

GENDER-SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT-MATERIALS USED IN THE OPEN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION (ONFE) PROGRAMME RUN BY THE NGOS IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

In line with the constitutional obligation of right to education and the declaration of the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (EFA), the Government of Bangladesh made primary education compulsory. In spite of that substantial amount of population found out of education for what NGOs involved actively in literacy sector to supplement and complement the state effort with a commitment to eradicate illiteracy.

NGOs run literacy programme under face-to-face (f2f) mode, Continuing Education (CE) programme under blended approach coupled with f2f, and open and distance learning (ODL)-known as open non-formal education (ONFE) programme in the NGO literature-and Open Basic Education (OBE) also known as Non-formal Primary Education.

The Directorate of Non-formal Education (DNFE) and NGOs run ONFE programmes to face the country's challenge to meet the EFA goal. These programs seek to prevent people from relapsing into illiteracy. Such activities include designing program materials that enable target groups to practice their newly acquired literacy skills. DNFE, BRAC, PROSHIKA, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, FIVDB, CAMPE and some other organizations have already developed some CE materials. This paper analyses the gender-sensitivity of these materials.

Keywords: Education, NGOs, literacy, ODL, NFE etc.

INTRODUCTION

NGOs in Bangladesh endeavour to promote social empowerment through an integrated approach to community development, and literacy and educational training. Since independence in 1971, they have been providing the Literacy and Continuing Education (CE) and Capacity Building Programme especially for marginalized in an effort to combat illiteracy and thus to contribute towards the achievement of EFA goals as well as to promote community development.

Some of the NGO-run education programmes have been the role model and being implemented in different countries. NGOs established community-based continuing education centres (CECs) and community learning centres (CLCs), where literacy and vocational training classes and community development activities are undertaken

through the coordination of field facilitators. On completion of the literacy programme, the CE programme focuses on thematic areas which particularly and appropriately address the needs of neo-literate learners through open and distance learning (ODL) mode and their communities as determined through community-based needs assessment surveys (www.ahsaniamission.org.bd)

These include:

- **livelihood: income-generating projects (IGPs), for example, poultry farming, business skills training and micro-credit management;**
- **agriculture, for example, home gardening, animal and poultry farming, integrated farming;**
- **gender equity (including women's empowerment);**
- **environment: conservation, for example, tree planting and appropriate use of natural resources; and**
- **life-skills such as knowing right to information, women's right, safety of life etc.**

NGOs target women and girls because they are traditionally socially marginalised, and they are assumed the key actors in community developmental activities and partners in development. That's why; the gender issues have been paramount importance to address and NGOs reacted accordingly – it is reported that most of the NGOs have gender policy in consistent with the national women development policy. In this why; NGO programmes are supposed to be the gender-sensitive and gender-responsive. Rahman and Das (2007) state that NGO run continuing education (CE) programmes for the disadvantaged people are gender-sensitive. Yet how to make their engagement in education using gender-sensitive CE materials more effective remains under-researched. This analysis attempts to assess ability to perceive existing gender differences, issues and inequalities and to incorporate these into actions. The aim of the study is to evaluate the gender sensitivity and balance of selected CE materials in the curriculum the NFE in Bangladesh.

TEACHING-LEARNING METHODOLOGIES IN NGO EDUCATION

Sabina et al (2012) state that various gender-related issues, such as gender-roles and aspects of women's representation in the NGO-prepared CE texts are very important as it seek to challenge prevalent representations of women as well as empower women through positive and active role. NGOs, in Bangladesh, are very self-motivated in imparting the non-formal education (NFE) programme using their innovative approach in different categories which are mainly conventional in nature. But NGO-run programme entitled continuing education (CE) uses face-to-face (f2f) contacts for limited times and learners complete their learning through self-learning materials (SLMs). Therefore, CE is completely run under ODL mode.

In NGO literature, this is called open non-formal education (ONFE), which has the characteristics of both ODL and NFE (Rahman and Panda, 2012). NGOs possess gender responsive values to help women in Bangladesh for coming out their conventional surrounds, so that they can be the partners in development through engendering them using different advocacy initiatives and implementing different programmers. NGOs normally work for women who are really marginalized; where gender concerns are very relevant and extremely significant.

Social norms, believes, values, behaviors, mindsets, policies, processes etc. all disclose gross discrimination against women. It is reported that textbooks in the formal schooling and academic settings are found a further set back in promoting gender-based discrimination in the overall processes and performance of educational institutions.

That's why; NGOs take advocacy initiatives for preparing gender sensitive learning materials and educational settings so that gender mainstreaming is possible. At the same time, NGO run NFE programmes influence the gender roles of their students thus impacting their educational outcomes. When considering Education for All (EFA) goal 5, which aimed to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and now aims to achieve gender equality by 2015, it should be realized that teachers are a critical force for meeting the goal (UNESCO, 2005).

NGOs employ a learner-centred participatory teaching-learning method, which nurtures the active participation of learners in their learning process. As such, learners are encouraged to learn by doing or from each other through discussions. In addition to CLC and CEC-based learning activities, NGOs also employ mobile teaching and distance learning strategies: in the former, facilitators visit learners in their home communities while in the latter, literacy lessons are delivered over the radio or by means of learning CDs or through the distribution of self-administered learning materials. In either situation, however, learners are provided with literacy learning materials including ICT materials, posters, games and learners' handbook. NGO primers, booklets, and other learning materials are subjected to gender audit in their internal process and always been well-researched because most of the NGO programmes are donor funded, where there are conditions of implementing gender-sensitive initiatives.

Given the country's current Women Development Policy 2011, which demands sexual equality in education and given the recent attention to diversity in male-female within learning materials (MOWCA, 2011), it seems that the need to closely examine what adults are reading is of great importance to NGOs.

The programme has made major contributions in improving literacy levels among marginalized. Learners have graduated from the programme and most of them are now able to read and write they are termed as neo-literates who are integrated into the public school system for carry on education and but it is found that if they are not attached with the further programmes-the neo-literates forget their learning – and finally, they have managed to establish (IGPs).

The programme is also assisting communities with material resources such as livelihood equipments to enable them to establish IGPs. Overall, the capacity to establish IGPs has enabled learners not only to become self-sufficient, and therefore, to improve their standards of living but also to contribute towards the development of their communities.

This programme is called the CE programme integrated with livelihood emphasis. The programme has also designed, developed and distributed a variety of NFE learning materials, which are now widely used by the communities as well as by other NGOs in their literacy and education projects. In order to promote lifelong learning and long-term community development, the programme facilitated the training of NFE facilitators. The human resource capital will ensure the long-term sustainability of the programme.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to examine the gender sensitive and gender balanced nature of selected textual materials used in the CE component of the NGO run NFE education and the impact of the gender representation had on learners.

The study specifically addressed the question-“. To what extent are CE textual materials at the NFE level gender sensitive?” The major aims of the paper are to investigate post-literacy education learning materials developed by the NGOs which specifically address

the diverse needs and aspirations of learners for lifelong learning.

METHOD

Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) is the second largest NGO in the country which runs CE programmes at their own CLC using the CE materials developed in their in-house style. The Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), an NGO coalition, develops the similar materials for the promotion of CE, especially of young girls and adolescents to supply the member NGOs. CAMPE has a vast network of NFE, AE, CE and CLC's in Bangladesh and over 700 members NGO's. CE materials of activity of EFA is collected and shared.

To evaluate what types of gender traits or sexual bias entering NFE learners might be exposed to in their CE learning materials of two NGOs were selected: 3 booklets from DAM and 7 primers from CAMPE were selected for the current study. These materials offered separate livelihood and life skills for disadvantaged children. This allowed a unique opportunity to study what types of information male were presented in their role in comparison to what female learned in their materials published by these NGOs.

The materials were analyzed for the number of male main characters in comparison to female main characters represented in the activities. Content and discourse analysis were deployed in this study to check images. The selected primers were watched and read through carefully and noted the representations of the male-female in the activities and finally come out of with the conclusions whether they are gender-sensitive or not. As such, in this study, the researchers took them to include representations of how things are and have been as well as how things might or could be.

In this study, discourses were considered as occurring at three levels: action, representation and identification. The discourse analysis employed in this study focused on materials as encompassing the roles. Using this analysis, attempt has been given to identify the gender stereotyping that is social or psychological characteristics attributed to women or men on the basis of gender. These characteristics shape expectations of gender behavior.

Examples of gender stereotyping of women include being caring, submissive or weak; and of men, being rough, assertive and strong. First two authors jointly did the analysis and report was developed under the supervision of the PhD supervisor of the first author. His authority in the field of gender sensitive ODL delivery was of great value to this report. In addition, two key persons were interviewed: Mr. Shahnewaz Khan from DAM and Mr. Tapon Lumar Das from CAMPE. Their opinion is of very significant in this study.

DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

It is obvious that gender stereotypes and sex-role stereotypes result in a mind set in learners that negatively affect their life horizons. Therefore, learning materials should not contain gender stereotypes as negative gender stereotypes affect a learner's aspirations and abilities. Das (2010) states that useful and ideal CE materials should therefore contain:

- gender balanced coverage;
- gender appropriate illustrations;
- gender fairness in language;
- gender fairness in illustrations; and
- gender fairness in content.

This study argues is compounded by the portrayal of males and females in textbooks such

as the history textbooks purposively sampled to ten for this study: 7 from CAMPE and 3 from DAM, which were developed in association of the Commonwealth of Learning (CoL). DAM produced life skills primers that are used at the CLCs of the CE component of the literacy programmes. It reported that these materials were represented by the both gender roles (Table: 1) and no stereotypes are found. A complete gender-based analysis of the CE materials was made as a whole, to explore how DAM policies can affect men and women differentially.

Table: 1
Images of men and women's roles as portrayed in
CE text-books - a content and discourse analysis

Publishers	CE material	Thematic areas	Author	Title	Gender ideology and biases disseminated
CAMPE	Texts	Environment	Ara and Mandary, 2011	Keeping the land safe	The whole book of 16 pages has 15 pictures; women's role has been portrayed in all of them. Gender roles and stereotyping have outlined the role of all women.
CAMPE, GSS, TIDP/LGED	Texts for 8-12 age group	Life skills	Tapon, 2011	Let's move on the road safely	The whole book of 30 pages has 30 pictures; 16 show women and the remaining show men. Of these 3 show women's role on modern life such as driving, traffic control etc.
CAMPE	Texts	Life skills	Agoon, 2003	Nutrition in cooking	The whole book of 20 pages has 18 pictures where women found at the kitchen; some picture show women caring sick bay boy and one woman found begging. Therefore, women found only in their traditional roles.
CAMPE	Primers	Life skills	Tutul and Laboni, 2009	No refusal for knowing information	The whole book of 16 pages has 12 pictures; each of them represents the active participation in connectivity of the ICT instruments to know the useful information. Pictures are found well-balanced in relation to the gender sensitivity.
CAMPE	Primers	Life skills	Taher and Yeasmin 2011	National Women Development Policy 2011; an easy lesson	The whole book of 16 pages has 17 pictures; each picture has represented the different role of the women such as public speaking, cultivating, teaching, counseling, local arbitration, family management, playing community works, driving and computing.
CAMPE	Primers	Life Skills	Mahbub and Rana, 2008	Seasonal Diseases	The whole book of 16 pages has 15 pictures; where 13 gender roles are represented and 2 pictures show gender-stereotypes

CAMPE	Primers	Life Skills	Yusuf and Ruga, 2011	Keep my own accounts	The whole book of 16 pages has 18 pictures; both man and woman working hard in the field; working in the market, opening bank account and shop keeping-women come out of their traditional roles.
DAM	Texts	Livelihood	Khatun, 2012	Boutique Print	The whole book of 20 pages has many pictures of different items; 5 pictures represent women's traditional roles.
DAM	Texts	Livelihood	Yusuf, 2012	Poultry	The whole book of 20 pages has many pictures of different items; 5 pictures represent only women working in the farm and others represent male dominated work.
DAM	Texts	Livelihood	Das, 2012	Nursery	The whole book of 20 pages has many pictures of different items; 2 pictures represent both men-women;
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CAMPE produces mainly the primers for CE learners to develop their life skills what in turn promote a quality of life; and as the CAMPE policy advocacy and learning materials has to be gender-sensitive. Following selected books from CAMPE are analyzed: Keeping the land safe, Let's move on the road safely, Nutrition in cooking, No refusal for knowing information, National Women Development Policy 2011-an easy lesson, Seasonal Diseases, Keep my own accounts. Livelihood books are selected from DAM and they are: Boutique Print; Poultry, and nursery. Whether it is women portrayed in the home or in menial work, women portrayed as teachers, nurses or in other helping professions, or women portrayed as passive actors in the background, we see negative stereotypes in some of the primers. Likewise, the stereotype of women in traditional roles reinforces oppressive and restrictive conceptualizations of gender and paints a limited picture of the skills, abilities and interests of women.

The booklet entitled 'Nutrition in cooking' found women dominated which presents a gender stereotypes where male representation is very minimum. Therefore, this booklet is not found non-responsive to CE programme. Livelihood materials are not sufficiently gender-responsive. On the other hand life-skills materials are found *more gender-balanced and gender-equity has been represented adequately.*

CONCLUSIONS

Since its inception, DAM and CAMPE has developed a variety of literacy teaching-learning materials (including booklets, posters, games and leaflets) which were widely distributed to the learners and their communities. The distribution of literacy materials to the communities has provided the basis for family-based lifelong learning. The materials are also being used by other NGOs in their literacy and education programmes.

In addition, NGOs has also trained a network of community-based NFE facilitators who, potentially, could continue providing literacy learning assistance to their people when the

programmes come to an end. It has been observed that, despite encountering major challenges, most learners are highly self-motivated and committed to learn because they are now aware of the importance of education in their lives and for improving their living standards. Literacy programmes should therefore build on the learners' enthusiasm to ensure lifelong learning. Gender-sensitive learning materials are of beneficial for obtaining a successful process of gender mainstreaming.

Therefore, NGOs have to have the option for the use of ICT-based learning materials and put emphasis on the content development for the NFE education where some preconditions need to be fulfilled-these are the sufficient technical capacity, a gender friendly organisational culture, accountability and will. Some of the learning materials of the literacy, numeracy and life skills-based education of the NGOs are of discrimination and stereotypes reinforced. In addition, they include gender dimension: girls/females often invisible in content and images, and often excluded from taught curriculum. Gender stereotypes are reinforced and eventually gender inequalities perpetuated in a wider context. It is required to promote skills-based, gender-sensitive educational content the life skills-based learning areas, including rights, gender equality, health, nutrition, peace and respect for diversity. Relevant, gender-sensitive materials that do not reinforce stereotypes are expected. To ensure that men and women have equitable access to education in this context, it will be important to apply gender-based analysis frameworks to the policies of the NGOs so that CE materials achieve the highest grade of gender-sensitiveness.

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