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**Designing social research: A methodological note for the study of
Professionalization of Teachers in Bangladesh**

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Introduction:

The goal of social sciences is to produce an accumulating body of reliable knowledge about the problems of society. Such knowledge about social problems would enable us to explain, predict and understand empirical phenomena that interest us. Research is a procedure by which researcher attempts to find systematically, and with the support of demonstrable fact, the answer of social problem or resolution of any other problem. There are many attempts to discuss social event from scientific point of view and modern social sciences have an important repertoire of different methods of analysis. However, the design of an inquiry begins with the selection of a topic/ problem and a ‘paradigm’. Because paradigms in the social sciences help us understand phenomena by providing assumptions about the social world, how research should be conducted, and what constitutes legitimate problems, solutions, and criteria of “proof” (Creswell, 1994). The aim of this essay is to give a brief overview of the existing paradigms in social science research and point out paradigms and methods that will be best suitable for my on-going doctoral research. Before going to have an effort to discuss the research strategies of my doctoral project it seems important to provide a brief outline about existing ‘paradigms’ in social science research.

Four paradigms

Guba and Lincoln (1994:105) identified four paradigms, which according to them are competing. These are: (a) Positivism; (b) Post positivism; (c) Critical theory and related ideological position, and (d) Constructivism.

(A) Positivism:

Social sciences have long been conceptualised as a one directional process—‘specificity to generality’ (Alexander, 1982). According to Alexander, the major arguments of positivist view to all forms of knowledge are:

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- The methods and procedures of the natural sciences are appropriate to the social sciences research;
- Only those phenomena which are observable, can validly be warranted as knowledge;
- Metaphysical notions of ‘feelings’ or ‘subjective’ experience has no place into the realm of knowledge unless they can be rendered observable;
- Scientific knowledge is arrived at through the accumulation of verified facts;
- Explanation and interpretation are derived only from direct observation; and
- There is no dialogue between theory and data.

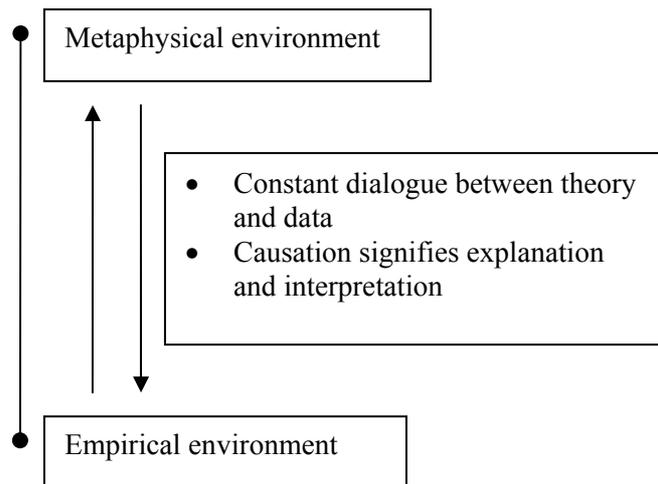
For, Guba and Lincoln (1994:106) the positive view of research focuses on efforts to verify a priori hypotheses stated as mathematical (quantitative) proposition(s) expressing functional relationships. Positivist research work aimed to identify qualitative data with propositions that can then be tested or identified in other cases (Lin, 1998: 162). From positivist point of view only quantitative data are ultimately valid, or of high quality (Sechrest, 1992 also quoted in Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

(B) Post Positivism:

The post-positivist position of searching knowledge emphasises to explain social ‘event’ on the basis of presupposition. In other word, presupposition influences researcher’s way of thinking or searching knowledge. Post-positivists’ (e.g. Michael Polanyi, Thomas Kuhn, Karl Popper etc.) arguments about all forms of knowledge are:

- All scientific data are theoretically defined;
- Empirical commitments are not based solely on experimental evidence;
- General theoretical elaboration is normally dogmatic and horizontal rather than sceptical and vertical;
- Shift or progress in scientific explanation/ belief – is due to alternative theoretical commitment.

The following is the basic assumption of post positivist argument:



According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) the post positivist view of social research focuses on efforts to falsify a priori hypotheses converted into a precise mathematical formula (quantitative hypotheses) expressing functional relationships. The post positivist view of inquiry integrates subjective as well as objective outlook and try to incorporate cultural beliefs or causal significance of tradition (s).

(C) Critical Theory

For, Guba and Lincoln *Critical Theory* is a comprehensive term, which denoting a set of several alternative paradigms including feminism, Marxism, materialism and a participatory inquiry. But the common assumption of *Critical Theory* is the value—determined nature of inquiry and historical realism (virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values crystallized over time).

(D) Constructivism

Constructivism, according to Guba and Lincoln is a term that ‘denotes an alternative paradigm whose breakaway assumption is the move from ontological realism to ontological relativism. The philosophical assumption of this paradigm for understanding the kinds of things that constitute the world is relativism i.e. realities are apprehendable in the form of

multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experimentally based, local and specific in nature (although elements are often shared among many individuals and even across cultures), and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions. The following is the overview of cross-paradigm analyses of social inquiries:

Table 1. Cross-paradigm analyses of social inquiries

Issues	Positivism	Post—positivism	Critical Theory et. al.	Constructivist
Inquiry aim	explanation: prediction and control		critique and transformation, restitution and emancipation	understanding; reconstruction
Nature of knowledge	verified hypotheses established as facts or laws	non-falsified hypotheses that are probable facts or laws	structural/historical insights	individual reconstructions coalescing around consensus
Knowledge accumulation	accretion—“building clocks” adding to “edifice of knowledge”; generalizations and cause—effect linkages.		historical revisionism; generalization by similarity	more informed and sophisticated reconstructions; vicarious experience
Goodness or quality criteria	conventional benchmarks of “rigor”: internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity		historical situatedness; erosion of ignorance	Trustworthiness and authenticity
Values	Excluded—influence denied		Included--formative	
Ethics	extrinsic; tilt toward deception		Intrinsic; moral tilt toward revelation	intrinsic; process tilt toward revelation; special problems
Voice	“disinterested scientist” as informer of decision makers, policy makers, and change agents		“transformative intellectual” as advocate and activist	“passionate participate” as facilitator of multi—voice reconstruction
Training	technical and quantitative; substantive theories	technical; quantitative and qualitative; substantive theories	re-socialization; qualitative and quantitative; history; value of altruism and empowerment	
Accommodation	commensurable		incommensurable	
Hegemony	In control of publication, funding, promotion, and tenure		Seeking recognition and input	

Adopted from Guba and Lincoln (1994:112)

Social science methodologies are based on two basic logics, the inductive and the deductive logic (Creswell, 1994). The inductive method departs from one known case or a few known cases, and attempt to search out broader patterns. For instance, one can compare instances of nature of relationships between State and any particular profession (e.g. teaching) in more countries, and search out the differences and similarities in State Profession relationships. On the other hand, the deductive method departs from known patterns or theoretic models, and attempts to search out the deviation and similarities between these references and the given cases. For instance, by referring to known patterns of the State—profession relationship in some countries, or to presumed patterns in relevant models, one can proceed by asking if these patterns also exist in the country of study, if the case fits the category and should be understood as one example of a theoretical model, and to what extent there are deviancies. In fact, this has been the methodological rationale of interesting works on neopatrimonialism and clientelism, like the study of Crouch (1979) on Indonesia and Roett (1992) on Brazil. From the above-mentioned discussion it is clear that paradigms encompass both theories and methods. Although they evolve, differ by discipline fields, and often are contested (Guba and Lincoln 1994), two among them are discussed widely in the literature: the qualitative and the quantitative paradigms (Philips, 1987; Webb, Beals, & White, 1986, Creswell, 1994). Quantitative study is an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analysed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory hold true. It generally involves examine relationships between and among variables. Alternatively, a Qualitative research aimed at understanding/ interpreting a social or human problem, based on building a holistic, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting (Creswell, 1994). By its nature qualitative research is sensitive to complexity and historical specificity. Qualitative method is well suited for addressing empirically defined historical outcomes and often used to generate new conceptual schemes. Moreover, qualitative methods can be used to a great advantage in research situations where theories are underdeveloped and concepts are vague. Thus, qualitative investigations are often at the forefront of theoretical advancement (Feagin *et al.* 1991). For example, a common practice in qualitative inquiry is to “double-fit” a theoretical concept and an empirical category, thereby sharpening and clarifying the content of both the concept and the category (e.g. the concept of “patrimonialism” and the set of cases that qualify as instances). Creswell (1994) pointed out the following distinctions of quantitative and qualitative paradigms assumption:

Table2: Distinction Between Quantitative and Qualitative Paradigm

Assumption	Question	Quantitative	Qualitative
Ontological assumption	What is the nature of reality?	Reality is objective and singular, apart from the researcher	Reality is subjective and multiple as seen by participants in a study
Epistemological assumption	What is the relationship of the researcher to the researched?	Researcher is independent from that being researched	Researcher interacts with that being researched
Axiological assumption	What is the role of value?	Value-free and unbiased	Value-laden and biased
Rhetorical assumption	What is the language of research?	Formal; Based on set definitions; Impersonal voice; Use of accepted quantitative words	Informal; Evolving decisions; Personal voice; Accepted qualitative words
Methodological assumption	What is the process of research?	Deductive process; Cause and effect; Static design—categories isolated before study; Context free; Generalizations leading to prediction, explanation, and understanding; Accurate and reliable through validity and reliability.	Inductive process; Mutual simultaneous shaping of factors; Emerging design—categories identified during research process; Context bound; Pattern, theories developed for understanding; accurate and reliable through verification

Adopted from Creswell (1994)

It is also to mention that *qualitative* implies that the data are in the form of words as opposed to numbers. Whereas quantitative data are generally evaluated using descriptive and inferential statistics, qualitative data are usually reduced to themes or categories and evaluated subjectively. There is more emphasis on description and discovery and less emphasis on hypothesis testing and verification (Rudestam and Newton, 1992)

Lin (1998:162) identified two traditions in qualitative research: positivist and interpretivist. For her, *positivist* work seeks to identify qualitative data with propositions that can then be tested or identified in other cases, while *interpretive* work seeks to combine those data into systems of belief whose manifestations are specific to a case. She argued that discovering causal relationships is the positivists' area of contribution, while discovering 'causal mechanism' is the area of interpretivists' interest. For Lin, preference for one or the other approach would be mistaken and the combination of both makes more sense. The following table 3 shows the comparison of Positive and Interpretive Research paradigms:

Table 3: Positive Vs Interpretive Research paradigm

Issues	Positive	Interpretive
Nature of reality	One reality; given	Multiple realities; socially constructed
Researcher's Perspective	Research as objective; researcher as outsider	Research as subjective, researcher as participant
Type of data	Numerical or categorical; many cases	Thick description; few cases
Type of analysis	Focus on similarity, control of context; particularistic	Focus on uniqueness; context used to interpret data; holistic
Goal of research	Simplifying; prediction	Understanding complexity; interpretation
Appropriate questions	"Fact" (e.g. what caused the French revolution?)	"Meaning" (e.g. how did the French revolution change the meaning of education?)

In the context of qualitative research both Positivist and Interpretivist paradigm should be seen as complements because causal 'relationships' and causal 'mechanisms' do not exist independently of each other. If causality exists, it must include both a "what" and a "how"—a relationship and a mechanism (Lin, 1998:165). It is also to mention that between two (positivist and interpretivist) paradigms of qualitative inquiry, either of which can be executed using quantitative or qualitative data. In the question of which method (s) to be used in the study of any specific social inquiry depends particularly upon the specific research issue/question(s). Before going to identify specific research questions and relevant research

strategies for my doctoral study it seems relevant to give a brief overview of the relevant theoretical background and the issue of study.

The Research Problem

The conceptual basis of teaching especially primary teaching has changed dramatically in the present century. From being a craft whose skills could be acquired through apprenticeship and/ or a short teacher-training course, it has evolved to a point where policy and practice have a more comprehensive theoretical basis (Andrew Burke, 1996). What Kellaghan said in 1971 would seem particularly relevant to current conditions in many developing countries (quoted in Burke 1996):

- The teacher's role today is at the point of decision. On that decision will depend whether the technical (non-professional) or professional² aspect of the job prevails. The pressures for development in both directions are great. On the one hand, there is already the tradition of the teacher as technician. It may seem to some that the maintenance of that tradition makes it easier to control schools and what goes on in them. Compared to the view of the teacher as technician, the view of teacher as professional is one that is being put forward increasingly by professional educators.
- The decision regarding the future role of the teacher as technician or professional is perhaps the most important one to be made in education today.If we opt for the professional role, we would be reasonably assured of having teachers who will be capable of dealing with the enormous changes in knowledge and conditions that are going to take place over the next fifty years. Given professional teachers, we might reasonably expect that this knowledge will be understood and accepted by them and assimilated into educational practices.

While changes in the conceptual basis of teaching and advances in the understanding of the professional nature of the teacher's role may not have impacted in any significant way, as yet, on policy and practice in most developing countries (Burke op cit). Bangladesh is not exception in this regard. It is because, since independence in 1971 the state policies toward primary education and teacher in particular were targeted to establish state authority with 'political/ electoral' interest in the profession. Politicisation of primary teaching is of course important to the Bangladeshi rulers because, they are after all educated and have good contact particularly with rural people by means to act as interpreters, letter-writers, census counters

² The question of professionalism has always been a thorny one for teaching, when compared to other established professions like medical practitioner and lawyer. The degree of independence and specialized knowledge deemed necessary to qualify as a profession is said to be absent in teaching (Lang, et al. 1999). Ingrid Carlgren (1996: 20) noted 'when we talk about teachers as professionals different aspects, meaning and concepts may come to mind. One could be teachers' professional knowledge....Another aspect is the 'professionalization of teachers', that is the process by which an occupation becomes a profession in the sociological sense (process includes State recognition and the delegation of power/ professional autonomy; specific material rewards and higher social prestige and recognition; commitment to practicing a body of knowledge and skill resulted from specialized, systematic and scholarly training and to maintaining a fiduciary relationship with clients; control of the development of professional knowledge etc.) or another aspect could involve 'teacher professionalism', referring to the quality of teachers' work'.

on a host of matters and above all influential in the rural areas by virtue of their skills as people with modern education. There is no room for primary teachers or their representative to play any role in the process of management and delivery of primary education in Bangladesh. Moreover, primary teachers' training in Bangladesh are said to be costly, over— theoretical, and mostly irrelevant to the skills required by a professional primary teacher. In fact, the professional vision of teaching sets broader parameters for the total development of teachers and teaching. It should be an effective factors in improving teachers' self—image and in motivating them to master the basic skills of teaching and to provide a better professional service to pupils and parents.

However, studies of professions especially the teaching profession and the state—profession relationships or how State influences the professionalisation of teaching in 'modern' developing nations of Asia context are hard to come across. This is a paradox not only from a theoretical but also from empirical point of view. From Parsons and onwards, there is a continuous tradition to ascribe profession like medicine, law and engineering crucial roles in the processes of modernization in America and Europe (Michelsen, 2000). In the context of developing countries of Asia, the role of profession like teaching in the process of nation building and national development has long been ignored.

In particular in the context of Bangladesh, a recent (1997) government sponsored National Committee on education policy (popularly known as Shamsul Huq Commission) report stated:

Presently the state of teaching profession from primary to higher levels is so poor that generally qualified persons feel no attraction to this profession. In teaching profession though the university teachers enjoy highest facilities, they lag far behind in honour and facilities received by the equal qualified government officers in administrative cadre...Teachers' service—terms are very disappointing and the environment of teaching is not at all congenial. Because of omissions and commissions of service rules and undemocratic regulations, generally all teachers and specially government teachers are mostly deprived of a citizen's basic rights including professional freedom. As a result, development of their creativity is also being affected. Their freedom of free--thinking, exercise of knowledge and expression of option is very limited. Those engaged in this unattractive profession are now losing their standard gradually due to environmental reasons (pp. 188-189).

However, a great discrepancy between imagined and experienced teaching/learning environment, professionalization of teaching and teacher professional role often occurs; this is reflected, for example in public discussion in Bangladesh. So, it needs to be empirically examined.

Theoretical background

One theoretical perspective seems to be of particular relevant for the type of study indicated above: the theory of profession. Since the days of Durkheim scholars have been interested in the division of labour between different occupational groups some of which have come to be labelled professions. Scholars writing mainly in the 1930s claim that a profession is an occupational group with particular features or traits. Among writers in this tradition we find Carr-Saunders & Wilson (1933) and Marshall (1938). Some decade later attention was directed towards the development of the profession, but there were writers such as Parsons (1951) and Wilensky (1964) who did concentrate on its attributes. In the 1970s writers like Freidson (1970a, 1970b), Johnson (1972) and Larson (1977) brought the profession into the political arena, emphasizing its role in the community and its connection to the state. What was of major importance now was not the attributes but the ability to be recognized by the state in order to safeguard a degree of autonomy and to have a secure platform from which a producer monopoly could be established. As Freidson (1970b) remarked:

The foundation on which the analysis of a profession must be based is its relationship to the ultimate source of power and authority in modern society—the state.”

The mainstream literature on the professions perceives the state and the professions as antithetical phenomena. State bureaucracies and other bureaucratic structures are seen as threats to professional autonomy. But, Terry Johnson (quoted in Erichsen, 1995) argued to the contrary that a close relationship of a profession to the state apparatus ‘may constitute the very conditions within which occupational autonomy is possible’. He further argued that state formation in the modern world includes the professions, thus eliminating the professional/state duality.

Burrage et al (1990) identified four interacting actors that according to them determine the form and success of failure of professionalization. These are:

States, according to Burrage et al. are the key actors and both regulators of professional life and instruments of professional advancement. In fact, states are directly or indirectly involved in every facet of professional existence, their organization, their resources and ‘education and licensing’, their relationships with other professions as well as for the ‘market’ for their services. The power, resources and prestige of any profession, therefore, depends largely on the policies of the state to which they are subjects (Burrage et al. 1990). Bangladesh has been

characterised as authoritarian and hierarchical society (Jamil, 1998). In Bangladesh, the ‘interventionist’ state have regulated and even nationalized basic services e.g. education, health, telecommunication and power supply etc., and has long been playing the vital role in the training, employment and ‘organization’ of teaching profession in general and primary teaching in particular. As state is the major employer and source of career prospect as well as skill development of primary schoolteachers, it therefore controls and determines every facet of their professional life, leaving virtually no role at all for ‘practitioner’ organizations (teachers’ associations).

Since independence, the state policies toward primary education and teacher in particular are targeted to establish state authority with ‘political’ in other words, ‘electoral’ interest in the profession. After nationalization of primary education in 1973, primary schoolteachers were designated as 3rd class³ government employees. Moreover, politicisation of primary teaching is of course important to the rulers in a developing country like Bangladesh. This is because, they are after all educated and have good contact particularly with rural people by means to act as interpreters, letter-writers, census counters, advisors to local people’ on a host of matters and above all influential in the rural areas by virtue of their skills as people with modern education. Since the school is financed out of the government funds, the Party in power always see primary teachers as effective mechanism to influence rural people from the viewpoint of its electoral interest. At the same time, teachers have also accepted the state authority over their profession as they are now part of bureaucracy and there is also legal and penal sanction if they fail to do so.

Moreover, other professionals/ cadres (for example, higher secondary level officials) in Bangladesh have long been playing dominating role in management and delivery of primary education in Bangladesh. There is no room for primary teachers or their representative in the process. As long as primary teachers fail to have access into the process of management and delivery they remain powerless. As a result, state lacks interest to provide adequate training to have proper knowledge base of teachers, ensure higher social prestige by providing proper

³ BSR (Bangladesh Service Rule) of the Peoples’ Republic of Bangladesh classified all employees of the Republic into four distinctive classes: First class (Gazetted) officer, Second Class (Gazetted) officer, Third Class (non-gazetted) employee and Fourth Class (non-gazetted) employee on the basis of the employees’ academic background, future career prospect, level of competence, scope of exercise power ect. According to BSR, 3rd and 4th class employees are subordinate to 2nd and 1st class employees.

and adequate material rewards and financial benefits all contribute to the lack of professionalization of primary teaching in Bangladesh.

Practising professionals, for Burrage et al. are other key actors in their own development. In order to pursue and uphold professional goals i.e. protect and enhance the corporate interests, monopoly of services, maintain professional autonomy etc., practising professionals use their essential 'resources' e.g. organization, ideology and 'proximity and persistence'. According to Burrage et al. there are four major/ ideal types of practitioners' organization. First are those that give primary emphasis to the knowledge base of the profession for example, academy or learned society. Second are those, which primarily seek to represent and lobby on behalf of the profession and to obtain some legislative relief or support. This representative association is primarily oriented towards the state. Third are those, which negotiate on behalf of their members and are often barely distinguishable from trade unions but the trade-union type of organization is primarily concerned to protect members having to deal with organized users of professional services, whether public or private. Finally, there are those that seek to regulate the members of the profession. In Bangladesh primary school teachers belong to trade-union type organization (Askvik and Alam, 1996, Gustavsson, 1991) and 'knowledge base' nature of professional organization is absent. Because of the absence of direct pay and benefit negotiations system with employers and the centralization of administrative authority particularly in public sector, professional associations can not pursue their objectives (e.g. salaries and working conditions improvement) through the usual method of collective bargaining, which ultimately make them depend on political parties to achieve their professional objectives and to pressure the government. So, different political parties backed primary teachers' associations and their distinctive ideologies resulted lack of interest articulation of the profession in a single voice. Political nature of teachers' organizations has contributed to 'provoke' conflicts within the profession and lead to the emergence of rival, competing forms of association. As primary teachers' associations in Bangladesh rely on distinct political ideologies that lack uniformity and consistency, which Burrage et.al termed as 'persistence' in the goals of their profession. Moreover, primary teachers' organizations in Bangladesh suffer from lack of motivational role of unions in inspiring, helping and encouraging teachers to be more professional, efficient, hardworking and ideal.

Users of professional services, according to Burrage et al. are the third significant actor in the professional domain. They also pointed out that 'fee-for- service' clients are the ideal users of

professional services because their resources e.g. their fees, publicity, malpractice suits etc., are all can be used to reward or sanction or control professional standard of the individual members of the profession. In Bangladesh as long as primary education is nationalized, the state is the ultimate user of the primary teachers' professional services to provide services for its citizens. As the stakeholders (particularly in rural areas) are unorganised and not 'fee-for-service' clients (primary education in Bangladesh is free), they lack influence and 'resources' to put pressure on teachers for uphold and maintain professional standards and code of ethics. Consequently, teachers do not feel pressure or necessity to keep and maintain their profession up to the standard. So, state as the major user is the only regulator of primary teaching profession rather client (parent/ student) in Bangladesh.

Training Institutes, for Burrage et al. (1990) are the fourth significant actor in the professional domain. Their major resources are the knowledge on which profession may depend and the status, which their degrees may provide. In Bangladesh, teachers' training in PTI (Primary Training Institute) is costly, outdated, over-theoretical and mostly irrelevant to the skills required by a professional primary teacher. The instructional strategies used by teaching staffs of the PTI often focus on a knowledge transmission approach with emphasis on rote learning and teacher-centred style of teaching, which simply reinforced in the PTI graduates classes. The one-year durable C-in-Ed (Certificate in Education) training is too short to train teachers who only have ten (SSC) or twelve (HSC) years of academic background. It also put little emphasis on developing subject-matter knowledge and suffers from the weakness of the theoretical bias of the course but not focus on children's needs. This poor quality of training institutes as well as teachers' academic competence results ineffective teaching and lack of primary teaching professionalization. Teachers with such weak academic and training background cannot teach children with confidence. Moreover, primary teachers in Bangladesh attend their respective training programme only due to system demands and also to get on to a higher pay scale but not for the purpose of their professional development. Teachers' training background helped them very little to achieve basic spirit of professional norms and values (Hossain, 1994, Quddus, 2001).

Objectives of the Study: On the basis of above—mentioned discussion about research issue/ problem and relevant theoretical background the overall general objectives of my study are to:

- Analyse the nature of the relationship between the State and teaching profession, especially in terms of how this has framed efforts to create a profession

- Examine how institutional—tradition⁴, on the one side, and how the socio-political order, on the other, have influenced the form of teaching profession?
- Examine the factors that both promote and inhibit professionalization of primary teaching in Bangladesh

Research Questions:

My study will focus on the interplay between the State and professionalization of a particular professional group i.e. primary teaching profession in Bangladesh. So, in connection with earlier stated objectives of the study and also to arrive at an understanding of the problematic the overall research question is: What are the actors and factors involved in the process of professionalization of primary teaching in Bangladesh? The specific research questions are:

- What is the role of State in terms of policy and administrative machinery, licensing in the education, delegate authority/ autonomy to influence professional activities of schoolteacher;
- What is the role of teaching practitioners themselves in terms of capacity to collective action, development of unions and what extent they are organized?
- What is the role of user in terms of their recognition of the primary teaching profession, reward/ sanction mechanism to uphold and maintain professional standard etc;
- What is the role of training institutes in terms of providing proper training and basic spirit of professional norms and values?
- What are the consequences of the reactions and resistance of teachers to various aspects of state control (if any)?

Research Method and Data Collection Strategies:

On the basis of earlier discussion about existing ‘paradigms’ in social research, I think the research approach of my study will be qualitative as well as historical (my aim is to see the professional development of schoolteacher during the period 1971-2001) in nature. The positivist paradigm of qualitative research as suggested by Lin (1998) would be more sensible for the type of study mentioned above. Moreover, one may ask why I should choose positivist

⁴ Institutional tradition can be seen as expressions of logics, identities, typical practices and meaning structure (Dobbin, 1994)

paradigm of qualitative research instead of interpretive and why I choose qualitative rather quantitative or any other alternative strategies available in social science research. The argument in favour of my choice is that my study problem mentioned above is socially complex problem and I want to use the theory instead of test the theory. So, qualitative study will be best suited for such kind of study. Moreover, my study involves causal analytic. Quantitative approach will not be suitable or rather fail to come to grip with the problematic by trying to analyse it in terms of variable and their interrelations. Because quantitative methods assume that same set of causes produce same result irrespective of context. Moreover, my research involves “what” (causal relationships) questions, so positivist paradigm of qualitative research will be best suited for the study. The following would be my data collection strategies:

Gaining Access:

Access is a critical part of doing research and a relational process. It not only facilitates researcher to have gain access to get the information they need but also affects what information is available to the researcher (Feldman et al. 2002). According to Feldman et al. gaining access is a process of building relationships. Their ‘relational perspective’ of access requires that researchers identify those who can help them gain access, learn the art of self—presentation and nurture relationships once they are establishment. On the basis of above-mentioned theory of access I followed under-mentioned strategies to have gain access to get the information/ informants. After reaching at Dhaka (the capital of Bangladesh) I met with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, explained my proposal, and requested him for official consent to conduct my research. I also met with Secretary of the Ministry of Education because Bangladesh has been identified as hierarchical society hence, all authorities to acceptance or rejection about any application is concentrated in the hand of the chief bureaucrat of the concern Ministry/ Division (Jamil, 1998). After having the consent of the Secretary to begin my research, I proceeded on to have formal administrative approval from the Director General (DG) for Primary Education. I personally talk with assistant director(s) in the Directorate of Primary Education and other central and local authorities (particularly with Thana⁵ Education Officer/ assistant Thana Education Officer). I managed to get a letter of recommendation from the local member of the parliament to have supports from the key informants of the locality, where I conducted my study. In my study the key

⁵ Local administrative unit next to District

informants were selected in-service/ retired⁶ schoolteachers, Official/ employee of the Education Ministry particularly assistant Thana education officer, Member/ leader of teachers' union, guardians, president/ members of SMC (School Management Committee) of selected school(s); Personnel of selected teachers' training institutes (PTIs) etc. I conducted the study in a district of the country with which I was most familiar and the only university within the district in which I have had fairly long working experience. This professional link with the highest educational institution in the district helped to have good contact and come in touch with many of the different level officials relating to education particularly primary education in the region. Moreover, all the way of my data collection, I conducted interview with civility, was attentive to listen the informants and showed genuine concern about the informants. To develop trust, I tried to perform 'commitment acts' to show commitment to learn the culture of the study institution or people there.

Case Study:

According to Feagin et al. (1991), a case study has been defined as “an in—depth multifaceted investigation, using a qualitative research method of a single social phenomena. It is also identified as an empirical inquiry, which (i) investigate contemporary phenomena within its real context, when (ii) the boundary between phenomena and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 1994:13). A case study is also time specific, contextual and particularistic in nature. Therefore, case study design was helpful for my study because it allowed me to have an opportunity to analyse and investigate the professional development of school teaching as well as fact of state—teaching profession relationships in Bangladesh in its real context. To examine the development of professionalisation of teacher over time, I talked/ interviewed some selected retired/ retire aged schoolteachers and also bureaucrats working in the ministry of education about the change they have had experienced. For example, what it was to be a teacher in 1971 (year of independence of Bangladesh) and in 2001? How teacher perceives their professional situation as of today compared to 1971? How can we explain the change over time? As mentioned above, aims of this study are to examine the role of the State, the practicing professionals (teachers), training institute and user (guardian/ student) in determining the success or failure of professionalization of schoolteacher. As the purpose of the study is also to identify and examine the major actors and factors involved in the process of professionalization of teaching profession in Bangladeshi societal context. To offer a

⁶ I would like to talk with retired schoolteachers to know the stories about their lives and work in the past, which will helps me to have an understanding of the trend of professionalization of teaching.

holistic personal viewpoint on the matter, it would probably be suitable to carry out investigation to a number of cases. Therefore, data of this study is collected from a number of *thana*⁷ education related offices as well as from number of randomly selected primary schools in each study thana. In this situation, case study method gave me an opportunity to employ various methods of data collection like observation of events within the case, the collection of documents relevant to the case and formal and informal interviews with the people involved. Data collection strategies include: visits of Thana education offices to have an understanding how Thana level education related bureaucracy and schoolteachers interact in the study areas. Case study method really helped me to understand why things happen as they do, and to generalize or predict from a single example requires an in-depth investigation of the interdependencies of parts and of the patterns that emerge.

Case Study 1: I studied Bangladesh Primary Teachers' Association (BPTA) as a case, which has about 80% of the primary schoolteachers in its membership. I interviewed 8 among 11 member of the Central Executive Committee of BPTA including Secretary, Joint Secretary, Finance Secretary, Assistant Finance Secretary, Women Secretary, Asstt. Organizing Secretary etc guided by open-ended questionnaire. Three remaining members of the BPTA Central committee whom I failed to have an appointment for interview includes: President of BPTA (who is a Dhaka university teacher) and others two were serving at the countryside of two different districts i.e. Chittagong and Khulna. My interview questionnaire covers the issues: what causes establishment of a professional organization like BPTA, what is the role of BPTA in terms of capacity to collective action/ act as collective body, what extent BPTA can exercise its control over entry and certification, refuse the unqualified people to practice primary teaching, enforce a code of ethics for all practitioners, develop and encourage research interests, promote information exchange, seek to improve the working conditions, remuneration and prospects of its members and serve as a source of solidarity. I also examined whether BPTA's role fit with trade unions type or professional association type in terms of its programmes and strategies. I also collected BPTA's constitution, minutes of different meetings including meetings of Teachers' Welfare Trust, Lists of demands and programmes of actions to fulfil its demands in different times since 1971.

⁷ *Thana* is a local administrative unit next to District.

Case Study 2:

I studied Chittagong PTI (Primary Teachers' Training Institute) as a case to have an overall idea about prevailing situation and development of teachers' training/ education in Bangladesh. PTI case study includes. Interview with Principle, Vice- principal and other trainers with different types of open-ended questionnaire. Interview questionnaire covers the issues like general characteristics of teachers' training, courses taught and the mode of instruction followed by trainers, examination system of PTI training, libraries and other available support to provide, specialized, systematic and scholarly training for the schoolteacher etc. I also conducted group interview with 30 school teachers mostly Head teacher (who were attending a teacher training course organized by ESTEEM a UK based consulting organization working for improvement of primary education in Bangladesh) guided by a structured questionnaire to know their views about teachers' training, association role to improve their professional life.

Conversation and interviews:

Interview seemed an important means of data collection for the study. It allowed to map participants' personal view and record of events that they have had experienced. I obtained data both by informal conversation and interviewing several key participants. Persons holding the key positions in the government i.e. the high-ranking civil servant or central leader of the professional associations/ bodies selected and interviewed. Those persons include: minister/ state minister for education, chief secretary, ministry of education, Director General (DG) of Directorate of primary education, District Primary Education Officer (DPEO), Thana Education Officer (TEO), Chairman/ President of School Management Committee, Chairman/ Secretary of the Teachers' association(s) and some randomly selected instructors of Teachers' Training Institute (PTI) and teachers of the selected study primary schools etc. All key informants mentioned above interviewed guided by earlier constructed questionnaire on broad topics: respondent's educational and training background, professional experience, how teachers' unions are organized and their role in collective action as well as national education policy formulation and implementation process, how teachers manage their professional life, how they feel about their professions, how leadership/ bureaucrats see delegate authority/ autonomy to influence professional activities of schoolteachers, What is the state policy about professional development of schoolteachers, How guardian/ local elite recognize the primary teaching profession, What are beneficiaries sanction/ reward to uphold and maintain professional standard of teachers, How far teachers' training institute are capable of providing

proper training to schoolteachers to perform their duties up to the standard etc. Field notes were written daily in notebooks.

Documents:

Documents are defined as “reports of events” (Good, 1966) recorded for the purposes of transmitting information. I collected variety of official and non—official documents relating to education/ education policy and more particularly concerning professional development of primary schoolteacher in Bangladesh. I reviewed a number of formal documents as well as the duties and responsibilities of different level education related officials (e.g. district education officer, thana/ local education officer etc.), Professional associations’ member and teachers. Variety of documents had also been collected from the Ministry of Education, Director General (DG) office, District Education Office, Thana Education Office and also from randomly selected schools/ teachers. I participated in the local and national level meeting relating to primary education. In addition, I met with central and local level government officials, teachers’ association leader and schoolteacher individually and group wise. Moreover, I tried to keep a full, careful and immediate record of whatever I did to pursue the field study. My multiple data sources to compile information on professionalization of teaching include: official documents like National committee on education and education policy; The national Five Year Plan, Education statistics, Teachers training manuals, The Charter of teachers’ duties, and articles and reports on teaching profession in journals and media, Governments committee reports and legislative bills. Moreover, documents from professional associations of schoolteacher also consulted. Most of the documents I consulted from primary sources. These documents serve as frame of reference for subsequent observation, informal conversations and interviews. Documents permit me to compare the participant’s subsequent informal accounts of their actions with official version.

Ethics

In all research, ethical issues deserve paramount importance. While this study is concerned with the study of people, I was committed to engage with participants in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. In both the field research and in subsequent writing stages, I adopt what I feel is an ethic of caring and responsibility. I am maintaining the confidentiality of all participants by using pseudonyms. To maintain the confidentiality of the data, the interviews have been coded. The names of the concern local office/ officials, school/ school teachers has

already been changed to protect the identity of the participants who play important roles in the study. Finally, all interview materials has stored in a private location to which only I have the access. To protect confidentiality, I tried to develop mutual trust and respect through careful listening and civility with the informants.

Conclusion:

In summing up, this paper argued that positivist paradigm of qualitative research as suggested by Lin (1998) seems more sensible for the type of study mentioned above. Because of its positivist nature, my doctoral study requires information about some “what” questions e.g. what promote/ inhibit teaching practitioners’ capacity to collective action, development of unions and organized behaviour; what is the role of State in terms of policy to delegate authority/ autonomy to schoolteachers to influence their professional activities, licensing in education etc; what beneficiaries (guardian/ pupil) do for recognizing primary teaching profession and what is their reward/ sanction mechanism to uphold and maintain professional standard of schoolteacher; what PTIs (Primary Teachers’ Training Institute) do to provide proper training to schoolteachers and how far these training helps teachers’ academic competence and effective teaching etc. It is also to mention that in social science there are alternative strategies to conduct a research. All paradigms have got relative strength and weakness. In my opinion, none of the paradigms are foolproof and can satisfy all criteria. So, the choice of method for any particular study is rather difficult. It, therefore, depends upon the research issue/ problem, concern research questions and individual researcher.

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