Hans Jørgen Braathe
Ann Merete Otterstad
Oslo University College
Faculty of Education

Dilemmas, challenges and contradiction in institutional co-operation work in Bangladesh. [1]

Towards Quality Primary Education in Bangladesh: Continuation of Training Program in Teacher Education in the period 2000 – 2006.

Abstract

As a part of a NORAD funded project entitled 'Primary Education Development Project for Quality Improvement' (PEDPQI), a component of the broader Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) for Bangladesh, Oslo University College, (OUC), has undertaken to conduct and implement courses in Mathematics and Science Education and in Teaching English as a Second Language for teacher educators in the 54 Primary Teacher Training Institutes (PTIs) and the National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE). OUC engagement is directed towards teacher education for the primary schools of Bangladesh. The purpose of this project is to follow up on institutional capacity building at NAPE and the PTIs through resource development for quality improvement. The basis has been subject-related inputs conducted by Oslo University College staff directed to both the PTI classroom and the primary school classroom. We are now in the process of following up to ensure that the ideas and content from the courses are integrated into the daily teaching at the PTIs. One focus is on how the content of the courses conducted relates to the existing curriculum in Bangladesh. A further concern is how to understand and organise activity-based and child-oriented teaching and learning in the teacher education system of Bangladesh.

The paper presents the project and puts forward some reflections on the work so far and on further engagement in the educational sector in Bangladesh.

1. Short background

LINS, Lærerutdanningens Internasjonale Senter, as part of Oslo University College, has been engaged as consultants for the Norwegian Embassy in Dhaka regarding the PEDPQI project. One of the components of PEDPQI was to produce a Human Resource Development (HRD) Plan. This plan was to be based on a needs assessment for Human Resource Development for the relevant institutions in the Primary Educational Sector in Bangladesh. The plan was further intended to be a working document for planning further actions and components in the work for quality improvement.

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[1] Paper presented at Netreed Conference 8-10 Dec. 2003 in Gausdal, Norway.

The final plan[2] prepared by one international and two national consultants, includes an analysis of the present primary education sub-sector, the current HRD institutional framework and recommendations based on the needs assessment findings. It concentrates on an analysis of Class I and II staff within Directorate of Primary Education, (headquarters and field-officers) and NAPE, including the PTIs. The main contribution of this plan is that it both highlights some of the structural obstacles to qualitative improvement of the primary education sector and lays a realistic basis for training staff within the present system. The HRD plan presents conclusions on regional co-operation and proposes that decisions concerning this shall be taken in consultations with Norway. In the HRD plan, (p.36) it is stated: "However, the Directorate will utilize the Regional Institutes and Oslo College for short-term training."

2. Subject based courses for PTI instructors at NAPE

With this background and on request from the Norwegian Embassy concerning ways LINS could further contribute to the PEDPQI, ideas were discussed and presented to the Embassy and to NAPE[3]. As the Faculty of Education at Oslo University College is the largest in Norway giving both pre-service and in-service training for primary school teachers, we see a potential in the staff to contribute to courses for the staff both at NAPE and the PTIs. During visits to NAPE the LINS team has in separate meetings discussed the ideas with both the Director NAPE and the staff at NAPE. From both parties positive feedback was given to ideas of a training program as an integrated part of the proposed HRD plan. At these meetings we presented different academic subjects with tailor-made content for educating the target age group of six to ten years, research methodology, ICT, library development and courses in general education, such as individual teaching and supervision (Østberg and Braathe, 2000).

From the knowledge of the structure of training at NAPE and the PTIs and the corresponding competence at OUC's Faculty of Education we recommended further elaboration in the academic fields of: English as a Second Language, Maths Education and Science Education. One important asset in the academic structure at OUC is the strong department of early childhood (pre-school) education. We recommended this competence to be integrated into the planning and implementation of the courses.

Our preliminary training design proposal was as follows:
- 1 week where OUC instructors stay at NAPE, do field visits and discuss and develop course design with NAPE faculty staff
- 2 weeks training course for NAPE and PTI staff at NAPE by OUC instructors
- An intermediate period of 3-4 months when participants work individually or in groups on tasks and material handed out
- 2 weeks training for the same NAPE and PTI staff/the same OUC instructors coming back

In the planning and designing of the courses it has been necessary for the selected staff at OUC to obtain contextual knowledge of the Bangladeshi primary school sector and the needs at NAPE and the PTIs. This has partly been provided by the LINS staff already familiar with the Bangladeshi primary education sector including NAPE and the PTIs, partly as suggested by the Director NAPE. The planned organisation of the courses has also given the opportunity for the OUC staff to improve their contextual knowledge of the Bangladeshi educational

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[2] Institutional Capacity Building Through Human Resource Development For Quality Improvement, October 2, 2000.
[3] During LINS consultancy assignment to PEDPQI October 2000.

sector. In this respect there has also been a building of competence at OUC/LINS, in particular with respect to Bangladesh but also in conducting training courses in the primary education sector in NORAD- supported countries in general. This training design differs from the one proposed in the HRD plan in that it has been exclusively in-country training except for a short study tour for some selected participants to OUC September 2003.

The involved parties approved the proposal for the training courses in English as a Second Language, Maths Education and Science Education[4].

The courses have been implemented according to the timetable below:

	Spring	Fall
2001		Mathematics Education
2002	Mathematics Education Science Education	Science Education English as a second language
2003	English as a second language	

The given courses have all been planned and conducted in close cooperation with the academic staff at NAPE. This co-operation has been very fruitful, and has created good relationships and professional exchange of knowledge both ways.

3. Implementation

The deep difference in beliefs and traditions in education between Bangladeshi teacher educators and practitioners in primary school and the newer ideas presented in the courses, created both positive curiosity and negative frustrations. During the courses there were a lot of important and interesting discussions on the organisation of teaching and learning in the three subjects at the PTIs. These discussions showed, as did the responses to the final questionnaires, that an important process has started. This process will require much work, and will take time and patience, both from the NAPE staff and the PTI instructors and from the teams from Oslo University College.

The process of altering educational cultures is a long, demanding and complicated one. We have some experience from being with the PTI instructors and the NAPE personnel who have responsibility concerning important subjects in the Bangladeshi primary schools. As the NORAD supported PEDPQI's goal is to raise quality in the primary education sector in Bangladesh, we see these courses given by Oslo University College (OUC) as a modest start and as one of many contributions to this end. In the report "Primary Education In Bangladesh"[5], it is recommended, *"to improve the quality and content of training in the PTIs"* (p. 62.)[6] . The joint OUC/NAPE programme is aimed specifically at this objective.

We think the participants have started a process. This process is about changing the focus from teaching methods only, to looking at theories of children's learning and the nature of

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[4] at the PEDPQI Annual Meeting 28th May 2001.
[5] Findings of PSPMP: 2000
[6] Primary School Performance Monitoring Project (PSPMP) December, 2001

subject knowledge as the foundation for choosing and creating teaching methods. In the same report mentioned above, implications for action are quoted such as, *The existing Teacher Education Program (C-in-Ed of the PTIs) needs to be renewed and revised. Modern child-centric, activity-based, teaching-learning strategies should be given more emphasis"* (p. 76).

The participants at these courses represent nearly all of the 54 PTIs and the NAPE staff teaching the three subjects. When these PTI instructors go back to their PTIs from the courses it will be up to them alone to implement the new ideas in their teaching. It is our experience from different in-service courses with teachers in Norway, and in other countries, that this can be a nearly impossible task to initiate by individuals alone, especially if the implementation demands changes in the daily routines that also include other colleagues at the PTIs. It is an obvious weakness that only one person from each PTI has participated in these different courses. However altogether this means that three PTI instructors from each PTI have participated in one of the three courses.
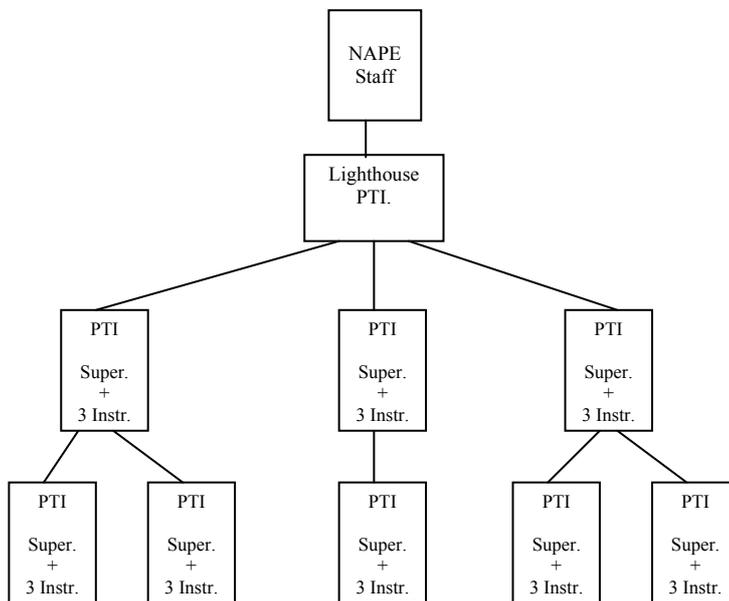
4. Networking

The challenge will be how to implement more process and activity oriented teaching methods that take into consideration children's learning, the nature of subject matter knowledge and different teaching methods. The challenge in the time to come will be to support the teacher educators in these change processes at the different PTIs. As these are processes involving the whole educational sector, all levels in the system have to be involved and take part in sharing the responsibility. This means first of all that all levels above the PTI must take responsibility for these processes to make them effective. This means that Primary and Mass Education Department, PMED, DPE, NAPE and the PTI superintendents all have to be involved. This again means that we will address all these levels in the follow up in the time to come.

Below is shown the Educational structure that is approached by the project, including DPE, NAPE and six "Lighthouse PTIs". We have established a group of six NAPE staff with responsibilities for mentoring and follow up the six "Lighthouse PTIs":
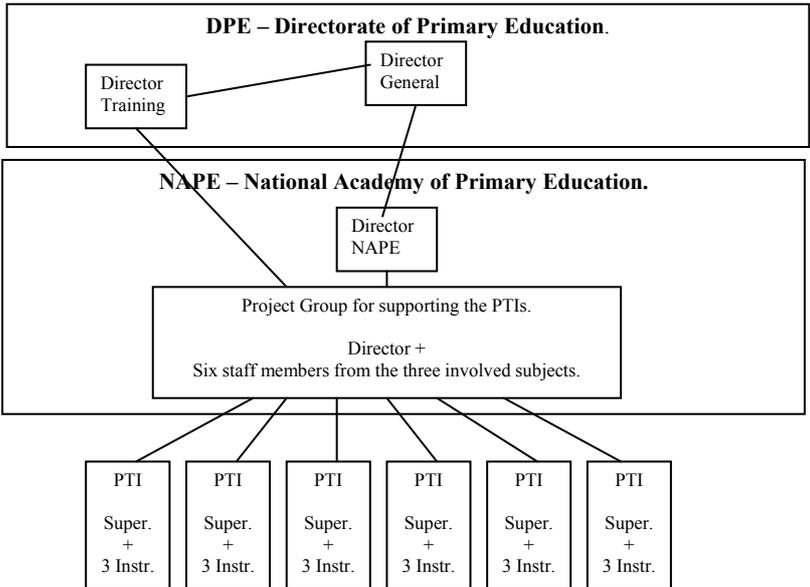
We have now been working with our Bangladeshi partners on this follow up for more than two years, and are in the process of implementation on a networking and cascading basis in

two steps. First each of the six "Lighthouse PTIs" has already been connected to three additional PTIs in their area, and second we have made plans and budget for adding the remaining PTIs from 2005 to the network.

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                        │   Staff  │
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                        │ Lighthouse│
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This means that from 2005 all the 54 PTIs are included in the project. The idea and rationale for a follow up project was presented to the Norwegian Embassy, NAPE and the DPE during a visit to Bangladesh in February/March 2002 [7].

5. The rationale for the following up

Good leadership "empowerment" – or the ways the participants take part in or are involved in building competence - will be a precondition for new change processes. Experience from different implementation processes in educational systems have shown that effective building of competence can be seen in five separate but dependant levels of activities: Relevant theory, Demonstration, Praxis, Announcement and Follow up in minimum 12 – 18 months (Dalin1994). Research results show that if all five activity aspects are fulfilled up to 85 % changes in behaviour can be achieved - but just 5 % if only the first aspect is fulfilled [8] [9].

Our proposal and further work builds on these experiences and we have tried to take these dependant levels into consideration in the planning of the following up of the subject based courses at NAPE:

Relevant theory
This involves the courses in Mathematics (Braathe & Otterstad 2001 a,b, 2002, 2003) Science (Andersen & Harnæs 2002) and English as a Second Language (Berg & Lyngstad 2002,

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[7] It was presented as a proposal with a budget and a timetable that were agreed upon in principle at the Annual Meeting for PEDPQI in May 2002. The full background is to be found in the LINS Contribution 2002 - 4. The final approval was given at the PEDPQI Semi Annual Meeting 11th December 2002.

[8] This builds partly on Joyce and Showers research about building of effective competence referred to in Dalin 1994.
[9] A question of Quality. State of Primary Education in Bangladesh. Volume 1. Education Watch 2000. The University Press Limited, Dhaka 2001.

2003) that have been implemented at NAPE. It will also include the present educational discourse in the educational system as well as coming courses, supervision and tutoring both from NAPE staff and OUC staff and other stakeholders in the PEDP II program.

As there are many different donors working with and implementing different programs directed to the improvement of the primary education sector in Bangladesh, it will be of importance to co-ordinate both the content and timing of the courses offered to the PTI instructors and NAPE staff. We will especially look into the theory and educational ideologies that support programs offered within the ESTEEM, JICA and IDEAL projects. We have initiated a dialogue between the donors involved. It will be of importance to nurture this collaboration and dialogue in the time to come. We have also involved the Director, Training of DPE in this co-ordination work.

One important aspect of developing theoretical knowledge in the system is to build good libraries with relevant literature including journals. *"Books are the principle source of teaching aid and learning materials for both teacher and the taught. ...To an overwhelming proportion (74%) the available library books are not very useful at the PTIs visited"* (Braathe and Otterstad, 2002 p. 35) the OUC team has supported titles for the libraries concerning the teaching and learning of Mathematics, Science and English. This list will be part of an addendum to the list of books prepared for buying books for NAPE and PTIs.

Demonstration
This will best be taken care of by selecting a number of PTIs to use as pilot institutions. We have initially chosen six "Lighthouse PTIs", chosen according to recommendations from NAPE staff. The selected PTIs now function as disseminators to PTIs in their nearby region. The participants in all the courses confirmed this view in their assessment. *"Arrange idea-sharing programme or interaction with other PTI's". "Should disseminate the knowledge achieved to all the PTI's and assist them to improve the knowledge"* (Braathe and Otterstad 2002).

The core group of personnel at the chosen PTIs will be the instructors in Mathematics, Science and English plus the PTI superintendent. The six chosen PTIs are given responsibility by their superintendents for networking in these three subjects with a number of PTIs in their region. We, together with our Bangladeshi partners, have found it appropriate that three PTIs network with each of the six chosen PTIs. These networks have to be followed up and supported by staff at both NAPE and DPE. The decisions for selecting PTIs into the network have been dependent on the degree to which the different PTIs show they are ready to start networking and disseminating their knowledge and experience. It is further dependent on the number of vacancies at the PTIs that are to be connected to the different networks. We have so far together with our cooperative partners, defined who will have what responsibility among OUC, NAPE, DPE and six chosen PTI superintendents. These responsibilities also include further dissemination to remaining PTIs in two steps. First each of the six "Lighthouse PTIs" has been connected to three additional PTIs in their area, and all the involved persons have made plans and budgets for adding the remaining PTIs from 2005 into the network.

Praxis
Praxis has to be done by the individual PTI instructor at his or her own PTI. This praxis has to a great extent to be supervised, supported and evaluated by the superintendent with support from NAPE staff, but also supported by the networks mentioned above. The processes of supportive supervision were initiated at the workshops at NAPE in November 2002, but we

think this has further to be looked into. The Director of NAPE and NAPE staff have to work through this way of supervision and reflection, and try it out among themselves and with the superintendents. It is of crucial importance that thrust and support for the changes is established with the PTI instructors involved. Of special importance were the rearranging of the timetable for the students at the PTIs to make room for activity based teaching methods, and also reflection on how the instructors can arrange the big groups of student teachers into smaller groups, and further use the rooms at the PTI differently from today's praxis. We even proposed they could use outside space for group and activity work. Further, the experiences of the student teachers have to be included in the daily teaching and learning at the PTIs, and routines for the student teachers' individual learning have to be looked into. All these changes of the procedures are radical changes for the superintendents; it is therefore of great importance that both NAPE and DPE staff give support for these changes. These developments are about to take place at the involved "Lighthouse PTIs".

Administration and Direction
DPE and NAPE must take the overall responsibility for following up of the project. It will consist of making changes for organising classes, teaching methods at the PTI, content and form of the examination papers, and revisions and supplements to the curriculum module textbooks. It will also include taking necessary steps for further revision of the C-in-Ed curriculum. The superintendents together with NAPE staff will monitor and supervise the implementation of these changes. Documentation of the work carried out for initiating change will be an important indicator of progress. Another important aspect will be the continuation of the processes due to the existing examination and evaluation system. This will set premises for what the instructors can allow themselves to do in their teaching at the PTI.

Follow up in minimum 12 – 18 months
A period of follow-up is recommended as long as Phase II of PEDP will last, which ends in 2008. Processes of change within educational institutions take a long time. This is because the staffs involved have higher education and are more conscious of the ideologies involved in different approaches to filling their roles. The responsibility for the follow up has to be shared by the involved partners. It is first of all the responsibility of DPE, NAPE and the PTI superintendents. In this respect the responsibility of the OUC staff would be to co-operate by listening to all the participants' different 'voices' and contributing with knowledge and experience into the system. This could be by offering courses at different levels both in Bangladesh and in Norway, and by tutoring and monitoring the different levels in the system. OUC has arranged, together with DPE and NAPE staff, a study-tour and seminar in Norway. This took place September 2003 and had as a goal to give the Bangladeshi officers new experience from teacher education and knowledge and ideas on how to implement changes in the educational system on a national level.

6. Discussion

The project for quality improvement in teacher education for primary schools in Bangladesh will continue for at least three more years. Support for the educational sector in Bangladesh has up till now been based on different projects under a governmentally coordinated umbrella project called Primary Education Development Project or PEDP. From January 2004 the support is organised under a SWAp called PEDP II, led by the Asian Development Bank, ADB. This work for teacher education will be part of the PEDP II to which Norway is contributing through basket funding.

This paper is mainly based on our own reflections and experiences through this project. We have used our respective disciplinary backgrounds as teacher educators in mathematics and pedagogy. We have also visited different schools, teacher education institutions, reviewed questionnaires, had focus group discussions, interviews, observations and made documentary analyses during the different processes throughout this project.. We have also this Fall had a visit from the Bangladeshi participants on a two week study – tour/seminar in Norway. The purpose of writing this paper has been to raise some critical questions both for ourselves but also for analysing critically the process so far for further developing practices so that the underlying reasons or rationales for changing practices may be explored. This might contribute to reflection on different aspects of being part of, and representatives for, Norwegian aid policy and practice.

Recipients' responsibility
We have in this project been part of NORAD's ideology of "the recipients' responsibility" for 'driving' a project further. This has challenged us in many ways. First, to get our partners and co-operators in Bangladesh to participate and take responsibilities in professional discussion and make decisions has been far more challenging than we have experienced earlier. In many ways the hierarchical system within the educational system sets many limitations and challenges for the local partners in their ability and possibilities to take on responsibilities and to act on these. This fact has taken us time to discover fully and to be able to start open communication about it in the project. Brock-Utne (2000) says the recipients quickly learn to use the donor's language, but we needed time and experience to understand the educational system. This project has developed from the traditions of ordinary LINS work as consultancy work for the Norwegian Embassy in Dhaka. Our mode of working has been visiting Bangladesh and our partners twice a year for about four weeks each time. For 'outsiders', like us, not working daily in the country would probably have benefited if we had 'lived' in Bangladesh for longer periods at the time. If people from 'outside' are to have status or a role as professional supporters for developing and implementing a project they have to 'understand' all the different discourses surrounding the project. It is also necessary to establish contact with people within the educational system and to communicate within these discourses. From our experience we see the necessity of having stayed in Bangladesh for longer periods and to actually experience the different discourses and not just read about them beforehand in Norway. Other donors we cooperate with have their consultants staying for longer periods of time. Some stay for half a year and others live there even longer. We see, understand and support the reason behind the recipients' responsibility concept. However, as long as other donors do not follow this ideology but stay in the country and run their projects by letting their own Project Implementation Units run parallel to the structure they are trying to strengthen, the recipients find it hard to understand the Norwegian ideology and to take responsibility for their own programmes.

A second aspect of the discussion about how to give 'ownership' to a project emphasises the need to build projects from the ground up and build on existing structures rather than through the application of 'blueprints'. We think the openness for local communities'/institutions' solutions (discourses) has to be emphasised in the processes of supporting a project or a programme within education. Volan (2003) points out, in her doctoral thesis about educational reforms and change in the South, the necessity of "anchoring educational planning in the indigenous environment" (p. 226). We are therefore critical of taking a successful project in one country and converting it to another context. 'Our' project has expanded and further been created over time in close communication and co operation with the partners involved. We did not have ready-made proposals or solutions when we started

these processes but open-minded attitudes to give the project possibilities to grow and hopefully succeed. We have had some goals to reach, but also these goals have evolved during communication and co operation with our partners over time. The process has had the existing structure and situation as its premises. It has been the Bangladeshis who could tell the needs and limitations. This again can be seen as a consequence of our distant and time limited presence in Bangladesh. This then has demanded a greater responsibility and "ownership" from the Bangladeshi side, and hopefully it has also created some qualitative competence in the system.

As a third aspect we also want to focus on the role of the donors' power relations towards the recipients (Brock-Utne 2000, Foucault 1977). The donor community is a well established cohort of professionals. As praxis is today we are tempted to say that this professional cohort is "using the recipients' needs to maintain a world wide industry/business of aid". We have often asked ourselves; in what way is it possible for the recipients to decide and influence freely what they actually want? Brock-Utne (2000) also raises questions like; whose education are we talking about, and what does for example education for all mean? This is also one of Sinlarets' (2002) main concerns when he points to the need for Asia 'to enhance creativity and productivity in teacher education'. He continues to say Asia has up to now been dependent on the western world, but he says "not until we walk with them or in front of them can we take part in setting the direction" (p.140). He searches for the proactive teacher education that enables the students to express themselves and fully use their own potential. But when we in 'our project' challenged the stakeholders to make decisions and pronounce the follow up requests and demands, they revealed that they have had few experiences and that the donors seldom ask for their opinions. The critical questions we have had to ask are; who are actually involved in planning and following up these processes, the donors (us), the Department of Education or the teachers at the Teacher Training Institutions? Sinlarets (2002) point out the need for teacher education to create critical, creative, constructive and wise learning for the students, to obtain and pronounce their 'own' goals and directions to search, analyse, criticise and evaluate from their own contexts. This should be all the donors' responsibility so "Asia resists adopting ideas and copying knowledge from other countries" (Sinlarets, p. 143). More attention is now given to the relationship between development partners and the recipient countries. We have recently been presented with a report: "Joint evaluation of external support to basic education in developing countries" (The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2003). This report takes a critical look at donor behaviour, and points to the need to accomplish deeper level analysis both from the macro and micro level.

Child centred teaching and learning
To what extent can we (and by what 'right' do we), as donors have to introduce 'child centred and activity based teaching and learning' into Bangladeshi teacher education? The basis for our work in the teacher education sector in Bangladesh has been the newly revised C-in-Ed curriculum. This revision has been financed and supported by Norwegian funds, and has been a vital part of the PEDPQI project. We have asked ourselves which discussions have been held in advance when these revisions were planned; whose voices have been heard? Who is the main force behind the plan? Which analysis has been made when the decisions about child oriented teaching and learning were introduced? The revised C-in-Ed curriculum has modules for general educational subjects like Child Psychology, Teaching Methods and Learning and Evaluation of Personal Development, in addition to modules for the different subjects. These general modules emphasise the 'child centred and activity based teaching and learning' as a basis for all activities at the PTIs. We suspect that the rationality of the western

understanding of child development is underpinning this emphasis. This rationality is also stressed in reports on the Primary Education sector in Bangladesh.[10]

By contrast, it may be useful to describe some of the characteristic features of the Bangladeshi primary classroom as it is described in these reports. In this classroom there is little space for the children's initiative, and no attempts are made to adapt the instruction to the interests of the individual child. The child passively receives the material it is assumed to be able to remember without asking questions. All initiatives come from the teacher, usually in the front of the classroom asking questions which the child answers and which again the teacher then evaluates. Few attempts are made by the teacher to accommodate to the children's interests and initiatives. The teacher's concern is to see if the child has the right answer. Most learning is based on rote learning of facts. This teaching is criticized for being traditional and old fashioned. The contrary and advocated situation is to create a classroom where the focus is on the children's and the teacher's communication.

These ideas emphasise child centred and activity based teaching and learning – but what happens to the teachers' values and interests in Bangladesh when these discourses (Foucault 1977) represent totally different values from those they are brought up to within their families and experience through their own schooling? Dana (2001) has written about 'The education and training of entrepreneurs in Asia', where he emphasises the need to understand and find the values, historical experience and mindset of the people being trained. He continues to argue to avoid "the translocation of Western - style 'expertise'" (p.414) if a project is to exist more than a short period after the experts have disappeared.

We have been responsible for the courses in Mathematics Education at NAPE for the PTI Instructors and have had to reflect on the differences between how mathematics is taught in Bangladesh and Norway, but also the differences in approaches between the different donors in Bangladesh. Leung (2001) has problematised these contradictory educational ideologies when it comes to teaching and learning of mathematics in East Asia. He discusses the features of East Asian mathematics education and its underlying values in contrast to features and values in the west. He presents these in terms of six dichotomies, namely; product versus process; rote learning versus meaningful learning; studying hard versus pleasurable learning; extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation; whole class teaching versus individualized learning; and competence of teachers: subject matter versus pedagogy. It is argued that these features are based on deep rooted cultural values and paradigms. His point of departure is the fact that East Asian students consistently outperform their counterparts in Western countries in recent international studies of mathematics achievements. His conclusion is to raise awareness of the differences and to point to the fact that these are deeply rooted in culture, and that importing, or in our case implanting, different ideologies demands reflection and knowledge. Volan (2003) emphasises the need to follow up courses representing new teaching methods for the teachers. This work must be followed up by the establishment of support systems which contribute to developing a facilitating environment, where all the involved persons take part.

Supervision and mentoring
The differences in common understanding of such concepts as supervision and mentoring also have created discussion about how western professional concepts might create difficulties. We have experienced that many of the donors emphasise these concepts in their work for

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[10] Primary School Performance Monitoring Project (PSPMP) December 2001.
A question of Quality. State of Primary Education in Bangladesh. Volume 1. Education Watch 2000. The University Press Limited Dhaka 2001.

achieving quality improvement. Our Bangladeshi partners (stakeholders) are trying to convert 'our' concept(s) into their daily praxis. We easily forget the differences in power relations between the different employees in the educational system. 'We' in our Norwegian context are almost habituated to think that everybody is situated at the same level and 'we' are not particularly concerned about the differences in status people may hold. We have experienced mentoring in Bangladesh to be understood as a synonym for supervision, as a way of inspection and control, and consequently checking up if people are doing what they are supposed to do.

The aims we have been emphasising by introducing mentoring in the project were to start a process of reflection over practice (Handal & Lauvås 2000, Edwards & Collison 1996, Zeichner & Liston 1996). We have tried to encourage colleague-based supervision, but have realised that the need for 'controlling and inspecting' interferes with the processes. The participants seem to conduct the mentoring influenced by the hierarchal system as a necessity for 'driving' the processes further on. This state of affairs hinders the positive and supporting atmosphere we want to establish so all participants can feel free to experiment and take part in the development of new practices at the PTIs and in the system as a whole. The deep difference in beliefs and traditions in educational leadership and mentoring and supervision between Bangladeshi teacher educators and practitioners, and the newer ideas presented in the courses and the seminars/workshops have created both positive curiosity and negative frustrations. It is our belief that this first start can only be the initiation of a process that will require much work, and will take time and patience, from the NAPE staff, the PTI superintendents and from teams from Oslo University College.

Curriculum, assessment and evaluation
We have had interesting discussions with the stakeholders on the content of the C-in-Ed curriculum and whether the activities and different teaching methods presented at the courses belonged to the curriculum or not. These discussions showed clearly that the curriculum is seen as a syllabus, and further that the module textbooks are seen as THE syllabus/curriculum by both the superintendents and the instructors at the PTIs, and even for some of the NAPE staff. We have tried to move the discussion towards an understanding of the textbooks as just one interpretation of the curriculum, but we think that there is a lot more work to be done in this area.

We have during these discussions experienced the tendency to describe school curricula, and in particular the new C-in-Ed curriculum, in terms of content, whereas learning is more likely to happen if we think about classroom practices. The documentation provided to us in the new C-in-Ed curriculum was in fact a syllabus. Our understanding of curriculum has always been broader than this. It includes active pedagogy, as well as the syllabus necessary to learning and the forms of assessment used to evaluate the learning. Understood in this richer way, a curriculum is the means of turning an inert syllabus listing of content into the experience offered to students in the classroom, what they make of those experiences, and the evidence that they provide as to the learning they have achieved. This is a means of reconciling the difference between syllabus and practice. Without such reconciliation, the syllabus drives the classroom and, as a consequence, the practices become merely transmissive.

Another prominent issue in this project has concerned questions about assessment/evaluation. We have had discussions about who are assessing the processes in the project so far, what is going to be evaluated, which form shall the evaluation have, who is going to do the evaluation, where and how? When is the evaluation going to be? What is the purpose of

evaluation (Handal & Lauvås 1987, 2000)? These questions can be said to emphasise the distances in beliefs and 'truth' regarding what assessment might mean within the project. As we have experienced the discussions about assessment in Bangladesh are often focused on how to make 'good' pre – post test, and seldom reflect the connection between assessment as guiding the project's further deveøopment. Volan (2003) also points out the necessity of supporting indigenous research capacity. In 'our project' we see the need to strengthen NAPE in terms of research connected to curriculum and assessment.

The women's positions in the project
We also experience 'a gender challenge' in this project. NORADs' philosophy is to practice equal opportunities for everybody; here understood as representation of as many women as men in the project. Our experiences are that the men are in the power positions and that the women's role is often invisible. The women seldom take part in the discussions without us trying to challenge them to 'contribute' so their position becomers more visible. We find this difficult when the discourses give other signals. We have from 'our' understanding interpreted the discourses as a hierarchically based gender system. This might be a wrong interpretation.

When we have initiated reflective questions such as, 'Who is in the position of being the leader in the group, or who has the power to set the standard of what is possible to say and decide? Which role has the female towards the male etc.?' We feel that all contacts and interaction between people are in some ways political. This is because power plays an important part in who does what, who says what, who is silent and who is passive. The participants seldom reflected upon gender positions but were more concerned about how their own titles were connected to power positions. One of the women has a title as specialist in her subject while two men are situated in the same position. It seems that her title gives her the 'same' (from her own statements) opportunities as the men have in the teacher education system.

Control and instrumentalist ideas for viability
In this project we are supporting, and hopefully strengthening the existing educational structure. The structure is a very hierarchical one, which means that everybody is dependent on approval from the level above them. At first, we had not included the Director General of DPE in the project, even though we know that the Director Training and Director NAPE are dependent on approval from him to be able to act according to agreed responsibilities in the project. This fact could paralyse the whole process. Therefore both PMED and the Director General of DPE are now included in the further project. We are much more relaxed and tuned into the Bangladeshi context and different discourses today than we were two years ago. We don't see our selves at the steering wheel, and we try not to tell the direction, and certainly not the speed, of driving – but still we have the role of initiating, asking for progress and pushing to get everyone to take responsibility and to contribute with their own voices.

7. Conclusions

The further process of adding the 18 new PTIs is left to the Bangladeshi partners in the project altogether. The work in Bangladesh is hopefully going on. As far as we know there should be different seminars arranged during this fall. We do not know the details of what is really happening in the project. It is difficult to communicate with partners in Bangladesh, due to communication problems. It is impossible to have e-mail contact with NAPE, and therefore the discussion about our role and position in the project is important to raise. We see our position as good supporters and partners in subject matter discussions and in the follow up

processes, and also as initiators of steps ahead. But it is important that the six NAPE staff together with the Director NAPE and the Director Training take responsibility to continue the exciting, and we hope, successful work done so far in utilising the NORAD money for improving the quality of teacher education and building the capacity of NAPE and the PTIs.

Summing up the status at this moment we see 'our' concept, the way this project is built up to give changes (Grøterud & Nilsen 2001) within the educational system, it contributes to new reflections and new knowledge among our partners and not least for our selves. But the dilemma of representing postcolonial discourses (Gandhi 1998, Said 1978, Viruru 2001, being part of the 'basket fund' where 'we' also are looked upon as 'donors', giving opportunities and economic benefits for the partners involved, does not always feel comfortable within a professional role.

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