointed out that in some countries, "Teachers are the monopoly suppliers of their services to the students, they have the full discretion in what they supply, and they are hardly held accountable for their actions. This gives rise to a situation where the teachers try to extract students' consumer surplus by shirking at school and supplying tutoring outside for a fee" (p. 223). To avoid these adverse effects of private tutoring or coaching, participants of this study suggested several strategies.

A majority of the respondents suggested that if the quality of the schooling improves then students would not need private tutoring or coaching. In particular, they noted that if all teachers taught each lesson with a professional devotion then students would not need private tutoring or coaching. Similarly, to avoid supplementary tutoring, the Korean authorities have decided to take a broader approach. At one level are efforts to improve the quality of the school system – to make it less rigid and to widen the types of learning that it promotes. Since the mid-1990s, schools have been required to offer additional services in order to make it less necessary for parents to seek these services externally (Republic of Korea, 1996).

Most of the participants urged the Bangladeshi government to play an interventionist role and to regulate the market in order to limit the negative dimensions of private tutoring. Participants suggested a few strategies that the Bangladeshi government could consider to control supplementary tutoring. For example, the Bangladeshi government can adopt the same policy as the Indian government adopted with regard to private tutoring. According to Indian private tutoring policy, teachers are prohibited from

tutoring students from their own schools. Bray's (2000) study has shown that this strategy

to control supplementary tutoring was successfully implemented in Hong Kong. Teachers

in Hong Kong have long been prohibited from tutoring their own mainstream pupils; and

if any teachers tried overtly to undertake such tutoring, they would be sharply sanctioned

by the authorities, their peers, the parents, and society at large. Bray further noted that

teachers in Hong Kong are relatively well paid, and thus cannot argue that they must tutor

to make ends meet. To implement this strategy in Bangladesh, participants noted that the

Bangladeshi Government needs to develop effective strategies for increasing teacher

salary.

To control the private tutoring, participants of this study also suggested that

instead of coaching or private tutoring, school-based, one-to-one or group teaching can be

emphasized. In such a situation, teachers should be paid extra remuneration.  According

to Biswal (1999b), school-based tutoring was successfully implemented in Zanzibar

(United Republic of Tanzania), where teachers had been given official permission to

provide supplementary tutoring in their own schools. As explained by a Ministry of

Education document (Zanzibar, 1998):

> The Government has officially allowed government schools to charge a small fee
> for extra tuition provided by teachers after the official working hours in situations
> where parents are willing to do so. Through controversial, the measure offers a
> rare opportunity for parents to voluntarily contribute to teachers' remuneration ...
> therefore increasing the motivation of teachers and decreasing their propensity to
> look for another job. This measure has a positive impact on access as the number
> of teachers to be recruited to cope with the ever-increasing enrolment becomes
> fairly stable. (p. 18)

Such issues are not unique to Zanzibar. From one perspective, in resource-constrained

settings the practice of teachers providing additional tutoring for their pupils may be a

solution rather than a problem (Biswal, 1999b). To sum up, the result of this study

suggested that the Bangladeshi Government, school staff, teachers, and students were responsible actors who could help to control private tutoring or coaching.

### *Call for Teacher Accountability*

One of the key findings of this study was the call for teacher accountability. Participants expressed that in Bangladesh, many teachers displayed a lack of professional acumen while in the classroom. They also mentioned that Bangladeshi teachers had many opportunities to attend different professional development training, but due to the teachers' lack of commitment to their job, they were neither serious nor willing to put efforts into implementing new methods or approaches in their classes. Due to these contextual factors, participants of this study expressed the necessity of teacher accountability towards sustainable school improvement in Bangladesh. Similarly, the research of Earl and Lee (1998) disclosed the external role of pressure and support for evaluation, networking, professional development, and expectations for accountability, as catalysts for the engagement of teachers that they found in successful schools. The research of Carnoy and Loeb (2002) also showed that an accountability system can change student performance.

Participants of this study suggested a teacher accountability system that involves assessing individual teacher's skills, knowledge, and responsibilities through formal and informal instructional supervision by administrators. They explained that at the time of teacher recruitment, teachers should be given some criteria for accountability and from time to time school administrators need to supervise them. Odden, Milanowski, and Youngs (1998) argued that the challenge of creating an effective teacher accountability system is to improve the quality of teacher instruction, thereby raising student

achievement. Odden and Clune (1998) argued that to improve teaching, one must first identify the knowledge and skills that a teacher needs to teach successfully and then create explicit standards and rubrics to measure performance.

In sum, participants of this study identified three dominant challenges or barriers toward sustainable school improvement in Bangladesh. First, participants believed that neglecting to listen to the voices of all stakeholders during policymaking negatively affected school improvement. To overcome this, they suggested that in the process of educational policymaking, the Bangladeshi Government needs to consult with people who have first-hand experience and knowledge about the educational system. Second, the data analysis of this study identified that the misuse of private tutoring or coaching was one of the main challenges to implementing school improvement strategies in Bangladesh. Participants shared some of the strategies to address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching, which included arranging school coaching after school hours, imposing laws to control private tutoring or coaching, reviewing teacher salary provisions, motivating students to be more attentive in class, and encouraging greater teacher commitment to classroom instruction. The third challenge that this study revealed was the lack of devotion to the teaching profession. To resolve this problem, most of the participants expressed the need for an effective teacher accountability system to emerge in Bangladeshi education.

## Implications for Theory, Practice, Policy, and Research

The findings of this study revealed that the key dynamics of school improvement in Bangladeshi context depend on careful planning by considering contextual relevance, providing school improvement needs, and resolving the challenges to the improvement

efforts. A number of implications for theory, practice, policy, and research emerged from this study.

***Implication for Theory: Towards Sustainable School Improvement***

The importance of context is highlighted by internationally comparative studies (Reezigt & Creemers, 2005). However, there were only a few studies in developing countries that have addressed contextual school improvement (Scheerens, 2000). Hallinger and Kantamara (2001) noted that the Asian literature on school improvement is lacking. Obviously the results of this study enrich the literature on international studies on school improvement.

This study illustrated the importance of the cultural context when developing school improvement strategies for Bangladeshi secondary public schools. The findings of this study acknowledged that the concept of an improving school is firmly embedded in the educational context of a country. That is, school improvement can never be studied separately from that educational context.

As previously noted, the presence of school effectiveness correlates are indicators of school efficacy, and the existence or nonexistence of these internationally-accepted characteristics distinguish the level of school effectiveness. However, the findings of this study showed that, in a Bangladeshi educational context, such correlates as parental involvement, academic emphasis, relationship among stakeholders, physical environment, and resource materials were associated with value-laden contextual perspectives. In this study, though these correlates incorporated contextual, cultural, and bureaucratic details, these realities did not make the universally-accepted correlates

irrelevant; rather, these realities enhanced the school effectiveness literature with a unique cultural perspective.

In this section, I present a framework of effective school improvement for Bangladeshi secondary public schools. The initial conceptual framework as described in the literature review (see Figure 2.2) incorporated a number of theoretical constructs suited for the concepts under study. The final segment of the initial conceptual framework was related to implementation. The theoretical implications of the findings of this study relating to implementation are identified in a revised framework (see Figure 5.1).
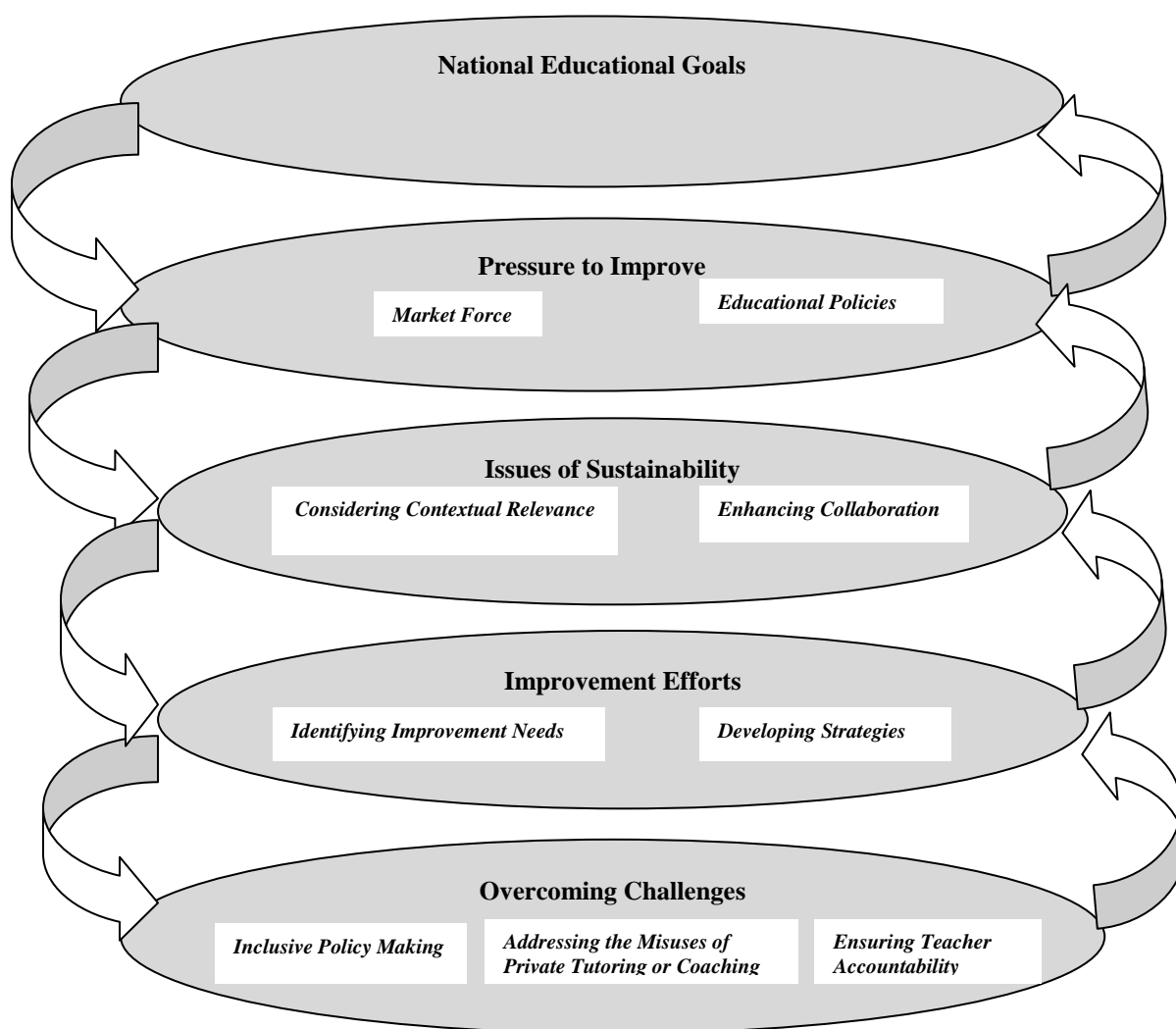


*Figure 5.1* School Improvement Framework for Bangladeshi Secondary Public Schools.

The findings of this study are related to effective school improvement in most of the Bangladeshi secondary public schools; however, there were also some differences between schools within Bangladesh, which added to the difficulty in creating a common model. Therefore, I, decided to use the term *framework* instead of *model*. However, I feel that the framework (see Figure 5.1) offers exactly that—a framework within which effective school improvement can be developed or explained in a Bangladeshi context. The concepts used in this framework are not completely new. Instead, the main innovation that this framework offers is the combination of earlier concepts from the often separated fields of school effectiveness and school improvement (Brown, Duffield, & Riddell, 1995; MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001; Reynolds, 1996; Stoll, 1999; Stoll & Fink, 1996). The most significant aspect of this framework is the highlighting of culturally embedded contextual conditions for school improvement efforts in Bangladesh.

According to this framework, *national educational outcomes or goals* are the main sources of the pressure to improve. The *pressure to improve* leads the *improvement efforts*. At the start of improvement efforts, *issues of sustainability* need to be considered. This research identified two factors relating to sustainable improvement efforts. The first factor was *considering contextual applicability before implementing new initiatives*, and the second factor was *fostering collaboration* among stakeholders. I determined that the actual improvement effort consists of two components: *identifying the improvement needs* and *developing the strategies* to meet those needs.

My data analysis revealed that the identified improvement needs can be grouped into two clusters: *providing the resources* and *improving the school culture*. This study also identified some of the challenges towards sustainable school improvement in

Bangladeshi context and recommended some of the strategies for *overcoming the challenges*.

This study revealed that the components of this framework are interrelated, continuous, and cyclical in nature. For example, *addressing the misuses of private tutoring or coaching* was one of the challenges towards sustainable school improvement in Bangladeshi context. Participants of this study explained that, on one hand, to improve the individual scores (educational outcome) in public examinations, students needed private tutoring or coaching; on the other hand, participants also noted that in Bangladesh, teacher salary was very low compared with other professionals; thus to supplement their income, teachers were involved in private tutoring or coaching. It also emerged from this study that private tutoring or coaching negatively affected the relationships among and between teachers and students. Then participants shared some of the strategies to address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching, which included arranging school coaching after school hours, imposing laws to control private tutoring or coaching, reviewing teacher salary provisions, motivating students to be more attentive in class, and encouraging greater teacher commitment to classroom instruction. This example clearly shows how and why the components of this framework are interrelated, continuous and cyclical in nature.

*Pressure to improve*. Figure 5.1 illustrates that in Bangladesh, striving to obtain the national educational outcomes is the main catalyst for school improvement. This study revealed that the pressure to improve was exerted through *market mechanisms* and *educational policies*. Market mechanisms created competition between schools in Bangladesh. Competition is likely to intensify the need to possess a reputable reputation

for potential customers and, as a consequence, this can be the stimulus for school improvement. In this study, I found that in Bangladesh, school improvement was promoted by educational policies that exerted external pressure on schools to change.

*Issues of sustainability*. According to Figure 5.1, at the start of improvement process, the issues of sustainability need to be considered. This research identified two factors relating to a sustainable improvement process: *considering contextual relevance* and *fostering collaboration*. Regarding the understanding of the sustainable school improvement, most of the participants noted that overall, lasting development of the schooling system could be regarded as sustainable school improvement. They also mentioned considering contextual applicability before implementing new initiatives as the most important factor towards achieving sustainable school improvement. This research also identified that to achieve sustainable school improvement, all stakeholders need to work collaboratively.

*Improvement efforts*. In Bangladesh, most of the school improvement efforts are mandated by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2005). Figure 5.1 shows that in a Bangladeshi educational context, the improvement efforts consist of two components: identifying the improvement needs and developing strategies to meet those needs. According to the data analysis the key school improvement needs can be grouped into *providing the resources*, and *improving the school culture*.

In order to make school improvement effective, the resources made available by the educational context are very important. Without these, schools are likely to experience difficulties in their improvement efforts. Resources can be material, but there are also other resources (or support) that may be essential for effective school

improvement. From the data analysis, it was revealed that in order to improve the school effectiveness, Bangladeshi schools need to recruit specialized teachers, who implement effective instructional methodologies, elevate the image of teaching profession, and provide professional development for other teachers. Participants identified other suggested school improvement needs to be: low student-teacher ratio, good textbooks, more extra-curricular activities, and more instructional materials, such as, computers, projectors, televisions, sound systems, and so on.

This study determined that the role of collaboration in improving school culture is crucial. The results of the data analysis revealed a variety of mechanisms to enhance collaboration among and between students, teachers, and parents. From participants' responses, it emerged that building trusting relationships, improving communication, developing collegiality, promoting professional commitment, and valuing others opinions are significant vehicles to foster collaboration among the stakeholders.

*Overcoming the challenges*. There was a strong indication from the participants of this study that in order to successfully implement improvement initiatives, all barriers of school improvement needed to be addressed. Figure 5.1 illustrates three dominant points that reflected the opinions of participants from both schools emerged from the data. These included lack of attention to the voices of all stakeholders during policymaking, the misuses of private tutoring or coaching, and lack of commitment among some of the teachers in their teaching. Findings affirmed that these barriers could be addressed by including all stakeholders' voices in educational policy-making, addressing the misuses of private tutoring or coaching, and making teachers more accountable.

Participants in this study noted that teachers, parents, students, teacher-training authority, Bangladeshi Government, Non-Government Organizations, school administrators, and district administrators were co-responsible within their own capacities to provide the necessary support and resources for school improvement in Bangladeshi context.

### Implication for Practice

A number of implications for practice emerged from this research. Many of these suggestions came from the participants themselves. Based on the results of this study, the following implications for practice are recommended in order to enhance the effectiveness of Bangladeshi secondary public schools:

1.  To *enhance collaboration among teachers*, district and school administrators are advised to reduce teachers` workloads and to give them more time to collaborate; to *foster collaboration among all stakeholders*, school administrators are recommended to value others' opinions, contributions and endeavors. They are also encouraged to adopt collaborative decision-making process.

2.  To *implement effective instructional methods*, teachers need to make teaching content practical and life-oriented, use more technological support, arrange study tours for students, and adopt varied teaching methods. In this effort, school administrators and district education officers are recommended to reduce the teachers' workload and arrange frequent formal/informal instructional supervision; also the Bangladeshi government may consider updating teacher training facilities.

3. To *increase the parental involvement*, participants suggested building trusting relationships among stakeholders, working towards frequent and transparent communication, raising parents' conscience about their children's education, encouraging parents to be more in touch with schools, making one monthly parent-teacher meeting mandatory for schools and parents, and arranging reward for parental involvement. Participants noted that school administrators, parents, school staff, and the Bangladeshi government were the responsible actors who could play important roles to increase parental involvement.

4. To *improve the relationship among teachers*, teachers are encouraged to exercise their best work ethics and professional commitment; school administrators are encouraged to treat all school staff as professionals.

5. To *control private tutoring*, the Bangladeshi Government can adopt strategies similar to those adopted by the Indian Government adopted, where teachers are not allowed to provide tutoring to students from their own schools. Participants of this study also suggested that instead of coaching or private tutoring, school-based, one-to-one, or group teaching can be emphasized; in that case, school teachers should be open to extending extra help to students in need. In turn, the Bangladeshi Government needs to develop effective strategies for increasing teacher salary.

6. To *boost the concentration or seriousness of classroom teaching*, teachers are encouraged to enhance their work ethic and professional commitment; and the Bangladeshi government is encouraged to adopt an effective teacher accountability system.

7. To *enhance teacher social value*, participants suggested that the Bangladeshi government should review teacher salary provisions, elevate the image of the teaching profession, and involve teachers in government functions and ceremonies.

### *Implications for Policy*

Though this was a study of two schools and the generalizability of the findings is consequently limited, relevance to governmental policy can tentatively be established. Although some policy implications were provided in the previous sections, in order to inform policymakers in their understanding of how to improve the effectiveness of Bangladeshi secondary public schools, the following recommendations are made:

1. Towards achieving sustainable school improvement, the Bangladeshi government could consider contextual applicability before implementing new initiatives.

2. In Bangladesh, the traditional model of policymaking is constructed by the techniques of governance set out across a range of top-down hierarchy of directives. Participants in this study believe that policymaking could take its initiatives from listening to the voice of grassroots teachers to learn about the everyday practices of students and teachers.

3. To solve the dilemma between centralization and decentralization, the Bangladeshi government may consider establishing educational goals, objectives, policies, time frames, and standards for national evaluations at a national level. This way, curriculum frameworks, accreditation, and the equitable allocation of resources would be centrally controlled. However, the means for achieving the

goals should be authorized through individual schools. That is, aspects of how, when, and in what way to teach should be decentralized.

4. To recruit more specialized teachers, it is recommended the Bangladeshi government could review teacher recruiting policies and recruit additional numbers of specialized teachers.

5. Teachers in this study stressed the need to have a career continuum in the teaching profession. They mentioned that in Bangladeshi secondary public schools, there is no promotion system for teachers. According to the current policy, the Bangladeshi government recruits assistant headmasters and headmasters directly. Teachers do not have any opportunity to become an assistant headmaster or a headmaster by the means of their performance, education, or experience; all teachers generally hold the same position. Participants of this study recommended the Bangladeshi government could establish a career continuum for secondary school teachers.

6. Compared to other professionals, teacher salaries in Bangladesh are very low. All participants of this study noted that the Bangladeshi government was solely responsible for increases to teacher salaries.

7. In order to enhance the school effectiveness, the Bangladeshi government needs to contextualize teacher training and professional development programs. Participants of this study mentioned that they were having many teacher training and professional development programs from different NGOs; however, in most of the cases, teachers were not able to apply their training knowledge because of

the shortage of time and because of the large number of students in one classroom.

8. From the data analysis, it was revealed that participants believe the Bangladeshi government needs to provide more funding for schools to buy computers, projectors, televisions, sound system, and other instructional materials.

9. The Bangladeshi government could play an interventionist role and regulate the market in order to limit the negative dimensions of private tutoring. Participants supplied some suggestions that the Bangladeshi government could consider to control supplementary tutoring. For example, the Bangladeshi government can adopt a policy similar to that of the Indian government with regard to private tutoring. According to Indian private tutoring policy, teachers are prohibited from tutoring students from their own schools.

10. Participants of this study expressed that in Bangladesh, there was a lack of professional ethics with regard to classroom instruction. To encourage and motivate teachers, participants of this study suggested that the Bangladeshi Government adopt an effective teacher accountability system.

*Implication for Future Research*

This study revealed perceptions of school administrators, teachers, students, and parents in two schools in one city in Bangladesh and contained a relatively small population. It would be beneficial to examine and compare perceptions of a larger population from other cities in Bangladesh. This study was also conducted during a relatively short period of time. Further qualitative study could be conducted to incorporate a longitudinal process of data collection.

My research disclosed the ongoing tensions between new teachers and more established teachers in Bangladeshi secondary public schools. Further inquiry into the nature of interaction and collaboration between younger and professionally established teachers would help clarify the underpinnings of these tensions.

A case study of collaborative culture in one of the participating schools would be beneficial for observing and analyzing the process of culture formation and micropolitical interactions in greater depth.

Due to some contextual factors, participants of this study expressed the necessity for teacher accountability towards sustainable school improvement in Bangladesh. Further inquiry into the nature of an effective teacher accountability system would be beneficial for the Bangladeshi education system.

One of the most significant conclusions of this study was to address the misuses of private tutoring or coaching. A case study focusing solely on issues of private tutoring would be beneficial for identifying the strategies to control the misuses of private tutoring or coaching.

It would be beneficial to conduct a further study to investigate the particular challenges in implementing the school improvement strategies in Bangladeshi context. Finally, it would be both valuable and interesting to study these same participants again in three to four years to examine how their perceptions have changes and or evolved.

## Methodological Reflections

Having completed this study, I look back on the process and recognize the strengths of the research. These strengths mainly focused upon my personal experience with the Bangladeshi education system and the research methodology that I employed for

this study. My professional background and experiences with schools in Bangladesh was influential in my decision to conduct research in this area. I believe my personal experience with the Bangladeshi education system provided me with the ideal background needed to conduct this research. Not only was I knowledgeable about the topic at hand, the past experience of teaching in the Bangladeshi educational system enhanced my comfort and confidence as a researcher. On a methodological note, because it was my intention to identify the major school improvement needs and to prioritize them, the NGT technique combined with individual interviews was the appropriate choice of data collection to capture the perceptions of individual participants. In particular, the format of semi-structured individual interviews allowed me to probe for a deep, contextual understanding about school improvement strategies in Bangladeshi context.

Retrospectively, when I look back on this research, a question that comes to mind is: what would I do differently if I were to undertake this research again? Four main ideas come to surface. I first list these ideas and then explicate their meaning. First, I would add the perspectives of the members from the Ministry of Education. Second, I would limit the interviews times to the weekend or holiday period when participants are less busy with school work. Third, I would vary the interview venues between participants' work places and other locations of their choice. Fourth, I would not choose a teacher respondent in the role of parent.

My purpose was to identify and analyze the major school improvement needs and related strategies for two Bangladeshi secondary public schools based upon the perceptions of in-school professionals, parents, and students. However, the education system in Bangladesh is highly centralized. In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Education is concerned with policy formulation, planning, monitoring, evaluation and execution of

plans and programs (Ministry of Education, 2005). In this context, looking back on the study process, if I had to do the study again, I would add the perspectives of the members from the Ministry of Education in order to have a broader view.

Two of the eight interview sessions of the study were conducted on the weekend. Reflecting on my interaction with participants during the interviews, I realize that the sessions undertaken during the weekend were longer and took place in a more relaxed atmosphere than those held during school hours and immediately after school. The reason for this difference may be the participants' less busy schedules in weekend compared to their many duties during school time. Those interviewed during school hours or immediately after school seemed to provide very brief responses. Thus, in a repetition of this study, I would request participants to participate in an interview during their leisure hours.

As I mentioned, two of the eight interview sessions of the study were conducted on the weekend. These two interview sessions took place in a restaurant and this relaxed atmosphere provided me with deeper insights than those interview sessions that took place in the schools. Interviewing participants outside their normal places of work would probably be more helpful.

There were 11 parents in the School B's parents' NGT meeting. After the completion of the NGT meeting, for the individual interview, I selected a female parent to provide a balanced representation of gender. However, this female parent was a teacher by profession. To avoid the dual role of a research respondent, if I had to do the study again, I would not choose a teacher respondent in the role of parent.

## Concluding Remarks: Reflection on the Research Journey

When I reflect upon the highlights of this research journey, I recollect the very beginning of this undertaking when I wondered if I would have enough data to complete the study. My worries turned out to be unsubstantiated, as the research produced a body of data that was much larger than anticipated. Handling such a great amount of research data presented a huge challenge. Although the process of data analysis was lengthy, tiring, and at times, frustrating, it turned this research into a journey full of significant findings and important discoveries.

It was interesting to see that the results of this study illustrated the importance of the cultural context in developing school improvement strategies for Bangladeshi secondary public schools. The findings of this study acknowledged that the concept of an improving school is firmly embedded in the educational context of a country. In this regard, one of the participants' comment was:

> We all want educational improvement. There is no doubt about this. We talk, seek, and debate about our educational improvement, but we don't take any positive action. Sometimes we tried to implement foreign strategies, but it didn't work out well. I think the main reason of this failure was that we didn't consider whether these strategies were applicable in our country or not. Before implementing anything we should consider our country context, our economical factors, our social factors, even our local school context. (p. 40)

It was fascinating for me to design a *school improvement framework* for Bangladeshi secondary public schools based on the findings of this research. I do not argue that this is a comprehensive school improvement framework; however, I would like to say that perhaps this framework incorporates effective guidelines for the Bangladeshi government to identify and analyze the sustainable school improvement efforts for Bangladeshi schools.

It was not until the end of the data collection for this study that I realized its importance not only to me as a researcher, but also to those participants who agreed to participate in NGT meetings and individual interviews. As I was analyzing the data and articulating the findings, the comment of one of the participants was constantly reminding me about the responsibility given to me by the participants. The comment was:

> Our policymaking is top-down. Those who are sitting on the top, they forget about their past, that they also graduated from these types of schools. Teachers are not called for any departmental meeting or board meeting; in fact, they don't have any chance to provide their inputs. Our policymakers make education policies without considering the real picture of the field or having input from ground-level people. Policymakers don't even think about the applicability of these policies. (p. 6)

Upon citing the above comment the participant implied that *not including teachers' voices in educational policy making* was one of the biggest challenges for sustainable school improvement in Bangladeshi context. The participant further noted "*we hope that through this research our voices will be heard*". In all honesty, at times, this responsibility seemed to be too much for me to handle. Looking back at this research journey, I hope that I managed to cope with such a great responsibility to understand and convey participants' perceptions to the reader in a fair manner.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Ethics Approval**

**Application for Approval of Research Protocol**

**Submitted to**
*University of Saskatchewan, Behavioural Research Ethics Board.*

1. **Name of Researcher:**    Md. M Islam Konok, Ph. D. Candidate.
                              Department of Educational Administration,
                              College of education,
                              University of Saskatchewan.

1a. **Name of Supervisor:**    Dr. Pat Renihan
                              Department of Educational Administration
                              College of Education,
                              University of Saskatchewan.

1b. **Anticipated Start Date:**    October, 2008
**Expected Completion Date:**    September, 2009

2. **Title of Study:**    *Sustainable School Improvement: A Case Study of the*
                          *Effectiveness needs of Two Bangladeshi High Schools*

3. **Abstract**

Reynolds (1998) stated that as the number of articles and books on school effectiveness has multiplied so have the misgivings about the current nature of the enterprise. Among these there are two major criticisms concerning context. According to Hamilton (1998), the first criticism is that of contextual relevance – is the list of characteristics that constitute an effective school universally valid? The second is from an ideological perspective what is the impact of the social and political values underlying the goals of education. Those concerned with school improvement have been advised by many educational researchers (Harber, 1997a; Harber and Davis, 1997; Reynolds, 1998; Hamilton, 1998; Harber and Muthukrishna, 2000; Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001) to pay attention to the unique features of the individual school *situation* and to build strategies on the basis of an audit of that particular context.

The purpose of this study is to identify the major school improvement needs and related strategies for two Bangladeshi secondary public schools based upon the perceptions of in-school professionals, parents and students. The following research questions direct the study: 1) What are the perceived school improvement needs for each school? 2) What specific strategies or initiatives are needed to improve school effectiveness for each school, according to study participants? and 3) What are the challenges or barriers to

implementing key improvement strategies and how might these challenges or barriers be overcome?

4. **Funding:**   Self-funded

5. **Expertise:** Not applicable

6. **Conflict of Interest:** Not applicable

7. **Participants:**

The participants in this study will be in-school professionals, parents, and students from two selected secondary public schools of Rajshahi School Board, Rajshahi, Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, there is no co-education system in secondary public schools, that's why I will choose one boys' school and one girls' school to provide a balanced representation of gender. I will send a letter to the Chairman of the Rajshahi School Board asking to conduct this study in two secondary public schools from Rajshahi School Board (see Appendix B). When the Chairman approves, I will contact headmasters by telephone, e-mail or mail to determine their willingness to volunteer their participation. After receiving their verbal expression of interest, I will send them a written explanation of the study (see Appendix C).

Initially, I will organize six group meetings for the purpose of data collection (Nominal Group Technique). For the purpose of these Nominal Group Technique (NGT) meetings, from each school one teacher group, one parent group and one student group will be organized. Each group will consist of eight to 10 teachers, parents or students. I will request each headmaster to choose participants for NGT meetings. After the completion of NGT meetings, one participant will be selected from each NGT group for individual interview. Individual interview participants will be chosen purposefully out of the focus group sample to provide a balanced representation of gender. I will also interview two headmasters from the selected schools. Initial interview questions for both NGT meetings and individual semistructured interviews will be formulated based on the research questions of this study (see Appendix G). Each NGT meeting and individual interview will last about 90 minutes. At the beginning of each NGT meeting and individual interview, I will review participants' rights as outlined within the consent form (see Appendix E).

It is important to emphasize that I do not have any prior relationship with any of the potential participants, nor do I intend to have a continued relationship with participants after completion of the study.

7a. **Recruitment Material:**
      The recruitment material will include the following:
   i.   Invitation Letter to the Chairman of the Rajshahi School Board, Rajshahi, Bangladesh (see Appendix B).

ii.    Invitation Letter to selected high school headmasters to participate in this study (see Appendix C).
iii.   Invitation Letter to selected participants to participate in this study (see Appendix D).
iv.    Interview Questions for both NGT meetings and individual interviews (see Appendix G).
v.     Consent form (see Appendix E).
vi.    Data/Transcript Release Form (see Appendix F).


## 8. Consent:

a) A copy of the letter seeking Chairman's permission to conduct this study in two selected secondary school from Rajshahi School Board, Rajshahi, Bangladesh (Appendix B).
b) Copies of the correspondence requesting high school headmasters to participate in the study are attached to this application (Appendix C).
c) Copies of the correspondence requesting participants to participate in the study are attached to this application (Appendix D).
d) A copy of the form soliciting participants' consent is attached to this application (Appendix E).

Each consent form:
i)    outlines in detail the purpose, length of time, and potential risks and benefits of participating in the study;
ii)   informs participants about the procedures involved in the study, the storage of data collected from the study, the confidentiality involved in the study, the volunteer nature of taking part in the study;
iii)  explains the researcher's readiness to be addressed questions at any point in the study at the contact information provided, and that the research has received approval on ethical grounds on [date] by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Sciences Research Ethics Board to whom questions may be addressed at (306) 966 2084, and that conducting interviews, and observing principals has been approved by the Directors on [date].
iv)   provides space for signatures of participants in the event they agree to participate.


## 9. Methods/ Procedures:

Being a multi-method study, this study will involve document analysis, NGT meetings, and semistructured interviews of selected participants. Initially, I will collect data via six NGT meetings (from each school one teacher group, one parent group and one student group will be organized). Each group will consist of eight to 10 teachers, parents or students. I will request each headmaster to choose participants for NGT meetings. The participant selection criteria will include: (i) all participants will be volunteers; (ii) participants will be aware of the education system of Bangladesh and their own school

circumstances; (iii) participants selection will take into consideration the cross-grade representation; and (iv) the participants will have been involved with the schools for at least two year.  After the completion of NGT meetings, one participant will be selected from each NGT group for individual interview by purposive sampling. This will be done to achieve a balanced representation of gender. I will also interview two headmasters from the selected schools.

Each NGT meeting and individual interview will last about 90 minutes. Interviews will be tape-recorded and transcribed. In the event of a need to clarify some findings or more information required to enrich the data, I will request respondents to avail themselves for follow-up interviews. The data analysis will be an inductive process of inferring themes and patterns from examination of data. I will use actual quotes of the participants in data analysis.

## 10. <u>Storage of Data:</u>

During and after completion of the study, all data collected will be securely stored by Dr. Pat Renihan, my research advisor at the University of Saskatchewan for a period of five years, and then destroyed.

## 11.  <u>Dissemination of Results:</u>

Participants will be informed that the data collected and the results of the study will be shared with the faculty of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan, and possibly in published articles, seminars, and/or conferences. In respect of anonymity, pseudonyms will be used when referring to the schools, and headmaster.

## 12.  <u>Risk, Benefits, and Deception:</u>

There are no anticipated risks or deception in this research. Participants will be informed of the purpose, and reason for participating, and may withdraw at any time without penalty. Relationships will be maintained on researcher-participant level, with participants having the right to withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort.
   a) Participants within this study do not include any vulnerable persons such as people in emotional distress, people who are physically ill, and people who have recently experienced a traumatic event.
   b) Participants in this study are not considered members of a captive or dependent population.
   c) There is no institutional/power relationship between the participants and the researchr.
   d) Within my data/files, I will take measures to protect the participants' anonymities.
   e) Third parties will not be exposed to loss of confidentiality/anonymity.
   f) Interviews will be audio-taped upon receiving participants' permission.
   g) Participants within this study will not actively be deceived or misled.

h) The research procedures will be accommodating to the respondents' time and preference of location.
i) I do not intend to ask questions that are personal, embarrassing or upsetting to participants.
j) I will conduct the NGT meetings and semistructured interviews in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of the participants.
k) Participants within this study will not embark on any perceived social risks.
l) The research will not infringe on respondent's rights such as restricting access to education or treatment.
m) Participants in this study will not receive compensation of any type.
n) No foreseeable harm is associated with this study.

**13.    Confidentiality:**

Confidentiality and anonymity will be observed throughout the study. Confidentiality will be preserved by the use of pseudonyms for real names in transcripts, analysis, and any document that results from this study. The school name of participants will not be identified. Specific details which would enable a reader to deduce the respondents' identities within interviews will be reviewed and, where necessary made more generic.

**14.    Data/Transcript Release:**

Participants will be given the opportunity to review final transcripts to ensure they accurately reflect what they said or intended to say. Participants will be afforded the right to clarify, add, or remove any or all of their responses. To acknowledge that the transcripts accurately reflect what was said in the interview and to authorize the release of the transcript to me, the respondents will sign a Data/Transcript Release Form (see Appendix F).

**15.    Debriefing and Feedback:**

Feedback will be given to participants in course of the study. Respondents will be informed that the completed dissertation will be available at the University of Saskatchewan's College of Education Library and the Department of Educational Administration, and that upon request, participants will be furnished with a summary of the report.

**16.** <u>**Required Signatures:**</u>

This proposal has been reviewed and is recommended for approval.

_____          _____

Dr. Pat Renihan, Faculty Advisor                                      Date


_____          _____

Md. M Islam Konok (Student)                                           Date


_____          _____

Dr. Edwin Ralph, Ed. Adm. (Acting Dept. Head)        Date

**17.** <u>**Required Contact Information:**</u>

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Dr. Pat Renihan | Md. M Islam Konok | Dr. Edwin Ralph |
| Educational Administration | 603-101 Cumberland Ave. | (Acting Dept. Head) |
| College of Education, U of S | Saskatoon, SK | College of Educ. U of S |
| 28 Campus Drive | S7N 1L5 | 28 Campus Drive |
| Saskatoon, SK. | 373-7978 | Saskatoon, SK |
| S7N 0X1 | 966-7020(fax) | 966-7583 |
| 966-7620 | islam.konok@usask.ca | 966-7020 |
| 966-7020 (fax) | or | edwin.raph@usask.ca |
| pat.renihan@usask.ca | Islampur | |
| | Chapai Nawabgonj- 6300 | |
| | Bangladesh | |
| | +88-078155013 | |

# UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB)

## *Certificate of Approval*

| PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR | DEPARTMENT | BEH# |
|---|---|---|
| Patrick Renihan | Educational Administration | 08-156 |

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CONDUCTED
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon SK

STUDENT RESEARCHERS
Md. M Islam Konok

SPONSOR
UNFUNDED

TITLE
Sustainable School Improvement: A Case Study of the Effectiveness Needs of Two Bangladeshi High Schools

| ORIGINAL REVIEW DATE | APPROVAL ON | APPROVAL OF: | EXPIRY DATE |
|---|---|---|---|
| 19-Jun-2008 | 22-Aug-2008 | Ethics Application | 21-Aug-2009 |
| | | Consent Protocol | |

Full Board Meeting ☐            Date of Full Board Meeting:

Delegated Review ☒
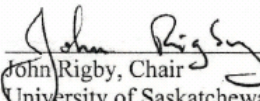
**CERTIFICATION**
The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

**ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS**
In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: *http://www.usask.ca/research/ethics_review/*

John Rigby, Chair
University of Saskatchewan
Behavioural Research Ethics Board

Please send all correspondence to:
Ethics Office
University of Saskatchewan
Room 302 Kirk Hall, 117 Science Place
Saskatoon SK S7N 5C8
Telephone: (306) 966-2975        Fax: (306) 966-2069

**Appendix B: Letter to the Chairman of the School Board**

**Letter to the Chairman of the Rajshahi School Board**

603-101, Cumberland Ave. (S)
Saskatoon, SK
S7N IL5
Telephone: (306)-3737978
Fax:        (306)-966-7020
e-mail: islam.konok@usask.ca

May 27, 2008

Dear Chairman,

I am currently a doctoral student in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada. I am conducting a research on "*Sustainable School Improvement: A Case Study of the Effectiveness needs of Two Bangladeshi High Schools*". The study has been approved by the Department of Educational Administration and the Behavioural Science Research Ethics Board of the University of Saskatchewan. The purpose of the study is to identify the major school improvement needs and related strategies for two Bangladeshi secondary public schools based upon the perceptions of in-school professionals, parents and students. I am seeking permission from you to contact two secondary public schools in your school board to assist me in the study. Being a multi-method study, the research will involve document analysis, Group meetings, and semistructured interviews of selected participants.

A study of this nature is of value for several reasons. The findings of this study will contribute knowledge to the existing literature on school improvement. This study has implications for both in-school professionals and school boards interested in school improvement in Bangladesh. The significance of this study will be found in its ability to inform policy makers in their understanding of how schools can be improved in the Bangladeshi secondary public school system. This study can also provide policy makers with a frame of reference for planning reform policies related to system change.

I wish to confidently assure you that serious effort will be made to avoid identifying any school and participants by interview data.

In case you have any concerns or you would appreciate additional information, you may contact Dr. Pat Renihan (email: pat.renihan@usask.ca) my advisor at +1-306-9667620 or myself at +1-306-3737978 or +88-0781-55013. If your preference is by writing, you may contact me at 603-101 Cumberland Avenue (S), Saskatoon, SK. S7N IL5 or Islampur, ChapaiNawabgonj- 6300, Bangladesh, or if by e-mail, my address is islam.konok@usask.ca You may also contact the Research Ethics Office at 966 2084. You are invited to call collect if need be. Thanks for considering this request.

Yours Sincerely,
Md. M. Islam Konok

# Appendix C: Letter to the Headmaster

603-101, Cumberland Ave. (S)
Saskatoon, SK, S7N IL5
Telephone: (306)-3737978
Fax:      (306)-966-7020                                   June 30, 2008
e-mail: islam.konok@usask.ca

Dear Headmaster,

 I am currently a doctoral student in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada. I am conducting a research on "*Sustainable School Improvement: A Case Study of the Effectiveness needs of Two Bangladeshi High Schools*". The study has been approved by the Department of Educational Administration and the Behavioural Science Research Ethics Board of the University of Saskatchewan. The purpose of the study is to identify the major school improvement needs and related strategies for two Bangladeshi secondary public schools based upon the perceptions of in-school professionals, parents and students. I took permission from the Chairman of Rajshahi School Board to conduct this study in your school. Now, I am seeking your assistance to conduct this study in your school. Being a multi-method study, this research will involve document analysis, group meetings, and semistructured interviews of selected participants.

Initially, I will organize three group meetings (one teacher group, one parent group and one student group). Each group will consist of eight to 10 teachers, parents or students. I will request you to choose participants for group meetings. The participant selection criteria are: (i) all participants will be volunteers; (ii) participants will be aware of the education system of Bangladesh and their own school circumstances; (iii) participants selection will take into consideration the cross-grade representation; and (iv) the participants will have been involved with the schools for at least two year. After the completion of group meetings, one participant will be selected from each group for individual interview. Individual interview participants will be chosen purposefully to provide a balanced representation of gender. I will also conduct an individual interview with you.

A study of this nature is of value for several reasons. The findings of this study will contribute knowledge to the existing literature on school improvement. This study has implications for both in-school professionals and school boards interested in school improvement in Bangladesh. The significance of this study will be found in its ability to inform policy makers in their understanding of how schools can be improved in the Bangladeshi secondary public school system. This study can also provide policy makers with a frame of reference for planning reform policies related to system change. I wish to confidently assure you that serious effort will be made to avoid identifying your school and participants by interview data.

In case you have any concerns or you would appreciate additional information, you may contact Dr. Pat Renihan (email: pat.renihan@usask.ca) my advisor at +1-306-9667620 or myself at +1-306-3737978 or +88-0781-55013. If your preference is by writing, you may contact me at 603-101 Cumberland Avenue (S), Saskatoon, SK. S7N IL5 or Islampur, ChapaiNawabgonj- 6300, Bangladesh, or if by e-mail, my address is islam.konok@usask.ca You may also contact the Research Ethics Office at 966 2084. You are invited to call collect if need be. Thanks for considering this request.

Yours Sincerely,
Md. M. Islam Konok

**Appendix D: Letter to Interview Participants**

603-101, Cumberland Ave. (S)
Saskatoon, SK, S7N IL5
Telephone: (306)-3737978
Fax:          (306)-966-7020                                                    August 2, 2008
e-mail: islam.konok@usask.ca

Dear Participant,

I write this letter to ask if you will volunteer to participate in a study which has been approved by the Department of Educational Administration and the Behavioural Science Research Ethics Board of the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada. The purpose of the study is to identify the major school improvement needs and related strategies for two Bangladeshi secondary public schools based upon the perceptions of in-school professionals, parents and students.

Being a multi-method study, this research will involve document analysis, group meetings, and semistructured interviews. Initially, I will organize three group meetings (one teacher group, one parent group and one student group). Each group will consist of eight to 10 teachers, parents or students. By courtesy of this letter, I am requesting your assistance as a participant of the group meetings of the study. After the completion of group meetings, one participant will be selected from each group for individual interview. In this case, if you are selected for individual interview, then I will be asking your favor to participate. Each group meeting and individual interview will last about 90 minutes. Your participation in the research is completely voluntary.

A study of this nature is of value for several reasons. The findings of this study will contribute knowledge to the existing literature on school improvement. This study has implications for both in-school professionals and school boards interested in school improvement in Bangladesh. The significance of this study will be found in its ability to inform policy makers in their understanding of how schools can be improved in the Bangladeshi secondary public school system. This study can also provide policy makers with a frame of reference for planning reform policies related to system change.

I wish to confidently assure you that serious effort will be made to avoid identifying your school and yourself in the results of the study.

In case you have any concerns or you would appreciate additional information, you may contact Dr. Pat Renihan (email: pat.renihan@usask.ca) my advisor at +1-306-9667620 or myself at +1-306-3737978 or +88-0781-55013. If your preference is by writing, you may contact me at 603-101 Cumberland Avenue (S), Saskatoon, SK. S7N IL5 or Islampur, ChapaiNawabgonj- 6300, Bangladesh, or if by e-mail, my address is islam.konok@usask.ca You may also contact the Research Ethics Office at 966 2084. You are invited to call collect if need be. Thanks for considering this request.

Yours Sincerely,
Md. M. Islam Konok

**Appendix E: Letter of Consent for Participation in Research**

        I appreciate your participation in this study. This is a consent form whereby you as a participant indicate that you are willing to be involved in the study entitled, **Sustainable School Improvement: A Case Study of the Effectiveness needs of Two Bangladeshi High Schools.** The proposed research was reviewed and approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research on _____, 2008.  Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.

        <u>**Supervisor:**</u> Dr. Pat Renihan, Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan; phone 966-7620, e-mail: pat.renihan@usask.ca

        <u>**Researcher:**</u> Md. M. Islam Konok, Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan. Phone: +1 306-3737978, e-mail: islam.konok@usask.ca

        <u>**Purpose and Procedure:**</u> The purpose of the study is to identify the major school improvement needs and related strategies for two Bangladeshi secondary public schools based upon the perceptions of in-school professionals, parents and students. The benefit of the study to you personally is the possibility that this study has implications if you are interested in school improvement in Bangladesh. The procedure to be employed to generate information will be through document analysis, group meetings, and individual semistructured interviews. You are invited to take part in group meeting and may be subsequently invited to take part in individual semistructured interviews. Each group meeting and semistructured interview will last about 90 minutes. For the group meeting and semistructured interview, you will have the prerogative of the choice of venue where you feel most comfortable. In the event you are participated in group meeting and/or interviewed, you will have the opportunity to review the transcriptions and reports, and discuss any thoughts, add, alter, and delete information from transcripts as appropriate. You can also express concern and reaction you have towards my analysis. During the period of the study, I will keep contact with you for clarification and additional information.

        <u>**Potential Benefits:**</u> A study of this nature is of value for several reasons. The findings of this study will contribute knowledge to the existing literature on school improvement. This study has implications for both in-school professionals and school boards interested in school improvement in Bangladesh. The significance of this study will be found in its ability to inform policy makers in their understanding of how schools can be improved in the Bangladeshi secondary public school system. This study can also provide policy makers with a frame of reference for planning reform policies related to system change.

**Potential Risks:** The research will be carried out in a spirit of mutual respect between you and myself. There are no foreseeable risks and there will be no deception. Direct quotations from the interview will be reported. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured by the use of pseudonyms in respect of you and your school. The greatest care will be taken to protect your anonymity, but there may be the possibility that because of the small participant sampling, you may be identified based on what you have said

**Storage of Data:** Throughout the document analysis, NGT meetings, interviews, and the study period, I will keep all documents, tapes, and transcripts in a safe and secure place. At the end of the study period, the data collected from you will be kept in a secure place at the University of Saskatchewan, Department of Educational Administration with Dr. Pat Renihan for five years and in consonance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines.

**Confidentiality:** Data obtained from document analysis, NGT meetings, and interviews, will be used for my PhD dissertation in partial completion for Doctor of Philosophy degree. The final versions of the research paper will not be confidential but will be released to the public probably as an article in a scholarly journal or for a presentation at a conference. However, prior to this release, you will be consulted on any material you do not wish made public, or any material you wish deleted. You will be referred to by a pseudonym in published reports.

**Right to Withdrawal:** Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort, or without loss of services at the University of Saskatchewan. In the event of withdrawal, the data collected from the NGT meetings, interviews, and tape recordings will be destroyed.

**Questions:** If you have any questions regarding your participation or your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to ask at any point. If you have questions at a later time, do not hesitate to contact me. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on (*date*).You may contact the Office of Research Services at the University of Saskatchewan (966-2084) concerning any questions regarding your rights as a participant, or myself, Md. M. Islam Konok at +1-306-3737978 or +88-0781-55013 or e-mail me at islam.konok@usask.ca . You may also request a summary of findings at the completion of the study

**Consent to Participate:** I have read and understood the description provided above. I have been accorded the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been satisfactorily answered. I am aware of the nature of the study and understand what is expected of me and also understand that I am free to withdraw at anytime in course of the study. A consent form has been given to me for my records.

_____          _____

(Name of Participant)                                    (Date)


_____          _____

(Signature of Participant)                               (Signature of Researcher)

**Appendix F: Transcript Release Form**

I, _____, have reviewed the complete
transcript(s) of my group meeting and/or personal interview in this study entitled,
**"Sustainable School Improvement: A Case Study of the Effectiveness needs of
Two Bangladeshi High Schools"**, and have been provided with the opportunity to
add, alter, and delete information from the transcript(s) as appropriate. I acknowledge
that the transcript(s) accurately reflect(s) what I said in my group meeting and/or
personal interview with [name of researcher]. I hereby authorize the release of the
transcript(s) to [name of researcher] to be used in the manner described in the consent
form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.


_____          _____

Name of Participant                                      Date


_____          _____

Signature of Participant                                Signature of Researcher

**Appendix G: Interview Protocol**

**Interview Questions for NGT Meetings**

*Introductory Comments*

a) Thank the participants for participating in the research.

b) Provide an overview of the purpose of the research.

c) Remind interviewees of length of group meeting.

d) Assure participants of confidentiality of all responses and participant's liberty to refuse to answer any questions they feel uncomfortable with.

e) Get written consent letter signed and request permission to record interview and inform them that they may request stopping the recording at any time.

f) Allow participants to ask questions about their concerns/involvement before proceeding to interview questions.

*Interview Questions (60-90 minutes)*

The questions of the NGT meetings are semistructured and constructive in nature. Questions and responses will be reordered and follow-up questions may be asked when appropriate.

1. In your opinion, what are the school improvement needs for this school? Would you please write them in a piece of paper (flip chart)?

2. Please share your list (of improvement needs) with me and others in this group.

3. I will ask the group to select from the entire list of ideas on the flip chart five most important items on a separate 3* 5 card, after members have their set of priority cards, have them rank-order the cards, one at a time; and then I will collect the cards and shuffle them, and record the vote on a flip chart in front of the group.

**Initial Interview Questions for Individual Semistructured Interviews**

*Introductory Comments*

a) Thank the participant for accepting to participate in the research.

b) Provide an overview of the purpose of the research.

c) Remind interviewee of length of the interview session.

d) Assure participant of confidentiality of all responses and participant's liberty to refuse to answer any questions they feel uncomfortable with.

e) Get written consent letter signed and request permission to record interview and inform them that they may request stopping the recording at any time.

f) Allow participant to ask questions about their concerns before proceeding to interview questions.

*Initial Interview Questions (60-90 minutes)*

The questions of the individual interview are semistructured. Questions and responses will be reordered and follow-up questions may be asked when appropriate.

1. What is your understanding of the term sustainable improvement? How does it apply to your (your child's) school?

2. In your opinion, what specific strategies or initiatives are needed to improve effectiveness for your school?

3. What are the challenges or barriers to implementing key improvement strategies in this school?

4. How might these challenges or barriers be overcome?

5. What suggestions and additions which you may wish to add to improve your school?

**Appendix H: Translation Auditor's Report**

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**Translation Audit**
**Letter of Attestation**

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This letter of attestation is in relation to the translation audit of the Ph.D. dissertation written by Md. M. Islam Konok entitled "Sustainable School Improvement: A Case Study of the Effectiveness needs of Two Bangladeshi High Schools".

The purpose of the audit was to review the translation of research products submitted by the dissertation author to establish the consistency, accuracy, and appropriateness of translation.

**The Audit Procedure:**
1. Translation from Bangla into English of selected pages from Ministry of Education. (2007). *School statistics*. Bangladesh Government, Dhaka, Bangladesh: Author. ( **pages 1 and 3**)
2. Translation from Bangla into English of selected pages from NGT meeting transcripts **(pages 6-10 and 15-19)**
3. Translation from Bangla into English of selected quotations from individual interview transcripts **(quotations from pages 12, 25, 38, and 46)**

**Summary:**
Following the examination of the Bangla and English versions of the sample translations, I was essentially (95%) in agreement with the translation. Despite minor omissions from the Bangla transcripts, which were necessary for proper conveying of the participants' thoughts in English, translations are consistent, appropriate, and accurate representations of the original documents.

As a result of the audit, I as auditor, testify that the translations of document analysis data, NGT meeting and individual interview transcripts, which I have examined in relation to Md. M. Islam Konok's dissertation, are consistent, appropriate, and accurate.

G C Kar (Signature) *G e k e w*

G C Kar, B.sc. (Mymensing Agriculture University), M.Sc. (University of Saskatchewan), and Ph.D. Candidate (University of Saskatchewan)

Date: December 16, 2010

**Appendix I: Calculation Tables**

**NGT Meeting (Teacher Group – School A)**
(8 teachers attended this group meeting)
What are the school improvement needs of this school?
1. To improve the relationship among all stakeholders
2. To provide more qualified and trained teachers
3. To facilitate more parental involvement
4. To provide effective leadership
5. Teachers need to be more responsible
6. To provide extra care for special-need students
7. Not imposing negative attitudes to students
8. To improve the school culture
9. To provide more teachers' training
10. To provide more teaching materials
11. To increase teachers' social value
12. Teachers must be free from parents' blaming and hassle
13. To implement and maintain more effective and understandable instructional methods
14. To decrease the class sizes
15. To provide equal work load among teachers
16. To provide administrative assistants
17. To provide more extra-curricular facilities
18. To provide financial aid for poor students
19. To arrange meetings between students and headmaster
20. Students should be mentally free from any kind of pressure
21. To stopping outside pressure for different kinds of campaign by students and teachers
22. To recruit more specialized teachers
23. To adopt code-system for evaluating exam papers
24. To reduce the work load for teachers
25. To provide instructional supervision
26. To provide good textbooks
27. To increase teachers' salaries

*Five Most Essential Needs: Teacher Group (School A)*
1. Teacher A
   - Need more trained teachers ---- 5
   - Effective teaching strategies --- 4
   - Use of code system in exam papers --- 3
   - Needs more supply of teaching materials  --- 2

- Needs Revolving writing board ---- 1
2. Teacher B
   - Needs experienced and effective Headmaster --- 5
   - More parental involvement --- 4
   - Needs more teaching materials --- 3
   - Effective teaching strategies --- 2
   - Headmaster & students meeting --- 1
3. Teacher C
   - Increasing teachers' social value --- 5
   - More teaching staff --- 4
   - More parental involvement --- 3
   - Special care for weak students --- 2
   - More teaching materials --- 1
4. Teacher D
   - Experienced and effective Headmaster --- 5
   - Specialized teachers --- 4
   - Instructional supervision --- 3
   - Teachers should be more efficient --- 2
5. Teacher E
   - Experienced and effective Headmaster --- 5
   - Smaller class size --- 4
   - Teachers should be more friendly ---3
   - More effective teaching materials --- 2
   - Parental meeting --- 1
6. Teacher F
   - Good relationship among teachers, students, and parents --- 5
   - Specialized teachers --- 4
   - Experienced and effective Headmaster --- 3
   - Arranging  general knowledge classes  --- 2
   - Smaller class size --- 1
7. Teacher G
   - Increasing teachers' social value – 5
   - Parents' involvement --- 4
   - Increasing teachers' salary --- 3
   - More effective teaching materials --- 2
   - Textbook and exam system should be changed --- 1
8. Teacher H
   - Increasing teachers' social value --- 5
   - Good relationship between teachers and students --- 4
   - Helping weaker students --- 3
   - Experienced and effective Headmaster --- 2
   - More trained teachers --- 1

Calculation Table: *Teacher Group (School A)*

| No. | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | To provide more qualified and  trained teachers | 5+4+1=10 | 3 |
| 2. | To implement and maintain effective and understandable instructional methods | 4+2+2=8 | 3 |
| 3. | To adopt code -system for evaluating exam papers | 3+1=4 | 2 |
| 4. | To provide more teaching materials | 2+3+1+2+2+1=11 | 6 |
| 5. | To provide effective leadership | 5+5+5+3+2=20 | 5 |
| 6. | To facilitate more parental involvement | 4+3+1+4=12 | 4 |
| 7. | To arrange meetings between students and headmaster | 1 | 1 |
| 8. | To increase teachers' social value | 5+5+5=15 | 3 |
| 9. | To provide extra care for special-need students | 2+3=5 | 2 |
| 10. | To recruit more specialized teachers | 4+4=8 | 2 |
| 11. | To provide instructional supervision | 3 | 1 |
| 12. | To decrease the class sizes | 4+1=5 | 2 |
| 13. | To improve the relationship among all stakeholders | 3+5+4=12 | 3 |
| 14. | To arrange  general knowledge classes | 2 | 1 |
| 15. | To increase teachers' salaries | 3 | 1 |
| 16. | To provide good textbook | 1 | 1 |

Final Table: *Teacher Group (School A)*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | To provide effective leadership | 20 | 5 |
| 2. | To increase teachers' social value | 15 | 3 |
| 3. | To facilitate more parental involvement | 12 | 4 |
| 4. | To improve the relationship among all stakeholders | 12 | 3 |
| 5. | To provide more teaching materials | 11 | 6 |
| 6. | To provide more qualified and trained teachers | 10 | 3 |
| 7. | To recruit more specialized teachers | 8 | 2 |
| 8. | To implement and maintain effective and understandable instructional methods | 8 | 3 |
| 9. | To decrease the class sizes | 5 | 2 |
| 10. | To provide extra care for special-need students | 5 | 2 |
| 11. | To adopt code-system for evaluating exam papers | 4 | 2 |
| 12. | To provide instructional supervision | 3 | 1 |
| 13. | To increase teachers' salaries | 3 | 1 |
| 14. | To arrange general knowledge classes | 2 | 1 |
| 15. | To arrange meetings between students and headmaster | 1 | 1 |
| 16. | To provide good textbooks | 1 | 1 |

**NGT Meeting (Student Group- School A)**
(12 students attended this group meeting)

What are the school improvement needs of this school?
1. To decrease the class sizes
2. To change the exam system
3. To arrange study tours for students
4. To provide a well developed library
5. To provide good textbooks
6. To arrange general knowledge classes
7. To implement and maintain effective and understandable instructional methods
8. To listen to students' voices
9. To provide equal treatment to all students
10. Teachers should be more responsible
11. To provide more extra-curricular facilities
12. To improve the school culture
13. To facilitate more parental involvement
14. To provide more laboratory classes
15. To provide more qualified and trained teachers
16. To provide more computer facilities
17. To provide effective and timely feedback
18. To arrange writing classes for students
19. To know more about school
20. To review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance
21. To introduce weekly exams
22. To provide more sports facilities
23. To decorate classrooms with educational posters
24. To improve the relationship among all stakeholders
25. To adopt code-system for evaluating exam papers
26. To ensure strict and consistent discipline

*Five Most Essential Needs: Student Group (School A)*

1. Student A
   - Application of more effective teaching strategies --- 5
   - Authentic and real life-oriented education --- 4
   - Equal treatment for all students --- 3
   - Introducing weekly exams --- 2
   - Smaller class size --- 1

2. Student B
   - Smaller class size --- 5
   - Introducing code system in exams --- 4
   - More practical laboratory classes --- 3
   - More computer facilities --- 2
   - Application of more effective teaching strategies --- 1

3. Student C
   - More computer facilities --- 5
   - Introducing code system in exams --- 4
   - General knowledge classes --- 3
   - Students' voices should be heard --- 2
   - Equal treatment for all students --- 1

4. Student D
   - Equal treatment for all students --- 5
   - Smaller class size --- 4
   - Strict school discipline --- 3
   - Application of more effective teaching strategies --- 2
   - Need more books in the library --- 1

5. Student E
   - Good relationship between students and teachers --- 5
   - Strict school discipline --- 4
   - More extra-curricular activities --- 3
   - More enjoyable and effective teaching strategies --- 2
   - More computer facilities --- 1

6. Student F
   - Smaller class size --- 5
   - Strict school discipline --- 4
   - More enjoyable and effective teaching strategies --- 3
   - More computer facilities --- 2

7. Student G
   - Equal treatment for all students --- 5
   - Authentic and real-life oriented education --- 4
   - Need more books in the library --- 3
   - More computer facilities --- 2
   - Introducing code-system for exams --- 1

8. Student H
   - Equal treatment for all students --- 5
   - Introducing code-system in exams --- 4
   - More computer facilities --- 3
   - Study tour for students --- 2
   - Classroom needs to be decorated with educational posters --- 1

9. Student I
   - More enjoyable and effective instructional strategies --- 5

- Equal treatment for all students --- 4
- Classroom needs to be decorated with educational posters --- 3
- Students' voices need to be heard --- 2
- Arranging study tours --- 1

10. Student J
- More enjoyable and effective instructional strategies --- 5
- More computer facilities --- 4
- Students' voices need to be heard --- 3
- Introducing code-system in exams --- 2

11. Student K
- Introducing code-system in exams --- 5
- Providing timely and effective feedback --- 4
- Good relationship between teachers and students --- 3
- Arranging writing classes --- 2
- Authentic and real-life oriented textbooks/ effective instructional strategies --- 1

12. Student L
- More enjoyable and effective instructional strategies --- 5
- Arranging general knowledge classes --- 4
- Smaller class size --- 3
- Arranging writing classes --- 2
- Good school culture --- 1

Calculation Table: *Student Group (School A)*

| No. | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | To implement and main effective and understandable instructional methods | 5+1+2+2+3+5+5+1+5= 29 | 9 |
| 2. | To decrease the class sizes | 1+5+4+5+4= 19 | 5 |
| 3. | To provide equal treatment to all students | 3+1+5+5+5+4= 23 | 6 |
| 4. | To adopt code-system for evaluating exam papers | 4+4+1+4+2+5= 20 | 6 |
| 5. | To provide more computer facilities | 2+5+1+2+2+3+4= 19 | 7 |
| 6. | To provide good textbooks | 1 | 1 |
| 7. | To arrange writing classes for students | 2+2=4 | 2 |
| 8. | To provide timely and effective feedback | 4 | 1 |
| 9. | To decorate classrooms with educational posters | 1+3= 4 | 2 |
| 10. | To arrange study tours for students | 2+1= 3 | 2 |
| 11. | To provide more extra-curricular facilities | 3 | 1 |
| 12. | To improve the relationship among all stakeholders | 5+3= 8 | 2 |
| 13. | To listen to students' voices | 2+2+3= 7 | 3 |
| 14. | To arrange general knowledge classes | 3+4= 7 | 2 |
| 15. | To ensure strict and consistent school discipline | 3+4+4= 11 | 3 |
| 16. | To provide a well developed library | 1+3= 4 | 2 |
| 17. | To provide more laboratory classes | 3 | 1 |
| 18. | To review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance | 4+4= 8 | 2 |
| 19. | To introduce weekly exams | 2 | 1 |
| 20. | To improve the school culture | 1 | 1 |

Final Table: *Student Group (School A)*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | To implement and maintain effective and understandable instructional methods | 29 | 9 |
| 2. | To provide equal treatment to all students | 23 | 6 |
| 3. | To adopt code-system for evaluating exam papers | 20 | 6 |
| 4. | To provide more computer facilities | 19 | 7 |
| 5. | To decrease the class sizes | 19 | 5 |
| 6. | To ensure strict and consistent discipline | 11 | 3 |
| 7. | To review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance | 8 | 2 |
| 8. | To improve the relationship among all stakeholders | 8 | 2 |
| 9. | To listen students' voices | 7 | 3 |
| 10. | To introduce general knowledge classes | 7 | 2 |
| 11. | To provide effective and timely feedback | 4 | 1 |
| 12. | To decorate classrooms with educational posters | 4 | 2 |
| 13. | To arrange writing classes for students | 4 | 2 |
| 14. | To provide a well developed library | 4 | 2 |
| 15. | To arrange study tours for students | 3 | 2 |
| 16. | To provide more extra-curricular facilities | 3 | 1 |
| 17. | To provide more laboratory classes | 3 | 1 |
| 18. | To introduce weekly exams | 2 | 1 |
| 19. | To improve the school culture | 1 | 1 |
| 20. | To provide good textbooks | 1 | 1 |

# NGT Meeting (Parent Group – School A)
(8   parents attended this group meeting)

What are the school improvement needs of this school?
1. To provide more qualified and trained teachers
2. To review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance
3. To provide up-to-date facilities
4. To increase teachers' salaries
5. To provide equal treatment to all students
6. To provide more computer facilities
7. To facilitate more parental involvement
8. To implement and maintain effective and understandable instructional methods
9. To provide effective and timely feedback
10. To provide effective leadership
11. To provide a well developed library
12. To provide more extra-curricular facilities
13. To recruit more specialized teachers
14. To improve the relationship among all stakeholders
15. To decrease class sizes
16. To increase teachers' social value
17. To make discipline strict and consistent
18. To arrange general knowledge class
19. To arrange study tours for students
20. To stop private tutoring or coaching
21. To provide more details on report cards
22. To stop changing textbooks frequently

## *Five Most Essential Needs: Parent Group (School A)*
1. Parent A
   - More qualified teachers --- 5
   - Stop private tutoring --- 4
   - Smaller class size --- 3
   - Increasing teachers' salary --- 2
   - Arranging general knowledge classes --- 1

2. Parent B
   - Increasing teachers' salary --- 5
   - More qualified teachers --- 4
   - Stop private tutoring --- 3
   - More computer facilities --- 2
   - Good relationship among all stakeholders --- 1

3. Parent C
   - Stop private tutoring --- 5

- Equal treatment for all students --- 4
- Providing effective and timely feedback --- 3
- More qualified teachers --- 2
- Good relationship among all stakeholders --- 1

4. Parent D
   - Equal treatment for all students --- 5
   - More effective teaching methods --- 4
   - More computer facilities --- 3
   - Increasing teachers' salary --- 2
   - Authentic and real-life oriented education --- 1

5. Parent E
   - More qualified teachers --- 5
   - Stop frequently changing textbook --- 4
   - Equal treatment for all students --- 3
   - Smaller class size --- 2
   - More specialized teachers --- 1

6. Parent F
   - Stop private tutoring --- 5
   - Smaller class size --- 4
   - Good relationship among all stakeholders --- 3
   - More computer facilities --- 2
   - More co-cultural activities --- 1

7. Parent G
   - Stop private tutoring --- 5
   - More qualified teachers --- 4
   - Smaller class size --- 3
   - More extra-curricular activities --- 2
   - More computer facilities --- 1

8. Parent H
   - Equal treatment for all students --- 5
   - Good relationship among all stakeholders --- 4
   - More computer facilities --- 3
   - Effective teaching methods --- 2
   - More specialized teachers --- 1

Calculation Table: *Parent Group (School A)*

| No. | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | To provide more qualified and trained teachers | 5+4+5+4=18 | 4 |
| 2. | To stop private tutoring | 4+3+5+5+5=22 | 5 |
| 3. | To decrease the class sizes | 3+2+4+3=12 | 4 |
| 4. | To increase teachers' salaries | 2+5+2=9 | 3 |
| 5. | To arrange general knowledge classes | 1 | 1 |
| 6. | To provide more computer facilities | 2+3+2+1+3=11 | 5 |
| 7. | To improve the relationship among all stakeholders | 1+1+3+4=9 | 4 |
| 8. | To provide equal treatment to all students | 4+5+3+5=17 | 4 |
| 9. | To provide effective and timely feedback | 3 | 1 |
| 10. | To implement and maintain effective and understandable instructional methods | 4+2=6 | 2 |
| 11. | To review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance | 1 | 1 |
| 12. | To stop changing textbooks frequently | 4 | 1 |
| 13. | To recruit more specialized teachers | 1+1=2 | 2 |
| 14. | To provide more  extra-cultural facilities | 1+2=3 | 2 |

Final Table: *Parent Group (School A)*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | To stop private tutoring or coaching | 22 | 5 |
| 2. | To provide more qualified and trained teachers | 18 | 4 |
| 3. | To provide equal treatment to all students | 17 | 4 |
| 4. | To decrease the class sizes | 12 | 4 |
| 5. | To provide more computer facilities | 11 | 5 |
| 6. | To improve the relationship among all stakeholders | 9 | 4 |
| 7. | To increase teachers' salaries | 9 | 3 |
| 8. | To implement and maintain more effective and understandable instructional methods | 6 | 2 |
| 9. | To stop changing textbooks frequently | 4 | 1 |
| 10. | To provide more  extra-curricular facilities | 3 | 2 |
| 11. | To provide effective and timely feedback | 3 | 1 |
| 12. | To recruit more specialized teachers | 2 | 2 |
| 13. | To review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance | 1 | 1 |
| 14. | To arrange general knowledge classes | 1 | 1 |

**NGT Meeting (Teacher Group- School B)**
(8   teachers attended this group meeting)

What are the school improvement needs of this school?
1.  To decrease the class sizes (at best 40 students)
2.  To provide instructional supervision (monitoring)
3.  To provide good textbooks
4.  To increase teachers' salaries
5.  To increase teachers' social value
6.  To provide financial assistance to the poor students
7.  To create good managing committee
8.  To facilitate more parental involvement
9.  To provide more qualified and trained teachers
10. To improve the relationship among all stakeholders
11. To recruit more specialized teachers
12. To match exam questions with the syllabus covered
13. To provide more computer facilities
14.  To provide effective and timely feedback
15. To stop private tutoring or coaching
16. To review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance
17. To improve school culture
18. To provide equal treatment to all students
19. To reduce the teachers' class-load (number of classes shouldn't be more than 3or
    4)
20. To make sure that education policies don't change frequently
21. To provide job specifications to ensure teachers' accountability
22. To stop teachers' harassment from government administration
23. To provide appropriate teacher promotion
24. To provide more teacher training facilities
25. To emphasize teachers' opinions while making education policies
26. To provide more laboratory instrument
27.  To stop gender discrimination
28. To listen students' voices
29. To involve teachers in different committees
30. To change text books with much consultations
31. To improve the school's physical state
32. To provide effective leadership
33. To provide more central office support
34. To provide more extra- curricular facilities
35. To implement and maintain effective and understandable instructional methods
36. To establish children right

*Five Most Essential Needs: Teacher Group (School B)*
1. Teacher A
   - Smaller class size --- 5
   - Need more teachers --- 4
   - More teachers' training --- 3
   - More friendly atmosphere --- 2
   - Increasing teachers' social status and salary --- 1

2. Teacher B
   - Improving school's physical condition --- 5
   - Good relationship between teachers and students --- 4
   - Effective leadership --- 3
   - More teachers' training --- 2
   - More central office support --- 1

3. Teacher C
   - Improving school's physical condition --- 5
   - Smaller class size --- 4
   - More extra-curricular facilities --- 3
   - Instructional supervision (monitoring) --- 2
   - Increasing teachers' salary --- 1

4. Teacher D
   - Teachers should be included in education policy making --- 5
   - Increasing teachers' social status --- 4
   - Increasing teachers' salary --- 3
   - More extra-curricular facilities --- 2
   - Text books should be changed with much consultations --- 1

5. Teacher E
   - Improving school's physical condition --- 5
   - Increasing teachers' social status --- 4
   - Good relationship with central office --- 3
   - Increasing teachers' salary (needs government's steps) --- 2
   - Classroom teaching should be student focused --- 1

6. Teacher F
   - Parents' day (parental involvement) ---- 5
   - Smaller class size --- 4
   - More specialized teachers --- 3
   - Good text books --- 2
   - More interesting classroom instruction --- 1

7. Teacher G
   - Increasing teachers' social status --- 5

- Equal treatment for all students  --- 4
- Establishment of children right --- 3
- Job description  for transparency, accountability and responsibilities --- 2
- More laboratory instrument --- 1

8. Teacher H
   - Smaller class size --- 5
   - Improving school's physical condition --- 4
   - More qualified teachers --- 3
   - Good textbook (up to date, real life oriented) --- 2
   - Parents' day (more parental involvement) --- 1

Calculation Table: *Teacher Group (School B)*

| No. | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|-----|-------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| 1. | To decrease the class sizes | 5+4+4+5=18 | 4 |
| 2. | To provide more qualified and trained teachers | 4+3=7 | 2 |
| 3. | To improve school culture | 2 | 1 |
| 4. | To provide more teachers' training | 3+2=5 | 2 |
| 5. | To increase teachers' social status | 1+4+4+5=14 | 4 |
| 6. | To increase teachers' salaries | 1+1+2=4 | 3 |
| 7. | To improve the relationship among all stakeholders | 4 | 1 |
| 8. | To provide effective leadership | 3 | 1 |
| 9. | To provide equal treatment to all students | 4 | 1 |
| 10. | To implement and maintain effective instructional methods | 1+1=2 | 2 |
| 11. | To provide good text books | 2+2=4 | 2 |
| 12. | To recruit more specialized teachers | 3 | 1 |
| 13. | To facilitate more parental involvement | 5+1=6 | 2 |
| 14. | To change text books with much consultations | 1 | 1 |
| 15. | To engage teachers in educational policy making | 5 | 1 |
| 16. | To provide instructional supervision | 2 | 1 |
| 17. | To provide more extra-curricular facilities | 3+2=5 | 2 |
| 18. | To provide more central office support | 1+3=4 | 2 |
| 19. | To improve the school's physical state | 5+5+5+4=19 | 4 |
| 20. | To establish children right | 3 | 1 |
| 21. | To provide job description to ensure teachers' accountability | 2 | 1 |
| 22. | To provide more laboratory instrument | 1 | 1 |

Final Table: *Teacher Group (School B)*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | To improve the schools' physical state | 19 | 4 |
| 2. | To decrease the class sizes | 18 | 4 |
| 3. | To increase teachers' social value | 14 | 4 |
| 4. | To provide more qualified and trained teachers | 7 | 2 |
| 5. | To facilitate more parental involvement | 6 | 2 |
| 6. | To provide more teachers' training | 5 | 2 |
| 7. | To provide more extra-curricular facilities | 5 | 2 |
| 8. | To engage teachers in educational policy making | 5 | 1 |
| 9. | To increase teachers' salaries | 4 | 3 |
| 10. | To provide more central office support | 4 | 2 |
| 11. | To provide good textbooks | 4 | 2 |
| 12. | To improve the relationship among all stakeholders | 4 | 1 |
| 13. | To provide equal treatment to all students | 4 | 1 |
| 14. | To recruit more specialized teachers | 3 | 1 |
| 15. | To establish children right | 3 | 1 |
| 16. | To provide effective leadership | 3 | 1 |
| 17. | To implement and maintain effective and understandable instructional methods | 2 | 2 |
| 18. | To improve school culture | 2 | 1 |
| 19. | To provide job description to ensure teachers' accountability | 2 | 1 |
| 20. | To provide instructional supervision | 2 | 1 |
| 21. | To change textbooks with much consultations | 1 | 1 |
| 22. | To provide more laboratory instrument | 1 | 1 |

**NGT Meeting (Student Group- School B)**
(12 students attended this group meeting)
What are the school improvement needs of this school?
1. To implement and maintain effective and understandable instructional methods
2. To review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance
3. To ensure that teachers come to the class on-time
4. To provide equal treatment to all students
5. To stop private tutoring or coaching
6. To focus  more on academic emphasis
7. To increase teachers' social value
8. To provide more qualified and trained teachers
9. To provide good textbooks
10. To provide effective leadership
11. To recruit more specialized teachers
12. To facilitate more students involvement
13. To provide more teacher training
14. To provide more extra-curricular facilities
15. To match exam questions with the syllabus covered
16. To decrease the class sizes
17. To provide effective and timely feedback
18. To have care from both teachers and parents
19. To arrange study tours
20. To improve the relationship among all stakeholders
21. To facilitate group teaching
22. To monitor and report to parents
23. To improve school culture
24. To provide more classrooms
25. To provide instructional supervision
26. To facilitate more parental involvement
27. To renew textbooks authentically
28. To reduce the number of holidays & increase teaching time
29. To abandon guide books and put more focus on textbooks
30. To arrange general knowledge classes
31. Classroom instructions should be in English
32. To provide more computer facilities
33. To provide more encouragement to students by all school staff
34. To collaborate more on knowledge sharing
35. To provide a well developed library and a common room

*Five Most Essential Needs: Student Group (School B)*

1. Student A
   - Good student-teacher relationship --- 5
   - Providing effective  and timely feedback after exams --- 4
   - Extra-curricular activities for students --- 3
   - Subject wise more teachers --- 2
2. Student B
   - Good textbooks --- 5
   - More qualified teachers --- 4
   - Teachers should be in the class on time --- 3
   - More computer facilities --- 2
   - Providing effective feedback after exams --- 1
3. Student C
   - Students should be more encouraged by teachers --- 5
   - Parents-teachers meeting at least once in a month --- 4
   - More qualified and trained teachers --- 3
   - More students' involvement --- 2
   - Parents should be more conscious about students --- 1
4. Student D
   - Subject wise more teachers --- 5
   - Equal treatment for all students --- 4
   - Good textbooks --- 3
   - More academic emphasis --- 2
   - Parents should be more conscious about students --- 1
5. Students E
   - Education should be real life oriented --- 5
   - Smaller class size --- 4
   - Providing effective feedback after exams --- 3
   - Stop private coaching or tutoring --- 2
   - Providing more teacher training --- 1
6. Student F
   - More subject wise teachers --- 5
   - Stop private tutoring or coaching & increase teachers' salary --- 4
   - Need good library and common room (recreation room) --- 3
   - Smaller class size --- 2
   - More qualified teachers --- 1
7. Student G
   - Teachers should be in the class on time --- 5

- Stop private tutoring or coaching & increase teachers' salary --- 4
- Smaller class size --- 3
- Regular parents-teachers meeting (at least once in a month) --- 2
- Providing effective feedback after exams --- 1

8. Student H
   - Good school culture --- 5
   - Good textbooks --- 4
   - Providing effective feedback --- 3
   - Introducing general knowledge class --- 2

9. Student I
   - Stop private tutoring or coaching --- 5
   - Good textbook --- 4
   - Teachers should provide own hand note to students --- 3
   - Arranging study tour --- 2
   - More qualified teachers --- 1

10. Student J
    - Authentic textbooks --- 5
    - Equal treatment for all students --- 4
    - Arranging study tour --- 3
    - More subject wise teachers --- 2
    - More computer facilities --- 1

11. Student K
    - More qualified teachers --- 5
    - Good textbooks --- 4
    - Abandon guide book and put more focus on textbook --- 3
    - Stop private tutoring or coaching --- 2
    - Good student-teacher relationship --- 1

12. Student L
    - Education should be real life oriented --- 5
    - Good student-teacher relationship --- 4
    - Need more encouragement from parents --- 3
    - Smaller class size --- 2
    - More extra-curricular activities --- 1

Calculation Table: *Student Group (School B)*

| No. | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | To improve the relationship among all stakeholders | 5+1+4=10 | 3 |
| 2. | To provide effective and timely feedback | 4+1+3+1=9 | 4 |
| 3. | To provide more extra-curricular facilities | 3+1=4 | 2 |
| 4. | To recruit more specialized teachers | 2+5+5+2=14 | 4 |
| 5. | To provide good textbooks | 5+3+4+5+4=21 | 5 |
| 6. | To provide more qualified and trained teachers | 4+3+1+1+5=14 | 5 |
| 7. | To ensure that teachers come to the class on time | 3+5=8 | 2 |
| 8. | To provide more computer facilities | 2+1=3 | 2 |
| 9. | To facilitate more parental involvement | 4+1+2+3=10 | 4 |
| 10. | To provide more encouragement to students by all school staff | 5 | 1 |
| 11. | To facilitate more students' involvement | 2 | 1 |
| 12. | To provide equal treatment to all students | 4+4=8 | 2 |
| 13. | To focus more on academic emphasis | 2 | 1 |
| 14. | To review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance | 5+5=10 | 2 |
| 15. | To decrease the class sizes | 4+2+3+2=10 | 4 |
| 16. | To stop private tutoring or coaching | 2+4+4+2=12 | 4 |
| 17. | To provide more teacher training | 1 | 1 |
| 18. | To provide a well developed library and a common room (recreation room) | 3 | 1 |
| 19. | To improve school culture | 5 | 1 |
| 20. | To arrange study tours | 2+3=5 | 2 |
| 21. | To abandon guide books and put more focus on textbooks | 3+3=6 | 2 |

Final Table: *Student Group (School B)*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | To provide good textbooks | 21 | 5 |
| 2. | To provide more qualified and trained teachers | 14 | 5 |
| 3. | To recruit more specialized teachers | 14 | 4 |
| 4. | To stop private tutoring or coaching | 12 | 4 |
| 5. | To decrease the class sizes | 11 | 4 |
| 6. | To facilitate more parental involvement | 10 | 4 |
| 7. | To improve the relationship among all stakeholders | 10 | 3 |
| 8. | To review the current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance | 10 | 2 |
| 9. | To provide effective  and timely feedback | 9 | 4 |
| 10. | To provide equal treatment to all students | 8 | 2 |
| 11. | To ensure that teachers come to the class on time | 8 | 2 |
| 12. | To abandon guide books and put more focus on textbooks | 6 | 2 |
| 13. | To arrange study tours | 5 | 2 |
| 14. | To provide more encouragement to students by all school staff | 5 | 1 |
| 15. | To improve school culture | 5 | 1 |
| 16. | To provide more extra-curricular facilities | 4 | 2 |
| 17. | To provide more computer facilities | 3 | 2 |
| 18. | To provide a well developed library and a common room (recreation room) | 3 | 1 |
| 19. | To facilitate more students' involvement | 2 | 1 |
| 20. | To focus more on academic emphasis | 2 | 1 |
| 21. | To provide more teacher training | 1 | 1 |

(11 parents attended this group meeting)

What are the school improvement needs of this school?
1. To improve the relationship among all stakeholders
2. To provide more qualified and trained teachers
3. To improve the school's physical state
4. To provide more effective teaching materials
5. To increase teachers' salaries
6. To provide more teacher training
7. To decrease class sizes
8. To facilitate parental involvement
9. To increase teachers' social value
10. To implement and maintain effective and understandable instructional methods
11. To provide effective and timely feedback
12. To review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance
13. To create administrative synchronization
14. To collaborate more on knowledge sharing
15. To provide a well-developed library
16. To focus more on outdoor sport facilities
17. To recruit more specialized teachers
18. To foster staff dedication, and devotion to the school community

*Five Most Essential Needs: Parent Group (School B)*
1. Parent A
   - Needs more qualified teachers --- 5
   - Improved relationship among students, teachers and parents --- 4
   - Effective and understandable instructional methods --- 3
   - Smaller class size --- 2
   - Providing quick and effective feedback --- 1

2. Parent B
   - Increasing teachers' salary --- 5
   - More parental involvement --- 4
   - More specialized teachers --- 3
   - More qualified and trained teachers --- 2
   - More effective teaching materials --- 1

3. Parent C
   - Needs more space (smaller class size) --- 5
   - Up to date teaching facilities --- 4
   - More qualified and trained teachers --- 3
   - More dedication and devotion --- 2
   - Up to date teaching methods --- 1

4. Parent D
   - Up to date curriculum and facilities --- 5
   - Dedication, devotion, & motivation --- 4
   - Providing effective feedback --- 3
   - More effective teaching materials --- 2
   - Knowledge based education --- 1

5. Parent E
   - More qualified and trained teachers --- 5
   - Well developed library --- 4
   - Increasing teachers' salaries --- 3
   - Improving school's physical state --- 2
   - More parental involvement --- 1

6. Parent F
   - More specialized teachers --- 5
   - Increasing teachers' social value and salary --- 4
   - Administrative synchronization --- 3
   - More parental involvement --- 2
   - Smaller class size --- 1

7. Parent G
   - Increasing teachers' social status --- 5
   - Increasing teachers' salaries --- 4
   - Good student-teacher relationship --- 3
   - More specialized teachers --- 2
   - Effective feedback --- 1

8. Parent H
   - Increasing teachers' social status and salaries --- 5
   - More knowledge sharing (Collaboration) --- 4
   - Smaller student-teacher ratio (smaller class size) --- 3
   - More teacher training --- 2
   - Good parent-teacher relationship --- 1

9. Parent I
   - More teacher training --- 5
   - Increasing teachers' social status and salaries --- 4
   - Good life oriented curriculum --- 3
   - Effective teaching materials & effective feedback --- 2
   - Good relationship among teachers, students, and parents --- 1

10. Parent J
   - Increasing teachers' social status and salaries --- 5

- More teachers' training --- 4
- Smaller class size --- 3
- Good teacher-parent relationship --- 2
- More knowledge sharing (more collaboration) --- 1

11. Parent K
    - More knowledge sharing (more collaboration) --- 5
    - Increasing teachers' social status --- 4
    - Improved curriculum --- 3
    - Smaller student-teacher ratio (smaller class size) --- 2
    - More qualified teachers --- 1

Calculation Table: *Parent Group (School B)*

| No. | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | To provide more qualified and trained teachers | 5+2+3+5+1=16 | 5 |
| 2. | To improve the  relationship among all stakeholders | 4+3+1+2=10 | 4 |
| 3. | To implement and maintain effective and understandable instructional methods | 3+1=4 | 2 |
| 4. | To decrease the class sizes | 2+5+1+3+3+2= 16 | 6 |
| 5. | To provide effective and timely feedback | 1+3+1+1=6 | 4 |
| 6. | To increase teachers' salaries | 5+3+4+4+5+4+ 5=30 | 7 |
| 7. | To facilitate more parental involvement | 4+1+2+1=8 | 4 |
| 8. | To recruit more specialized teachers | 3+2+5=10 | 3 |
| 9. | To provide more effective teaching materials | 1+4+5+2+2=14 | 5 |
| 10. | To foster staff dedication, and devotion to the school community | 2+4=6 | 2 |
| 11. | To review current curriculum to  ensure ongoing relevance | 1+3+3=7 | 3 |
| 12. | To provide a well developed library | 4 | 1 |
| 13. | To improve the school's physical state | 2 | 1 |
| 14. | To collaborate more on  knowledge sharing | 4+1+5=10 | 3 |
| 15. | To increase teachers' social value | 4+5+5+4+5+4= 27 | 6 |
| 16. | To create administrative synchronization | 3 | 1 |
| 17. | To provide more teacher training | 2+5+4=11 | 3 |

Final Table: *Parent Group (School B)*

| Rank Order | School Improvement Need | Weighted Score | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | To increase teachers' salaries | 30 | 7 |
| 2. | To increase teachers' social value | 27 | 6 |
| 3. | To decrease the class sizes | 16 | 6 |
| 4. | To provide more qualified and trained teachers | 16 | 5 |
| 5. | To provide more effective teaching materials | 14 | 5 |
| 6. | To provide more teacher training | 11 | 3 |
| 7. | To improve the relationship among all stakeholders | 10 | 4 |
| 8. | To collaborate more on knowledge sharing | 10 | 3 |
| 9. | To recruit more specialized teachers | 10 | 3 |
| 10. | To facilitate more parental involvement | 8 | 4 |
| 11. | To review current curriculum to ensure ongoing relevance | 7 | 3 |
| 12. | To provide effective and timely feedback | 6 | 4 |
| 13. | To foster staff dedication, and devotion to the school community | 6 | 2 |
| 14. | To implement and maintain effective and understandable instructional methods | 4 | 2 |
| 15. | To provide a well developed library | 4 | 1 |
| 16. | To create administrative synchronization | 3 | 1 |
| 17. | To improve the schools' physical state | 2 | 1 |