Bangladesh Educational Assessment
Time to Learn: Teachers' and Students' Use of Time in Government Primary Schools in Bangladesh

BEPS

Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity

CREATIVE ASSOCIATES INTERNATIONAL

In collaboration with

CARE, THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, AND GROUNDWORK

USAID

United States Agency for International Development

Contract No. HNE-I-00-00-00038-00

BANGLADESH EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

TIME TO LEARN:

Teachers' and Students' Use of Time in Government Primary Schools in Bangladesh

Prepared by:

Karen Tietjen, Arifur Rahman, and Seth Spaulding

With
Research Assistants

Farhana Afroze, Farzana Ahmed Md. Rahmatul Al Azad,
Ishraful Awlia Chowdhury, Partha Sarathee Ghosh, Saika Nizam

In association with Unnayan Shamannay (Dhaka).

Photo Credit: Seth Spaulding

Prepared for:

Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity
United States Agency for International Development
Contract No. HNE-I-00-00-00038-00
Creative Associates International, Inc. (Washington, D.C.)

June 2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ACRONYMS

AUPEO	Assistant Upazila Primary Education Officer
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BEPS	Bangladesh Education and Policy Support
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education
DPEO	District Primary Education Officer
EFA	Education for All
ERD	Economic and Rural Development
ESTEEM	Effective School Through Enhanced Education Management
FFE	Food for Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrollment Ratio
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
GPS	Government Primary School
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
IDEAL	Intensive District Approach to Education for All
IEC	Information and Education Communication
M and E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MPED	Primary and Mass Education Division
NER	Net Enrollment Ratio
NFE	Nonformal Education
NFPE	Nonformal Primary Education
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NORAD	Norwegian Development Agency
PMED	Primary Mass Education Division
PEDPII	Second Primary Education Development Program
PES Project	Primary Education Stipend Project (2001-2002)
PESP	Primary Education Stipend Project (2003-)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSPMP	Primary School Performance Monitoring Project
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
PTI	Primary Teacher Training Institution
RNGPS	Registered Non-governmental Primary Schools
SAT	Satellite Schools
SLIP	School Learning Improvement Plans
SMC	School Management Committee
Tk.	Taka
UEC	Upazila Education Committee
UPEP	Upazila Primary Education Plan
UPEO	Upazila Primary Education Officer
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This study provides an empirical analysis of the use of and demands on teachers' and students' time, the factors affecting time use, and the impact on schooling and contact hours in Bangladesh's government primary schools. Eight schools in two disadvantaged districts were studied using a hybrid approach of quantitative and qualitative methods, including teacher and student surveys, focus group discussions with teachers, parents, and community members, and interviews with education authorities, teachers' union leaders, School Management Committee (SMC) members, and head-teachers. Classroom observations were also conducted and visits were made to the homes of students.

Synthesis, Conclusions, and Overall Recommendations

Students in Bangladesh's government primary schools receive very little contact time and even less classroom instruction time, both in comparison with international norms and with Government of Bangladesh standards. Schools may operate between 42 percent and 78 percent of the total scheduled days of operation. The number of contact hours as a proportion of scheduled contact hours for students in double-shift schools ranges between 27 percent (worst case for grades three through five) and 78 percent (best case for grades three through five). At best, students are receiving about half of the instructional time programmed and at worst less than one-fifth. In short, this study reveals that the government primary schools studied are simply not providing the education (question of quality aside) that is being financed by the government.

Many factors explain the low contact and classroom instructional time. S*tructural factors*—established by the education system—can be remedied in part by revising policies, rules, and regulations governing the school calendar, schedule, curriculum and teaching staff, and re-allocating resources accordingly. *Operational factors*—the way the educational authorities, the school, its staff, and its students interpret and treat the procedures, rules and regulations, and the manipulation of resources—are more challenging.

Teachers are the major mediating force in contact and classroom instructional time. Their attitudes and behaviors are primary determinants in the amount of contact and instructional time provided to students. Many teachers attempt to limit their working hours and lighten their teaching burden primarily due to low remuneration and greater attention towards personal responsibilities. The education system officially sanctions some of the strategies teachers use to lighten their teaching burden and other strategies go largely un-regulated by the supervisory system. In other instances, the lack of professionalism and initiative erodes contact time. This study uncovers corrupt or unethical behavior by some head-teachers and teachers.

Students also contribute to the minimal contact and instructional hours, further reducing teacher-student interaction at school. Uncomfortable surroundings, unpleasant teachers, and uninteresting or incoherent instruction undoubtedly keep some students from attending school regularly and definitely depress learning achievement.

The real challenge in Bangladesh is how to make the ostensibly well-developed education system work as intended. In general, the problems of low contact and lack of classroom instructional time are not caused by a lack of policies, rules, regulations, supervisory procedures and/or trained personnel, but rather by the meaningful observation, implementation, and enforcement of these provisions.

One way to increase the implementation of structural and operational reforms is to involve the beneficiaries of primary schooling, specifically the parents and community members, in managing the school and holding its personnel accountable for their actions. Such increased involvement would mean restructuring the way SMCs and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) operate, including identifying appropriate members, establishing information dissemination systems, developing meeting schedules, and broadening the definition of their responsibilities and accountability.

Another way of promoting reform is to further expand alternatives to the formal government primary school system, for example the extensive network of BRAC nonformal education centers. One option in Bangladesh is to use radio- or television-based programs to provide remedial instruction for government primary school students, covering and reinforcing the curriculum with greater innovative teaching methods than found in the average classroom. Another option is to develop a junior and higher secondary distance education program that students in non-government schools, such as BRAC, could access to further their formal education. This would essentially remove the constraints on students enrolled in nonformal primary school programs and would make these programs more attractive to other school-aged children, thereby introducing an element of competition. It also would put pressure on government education personnel to retain students through better school operations, which in turn would maintain per capita resource allocation—an area of concern to school personnel.

Specific study findings and targeted suggestions are listed below.

The School Calendar

The study found that:[1]

- Schools take more holidays—both with and without approval of the proper educational authorities—than allocated by the school system.
- Schools operate for significantly fewer days—19 percent to 55 percent less—than scheduled in the school calendar.
- Schools do not always record the school closings for definitional and/or concealment reasons.

[1] Study findings refer to results generated from the eight schools observed in this study only.

- One month of contact time with students at the beginning and at the end of the school year will minimally be sacrificed to administrative and non-teaching activities.
- Disasters (i.e. flooding) annually close some schools for about one month, but no strategies have been in place to compensate for lost school days.
- Rural, marginally staffed schools are vulnerable to closing due to teacher training and official demands made on teachers.
- Some schools' teaching staff take advantage of their remoteness and circumstances to close the schools unnecessarily.

Some suggestions about the school calendar are:

- Reduce the number of holidays.
- Develop local strategies to address the provision of school during periods of disaster, including:
    - setting up temporary learning posts staffed with teachers;
    - providing self-guided instructional materials for students;
    - providing boat transport for teachers and students to posts;
    - assigning teachers from closed schools to other schools or giving them other duties;
    - using scheduled vacation to compensate for school days lost; and
    - offering "floating" vacation days to correspond to and suit local conditions (i.e. floods and other disasters, monsoon period, harvest) to reduce days lost.

- Schedule preparation for the up-coming school year in December (last month of the academic year), including:
    - requiring all teachers to be present during December (eliminate break for teachers);
    - scheduling no classes after exams start; and
    - consolidating exam days (do not spread over a month with some students still in class).

- Deliver a partial, but workable, percentage of textbooks to schools by the end of January. Provide for the remainder to be delivered later.
- Provide, by the end of December, all teachers with abridged instructional guides and strategies for the first months of the year to help them deal with lack of textbooks.
- Regularize and limit the use of contingency days to two for each Upazila Primary Education Officer (UPEO), and one for each school, for a total of three.
- Keep schools open and operational during local events or ceremonies. Allow schools to send one teacher representative, rather than all or most teachers.
- Schedule cluster in-service training for off-days or Thursdays (early closing day).

- Schedule other teacher training for vacations or times of expected flooding (or other disasters) when schools are likely to be closed in these areas.
- Enforce the policy that teacher participation in training should be staggered. Only one or two teachers from a school are in training at the same time.
- Establish a substitute teacher corps, using retirees or secondary school graduates.

The School Day and Class Time Use

The study found that:

- Three of eight schools did not start on time.
- Urban schools are more likely than rural schools to conform to the official school day schedule, primarily because of the proximity of the school to the teachers' residence and the Upazila Primary Education Office.
- Rural schools seldom observe the prescribed official school schedule, delaying opening to allow for non-resident teacher travel time and an hour and a half break for students who have attended Koranic school (generally an hour between 6:00 am to 8:30 am).
- Instructional time at rural schools is further reduced by the "effective" hours of operation, which are constrained by late arrival and early departure of teachers.
- Teachers believe that the length of the school day and concentrated blocks of time allocated for instruction, without breaks, are too long for both students and teachers.
- Teachers manipulate school resources, i.e. staff, classrooms, materials, to lighten their work burden and shorten the work day, by creating surplus teachers, cancelling classes, incorporating after-school-hours work into the school day, and hiring janitorial staff.
- Teaching or "instruction" occupied on average 63 percent of the class time in the classes observed. Teacher-centered methods occupied most (83 percent) of this time.
- Student compliance with teacher instructions was low: 57 percent of students in urban areas responded as the teacher directed and only 38 percent of students in rural schools responded as directed.
- Estimated contact hours for double-shift schools fell far short of the contact hours estimated for 2003, with contact hours for grades one and two at best totaling 419 (out of 654 hours) and contact hours for grades three to five at best totaling 729 (out of 932 hours).

Some suggestions about school day organization are:

- Re-organize the school day to be a shorter single shift.
- Combine smaller upper grade classes (combine grades four and five, for example).
- Start the school day earlier in the morning, at 9:00 am (at least for teachers).
- Do not allow 10:00 am or later starting times.
- Increase class time to a longer block.
- Incorporate one or more additional breaks for students into the schedule.
- Provide sufficient quantity of teachers to schools, especially those with very small staffs (three or four teachers).

- Develop a remedial strategy for students (assign teachers, develop materials).
- Assign one teacher on a rotating basis to stay after school to help children with homework.
- Eliminate separate classes for such subjects as culture, art, and handwriting, and incorporate these into core subjects.
- Eliminate English classes in the early grades (as skilled teachers are not available).

Teacher Time and Attendance

The study found that:

- 13 percent of teachers were absent on the day the school was visited.
- 97 percent of teachers took leave, averaging ten days.
- 20 days of leave are allowed and teachers try to take the full amount.
- Domestic tasks, special events, and income-generating activities accounted for the majority of days missed by teachers.
- 23 percent of teachers and 50 percent of head-teachers were late on the day the schools were visited; about half were three to four hours late.
- Most of the teachers said they were late primarily because of domestic chores and transportation problems.
- Teachers in rural schools travel an average of 53 minutes to get to school compared with 17 minutes for teachers at urban schools.
- Head-teachers set the standard for punctuality; if he or she is late, then teachers are likely to be late.
- Most of the 35 percent of teachers who admitted leaving early one or more days per month, left because of domestic chores and income-generating activities.
- 40 percent of teachers, mainly male, engaged in income-generating activities.
- Non-school-related official duties cause teachers to miss school, be late, and leave early.
- No teacher reported ever being criticized or penalized for being absent or unpunctual.
- Schools cope with teacher absenteeism and tardiness by enlisting a surplus teacher or head-teacher to take the classes, combining grades and class sections, and shuttling between classrooms.
- Teachers believe they are underpaid and unappreciated, but 73 percent of them are satisfied with their job.

Some suggestions about teacher absence, tardiness, and early departure are:

- Reduce the casual leave and revise the leave policies for teachers to be consistent with contact hour requirements.
- Revise teacher payment procedures such that procedures do not occur during the school day.
- Create a system of rotating substitute teachers.
- Limit the amounts of training a teacher can pursue, either as a trainer or trainee.

- Terminate government policy of removing teachers from the classroom to perform non-teaching duties.
- Initiate an information and education communication (IEC) campaign for teachers and the public about teacher attendance and punctuality (the requirements, the consequences, and the procedures for non-conforming teachers).
- Enforce the "enforcers" in taking appropriate action against teachers who are excessively absent or tardy.
- Empower the community and parents to address and establish a system of accountability with schools about teacher attendance and performance problems.

Student Time and Attendance

The study found that:

- Actual percentage of students enrolled who were in attendance on the day of the visit (surprise visits) ranged from 43 percent to 67 percent.
- Teachers estimated that at least 20 percent of the children had excessive absences, another 30 percent were absent enough to cause concern regarding their achievement, and about 50 percent of the children were very regular in their attendance.
- About half the students studied were absent at least one school day during the previous week. Most were absent due to illness, but substantial numbers reported having done domestic work (especially among girls) or worked outside the home (urban boys). Farm work was not reported as a frequent reason for absenteeism of rural boys.
- About half the students reported having been tardy at least one day the previous week. Girls reported household duties as the main reason, while travel time (averaging about ten minutes walk for all schools) did not seem to be an important factor causing tardiness.
- Many rural students seemed to have little sense of time; this may have affected the number of times they were tardy.
- Attendance at Koranic school early in the morning did not appear to have a significant effect on tardiness.
- Over 40 percent of the students in the studied schools reported having left school early at least one day the previous week. Some left after they had received food in schools with school feeding programs.
- Stipends and school feeding programs significantly improved attendance and regularity; some students reported feeling hungry during the day to the extent it affected their concentration.
- Most students reported having around two hours of free time during school days and from 6 to 16 hours daily on weekends and school holidays. Students perceived that boys have more free time than girls.
- Most students reported spending an average of nine to eleven hours a week doing homework. This may include time with tutors.
- Nearly half of all students, urban and rural, reported using out-of-school tutors to help them.
- About half of the students reported that teachers, at most, inquired about their absences or tardiness. A few indicated that they had been scolded or beaten. About a third of rural

students indicated that nothing happened, while only ten percent of urban students reported no consequences.
- Teacher action to contact and counsel parents of absent or dropout children was infrequent, despite the regulations indicating that they should do so.
- Schools have established no pro-active strategies—remediation—to deal with student absenteeism.

Some suggestions about student time and attendance are:

- School snack programs—with minimal time and teacher burden—should be offered at schools where poverty is a problem, and attendance criteria should be established for participation.
- Programs to address other demand-side issues—such as de-worming and school health programs, "floating" vacations, and flexible hours—should be developed.
- Schools should open and operate on the official schedule or on a fixed schedule that suits the local environment and all stakeholders understand.
- Teachers and head-masters must follow regulations and visit parents of students who are regularly absent or late to counsel them. There should be serious consequences if the Upazila Education Officer and his/her assistants find that such visits and counseling are not happening.
- Possibly re-think the curriculum, teaching materials, and methods to:
    - relate curriculum more to local environment so that students and parents value schooling;
    - provide more creative homework suggestions;
    - provide remedial and self-help materials and other innovations to help teachers, students, and parents cope with children who get behind in their achievement;
    - provide innovative teacher manuals to help in managing a dynamic school and classroom; and
    - start a portfolio evaluation system of students to have a record of each child's total school life and not just attendance and exam results.

- Better strategies are needed to make the local school and its teachers accountable to the community. This implies greater decentralization of school management and a revitalization of the roles of the Upazila Education Offices, the SMCs, and the PTAs.
- Structures must be more information- and decision-oriented; and help teachers and the community understand what is happening in the school, what should happen and the possible ways of getting there.

Cross-cutting Issues

The study found that:

- Centralized bureaucratic infrastructure is well developed and there are appropriate rules and regulations involving school record keeping by the head-teacher and inspection by

the Upazila Education Officers. The rules and regulations, however, are seldom used effectively.

- School SMCs and PTAs generally have little involvement in helping improve school management, though both groups occasionally help in school maintenance and acquisition of equipment and materials. SMCs and PTAs generally do not engage parents and the community, and they seldom meet.
- The supervision and inspection system is well developed but must be incorporated into a larger revitalization of school-based management so that the education officers have community backing and understanding of what makes good schools.
- Poverty affects student attendance and punctuality. Many students miss school due to illness or the need to work, both of which are reasons rooted in poverty. Many poor parents do not have the funds for books and tutors; those parents that do undoubtedly give their children additional chances. Many parents are charged for services by the teachers and head-masters that they can ill afford. Corruption issues are related to all of the above. The Minister of Education is fully aware of corruption problems, and his efforts must extend down to the school level.
- Corruption issues affect many aspects of the primary education system. Corruption and unethical practices by educational authorities, head-teachers, and teachers reduce contact and instructional time, and undermine parental confidence in the school.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Problem Statement

Teacher-student contact time and time-on-task has been identified worldwide as key factors in student learning and achievement. In Bangladesh, however, several analyses have found that its primary schools provide one of the lowest numbers of teacher-student contact hours in the world. In one study, children in grades one and two were found to receive only 444 contact hours of schooling annually. The extremely low level of academic competency among Bangladesh's primary school students has been attributed, in part, to the minimal contact time schools provide to students. The problem of teacher-student contact time has been found to be particularly acute in government primary schools.

Among the factors that have been identified as negatively affecting the contact time between teachers and students—and ultimately depress school quality and student learning—are:

- The widespread use of staggered (or double) shifts.
- Poor teacher attendance, high rates of absenteeism, lack of punctuality, ineffective class-time use, and time- allocation to non-teaching duties.
- Low, irregular, and tardy attendance by primary school students.

The five-year Primary Education Development Program Plan (2003-2008), prepared by the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) in partnership with a large group of international funding agencies, recommends that student-teacher contact hours be increased to levels commensurate with international standards (750 hours) and that the school calendar be altered to provide for more days of schooling. To date, these suggestions have not been developed or operationalized, and no public dialogue on these issues has taken place.

While several studies have assessed the level of contact time and the rate of teacher and student attendance, no recent studies have been found that specifically clarify the obstacles and demands that shape and infringe on school-, teacher-, and student-time use. This study is intended to take an in-depth look at the magnitude of the problem and the factors that influence contact and instructional time provided by government primary schools and teachers, on one hand, and received by students, on the other. The intent of the study is to provide USAID with information and recommendations that can be used to inform the formulation of policies and programs aimed at increasing contact hours, effective schooling, and student achievement.

This study is undertaken as one of three commissioned during 2003-2004 by USAID in priority areas of inquiry identified during its strategy development process. The other two studies address the Madrasah education system and early childhood education.

B. The Purpose of the Study and Key Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to provide:

1. Empirical analysis of:

- The use of and demands on school, teacher, and student time.
- The factors affecting school-, teacher-, and student-time use.
- Their impact on schooling, contact hours, and instructional time.

2. Suggestions on:

- How the education sector can manage existing resources more effectively to maximize contact and instructional hours.
- How to introduce and promote recommended changes in policies and practices.

Specifically, this study aims to:

- Develop a profile for how government primary school teachers, serving disadvantaged children, use time both during and after school hours; and provide analysis of how teachers' use of time may impact student learning. Teachers profiled represent male and female population, urban and rural areas, and two regions outside Dhaka.

- Develop a profile for how disadvantaged primary school students use time both inside and outside school, and provide analysis of time related constraints and opportunities that relate to learning. Students profiled represent girls and boys, urban and rural areas, and two regions outside Dhaka.

- Clarify official policies, decision-making processes, and actual data related to school calendars, daily schedules, holidays, and attendance guidelines for students and teachers.

- Clarify the extent to which unscheduled school events, local holidays, or teacher meetings and in-service workshops result in reduced learning time and the approval process involved in school cancellations.

- Identify obstacles and incentives for increasing students' learning time.

- Identify potential entry points and innovative strategies by which USAID can enhance productive use of learning time, given expected resources and comparative advantages.

The major research questions are:

- How does the system structure time for learning?
- How do teachers use their time in and outside of school and why?
- How do students use their time in and outside of school and why?
- How does teacher- and student-time use affect school operations and contact hours?
- What are the actual contact hours?

C. Organization of Study Report

The report for the *Time to Learn* study is organized into five chapters. Following this introduction in Chapter I, Chapter II provides an overview of the education system and summarizes previous research on contact time and teacher and student attendance. Chapter III describes the approach and methodology used in the study and the sample.

Chapter IV presents the research findings and analysis. It is divided into four sections, following the analytic framework used to develop the study:

- Section A examines the school calendar and the number of days of schooling;
- Section B looks at the school day, its organization, and class-time use;
- Section C addresses teacher attendance and the factors affecting it;
- Section D addresses student attendance and the factors affecting it; and
- Section E discusses some of the cross-cutting issues.

Sections A-E begin with a summary of findings and conclude with a list of suggestions aimed at the specific problems and constraints to sufficient and effective time use identified in the section.

Chapter V presents conclusions and some overall recommendations for how to start to introduce some of the more specific changes suggested in the previous chapter.

The Annexes include a Technical Note on methodology, a Researcher Roster, Instruments, and Research Assistant Impressions.

II. BACKGROUND

This chapter provides an overview of the primary education system in Bangladesh and summarizes the results of previous research on the contact time, teacher and student attendance, and issues related to time use.

A. An Overview of the Primary Education System in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has received international recognition for its strong national commitment to education and the impressive gains it has made towards achieving primary "education for all" over the past two decades. The country sustains one of the largest and most complex primary education systems in the world, comprising up to eleven different types of primary schools (with government schools accounting for 61 percent of enrollment). The 1990 Compulsory Primary Education Act (CPE) legislated that all children between ages six and ten must attend primary school and established the framework to ensure that no child is deprived of a primary education, due to an inadequate number of schools, poor instructional quality, or discrimination arising from gender, income, ethnicity and residence. Since 1990, pupil enrollments have increased 30 percent, the number of primary level institutions has nearly doubled (mainly in the non-government sector), and the significant gender gap has virtually disappeared.[2]

1. *Student Outcomes*

Enrollment and Attendance

In 2001, nearly 18 million pupils were enrolled in over 78,000 primary level institutions, resulting in a gross enrollment ratio of 97.5 percent with no disparity between boys and girls.[3] Enrollment in Government Primary Schools (GPS) has been marked by a slightly negative growth of -1.6 percent while community schools and satellite schools have dramatically increased in enrollment. Attendance rates for primary school are uniformly low, averaging 58 percent.[4]

Completion

Dropout rates remain high, resulting in an inefficient cycle time of 6.6 years. Over 33 percent of the children who entered primary school did not complete all five grades. By school type, the completion rate is highest (71.5 percent) for GPS, followed by Registered Non-government Primary Schools (RNGPS) (55 percent), and only 48.4 percent for all other primary institutions.[5] It is the lowest for Madrasahs (religious schools).

[2] *Statistical Profile on Education in Bangladesh*, Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), November 2002.

[3] *Statistical Profile on Education in Bangladesh*, Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), November 2002. Other studies—which included NFE enrollments--estimate the GER to be about 108 percent.

[4] *Renewed Hope/Daunting Challenges*, Education Watch 2000. BANBEIS reports 61 percent.

[5] Government of Bangladesh/ PEDP II Project Preparation Team, Second Primary Education Development Programme 2003-2008, Draft Macro-Plan – August 2002.

Achievement

Pupil assessments have found that those who do complete the primary cycle perform are, on average, at a third grade achievement level and lack essential problem-solving skills. Education Watch 2000 survey found that less than two percent of the students completing the five-year cycle acquired all 27 cognitive competencies tested. A proxy for national assessment is provided by the data on the national primary scholarship exam, taken by 20 percent or less of the grade five completers nationwide. Of these children, the average national pass rate was only 37 percent in 2001, an improvement over the 12 percent pass rate of 1996, but still low.

Table II.A.1: Enrollment in Different Types of Primary Schools in Bangladesh.

Type of school	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Trend (Percent Change)
Government Primary Schools (GPS)	11593013	11760099	11808345	11701755	11022234	10832476	10830742	-1.6
Experimental Schools (EXP)	7292	9033	7715	10152	12273	11482	11513	8.3
Registered Non-government Primary Schools (RNGPS)	3109688	3561839	3894884	4122809	4032995	4170925	4163873	4.4
Non-registered Non-government Primary Schools (NGPS)	689143	573164	583616	440116	367948	307867	299345	-15.0
Community Schools (COM)	103761	162583	321515	434792	474179	454905	490456	25.4
Satellite Schools (SAT)	19968	21831	38652	167870	193857	209238	276348	50.0
High School Attached Primary Section (H/A PS)	403931	433766	383301	562227	436477	499353	337543	-0.5
Kindergarten (KG)	252514	210007	208089	237110	290000	345088	364196	8.7
Ebtedayee Madrasah (EM)	701293	614160	542039	438715	475943	417411	438957	-8.2
High Madrasah Attached Ebtedayee Madrasah (H/A MAD)	253095	233934	243517	245096	315825	403621	417383	10.2
NGO-run Full Primary Schools (NGO)	0	0	0	0	N/A	15619	28864	--
Total	**17133698**	**17580416**	**18031672**	**18360642**	**17621731**	**17667985**	**17659220**	**0.3**

Equity and Disparities

An important achievement in Bangladesh primary education has been a virtual elimination of the gender gap in terms of enrollment. In 2001, girls represented 49 percent of total enrollment at the primary level and repetition, dropout, and completion rates were reportedly comparable to, or better than, those for boys. Nonetheless, substantial numbers of primary

school-age children remain out of school. The GOB estimate of the net enrollment rate (86.6 percent) indicates that approximately 2.5 million children age six to ten were not enrolled in primary school in 2001; other estimates suggest that at any one time the number of out-of-school children is closer to four million.[6] Socio-economically disadvantaged groups, such as rural populations (especially in the tribal and Hill Tract regions), ethnic minorities, slum-dwellers, and the poor (including the landless, marginal farmers, and day-laborer households) are often not able to access formal primary schools.[7] The Education Watch 2001 survey found that 65 percent of primary school-age children from the poorest households (as indicated by food security status) were enrolled in primary school, compared with 89 percent of children from the wealthiest households.[8] It is very likely that the 20 percent of the primary school-age children who are not enrolled and some one-third of the enrolled who dropout before completing the cycle belong predominantly to the poorest households. There is a very substantial overlap between the estimated 6.3 million working children in the five- to 14-year-old-age group and non-participation in primary education.

While there is some modest regional variation in the gross enrollment ratio (ranging from 101 in Rajshahi Division down to 95 in Dhaka Division), the 2001 examination results show a tremendous range. Within Dhaka Division are the lowest and highest failure rates by district. In Dhaka City and its environs, 41 percent of boys and 46 percent of girls failed, with nearly as many girls taking the exam as boys. In Jamalpur District (one of the two field sites used in the present study) nearly 87 percent of boys and 69 percent of girls failed, with about 50 percent more boys taking the exam than girls.[9]

Growth and distribution of different types of schools provide a further indication of regional disparities. For instance, satellite schools (SAT)—primary schools without complete facilities or a full complement of teachers—have grown by 57 percent from 1995 to 2001. These schools—attached administratively to a nearby government school—tend to be located in poor, rural areas where the community constructs or rents a room for a school and the government subsidizes a teacher. Similarly, community schools (COM), constructed by the community and with some government teacher salary subsidy, expanded dramatically from 828 to 3,268, just under a 400 percent increase in enrollment.

[6] See *Bangladesh: Second Primary Education Development Program (PEDPII) Annex 4: Economic and Fiscal Analysis*, and *Renewed Hope/Daunting Challenges*, Education Watch 2001. These studies estimate the NER to be between 75 percent and 81% percent.

[7] NGO nonformal education centers mainly cater to their needs. See Alam, M., Basic Educational Achievement in Rural Bangladesh: Level, Pattern and Socio-economic Determinants, Research Report no.153, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, 1997.

[8] Overall enrollment of the poor was 66 percent, the non-poor 82 percent (*Bangladesh Household Income and Expenditure Survey*, World Bank, 2001).

[9] Primary and Mass Education Division, Directorate of Primary Education, *Primary Education Statistics in Bangladesh – 2001*, Dhaka, May 2002

2. *System Description*

Budget Allocations

In 2001, only 1.3 percent of GDP was allocated to primary education, considerably less than most developing countries. Primary education as a percentage of the total education budget is around 49 percent in the 2002/3 budget. Most of the recurrent education budget goes to teacher salaries. Development plus recurrent cost per student has increased from Taka 1,035 (about US$17) in 1985 to Taka 1,560 (about US$26) per student in 2001. Over 18 percent of the total primary and nonformal education budget comes from external sources (loans and grants).

Governance and School Management

Educational management in Bangladesh has been characterized as extremely centralized, non-participatory, non-transparent, and bureaucratic.[10] The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education manages both primary education and nonformal education. Primary schools are under the direct supervision of the upazila primary education officer (UPEO), who reports to the district education officer (DPEO). School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) have been authorized by the government and duly formed to encourage more community involvement and support for primary schools. However, the SMCs and PTAs do not enjoy the administrative and financial resources to operate effectively and most meet irregularly, with little attendance and little effective participation on the part of parents and the community.

Teacher-student Ratio

Bangladesh had a national teacher-student ratio of 1:54 in 2001, slightly up from 1:52 in 1995. In GPS, the ratio is 1:67 and in the NGPS 1:52. Average class size nationally is 38, with the GPS at 57 and 42 in NGPS.

Teachers

Over 300,000 teachers serve in formal primary schools; 165,000 hold permanent jobs in government primary schools. Of GPS teachers, 50 percent hold a Senior Secondary School Certificate, 36 percent a Higher Secondary Certificate, and 15 percent a college degree as their highest level of qualification. Thirty-four percent of GPS teachers are female.

The Curriculum and Textbooks

From 1992-1996, a competency-based curriculum at the primary level—the Essential Learning Continuum (ELC)—was introduced at the primary school level. A set of 53 essential terminal competencies—cognitive, psychomotor, and affective—are covered by the curriculum. There are currently three textbooks for grades one to two and six textbooks for grades three to five. It is government policy to distribute these books free of charge, although 50 percent of the books are recycled for re-use at the upper grades.

[10] Hossain, MH, "Decentralization of Educational Management and Planning of Primary Education in Bangladesh". In Jalaluddin AK and Chowdhury AMR (editors), Getting Started: Universalizing Quality Primary Education in Bangladesh, Dhaka, UPL, 1997.

Physical Environment of the Schools

In Bangladesh, the physical environment in most primary schools is extremely poor. Classrooms are inadequate, with a national average of 3.8 classrooms per school. The library facilities are mostly absent. Desks, blackboards, and teaching aids are often inadequate. Playground and sports equipment are rare. Electricity, water, and drainage facilities are unavailable in many schools.

Programs to Alleviate the Negative Effects of Poverty[11]

The Government of Bangladesh has instituted several programs that attempt to redress the negative effects of poverty on primary schooling, including the elimination of official school fees, the provision of textbooks free-of-charge, and incentives to encourage the participation of vulnerable children. Estimates suggest that the poor receive 56 percent of all government subsidies on primary education.

The Food for Education (FFE) program, begun in 1993, provided 40 percent of the children enrolled in primary schools in the targeted poor areas with a monthly allocation of wheat or rice for their family if they attended primary school regularly. Although the FFE program did raise enrollment and attendance rates, it suffered from high levels of leakage and was poorly targeted. Increases in the price of the food commodities in 2001 and 2002 caused the GOB to reduce the amount of food assistance, until the program was discontinued in June 2002.

In 2001, the GOB initiated the Primary Education Stipend Project (PES Project). Eligible students received 25 Taka per month (about 45 US cents) during the two years of project implementation, despite questions raised about the effectiveness of such a low stipend amount. This project was terminated in 2002.

Building on many of the lessons learned from the two predecessor programs, the new Primary Education Stipend Program (PESP), launched in 2003, has quadrupled the monthly stipend amount to 100 Taka per month for one child, introduced bank-mediated disbursement procedures, and targeted 40% of students from poor families throughout rural Bangladesh (excluding metropolitan cities, district towns, and pourasavas). The PESP covers more than 65,000 schools and 5.5 million students, at an estimated cost of Taka 331,472.70 lakh (approximately $600 million) over five years. It is the single largest program in the country, according to MOPME officials.

[11] This section has been taken from Tietjen, K. "Descriptive Analysis of the Primary Education Stipend Program in Bangladesh," The World Bank, August 2003.

B. Review of Research on Contact Time, Teacher and Student Attendance, and Related Issues

Several reports and documents have been consulted during the development and preparation of the *Time to Learn* study in order to provide a foundation for understanding the education system as a whole and the issue of time use in particular. Three recent studies have been especially informative: Education Watch 2000 *A Question of Quality: State of Primary Education in Bangladesh* (2001), Education Watch 2001 *Renewed Hope/Daunting Challenges* (2002), and Primary School Performance Monitoring Project (PSPMP) *Primary Education in Bangladesh: Findings of PSPMP 2000* (2001). These studies provide most of the information presented below.

1. *Contact Time*

Students in Bangladesh spend a limited number of hours in school. The 2000 World Bank *Education Sector Review* notes that the total number of instructional hours in grades one and two is much lower compared with other Asian countries (444 hours v. 1,100 in Indonesia and 1,235 in China).[12] In part, the double-shift system prevalent in government primary schools accounts for the low number of contact hours because of the reduced time per shift. The number of hours required to be taught in government primary schools and registered non-government primary schools is 18 hours per week for grades one and two and 26 hours for grades three through six.[13] This requirement is based on a single-shift school. Most studies suggest that this is less than the ideal by at least 25 percent. This problem is further compounded by the fact that more than 90 percent of the government primary schools run on a staggered two-shift basis, which provides for even less contact time. It has been observed that as a result, on an annual basis actual contact time in two-shift schools is about 178 hours less for grades one and two and 400 hours less for grades three through five than in one-shift schools.[14]

During the school day, teachers spend considerable amounts of time conducting other—non-teaching—work, such as censuses, surveys, health and immunization, Total Literacy Movement, Food for Education, and voter registration. A 1992 study conducted by UNICEF found that less than 40 minutes per day was devoted to teaching-learning activities in formal schools.[15] A 1996 study found that in 40 percent of the government primary schools the last two class periods of the day were held irregularly, further shortening the school day.[16]

More recently, the 2000 PSPMP study confirmed that the school day was shortened in 46 percent of government primary schools, especially in rural schools (56 percent in rural

[12] These figures do not appear to reflect the current, official contact time in Bangladesh' government schools, although it still remains far below other Asian countries.
[13] It should be noted that NGO-run nonformal education centers complete the curriculum in 4 years instead of 5.
[14] ADB, Project Performance Audit Report on the Primary Education Sector Project (Loan 1026-BAN) in Bangladesh, November 2000.
[15] Karim, AHM, 1992, *School-Based Primary Education in Bangladesh: Review*, UNICEF (mimeograph) cited in The World Bank's *Bangladesh Education Sector Review*, 2000.
[16] Center for Policy Dialogue, *Growth or Stagnation?*, 1996, p.349.

schools versus 16 percent in urban schools). It also reports that 55 percent of schools start late, although the teachers state their school follows the official school calendar. The proportion was higher among rural schools (59 percent) than urban schools (36 percent).

Contact time is only a good proxy measure for beneficial student-teacher interaction and potential for learning if it is used effectively. Education Watch 2000 found that 43 percent of class time was devoted to pro-active or teacher-centered instruction, 57 percent to more desirable inter-active or student-centered instruction, and 23 percent to non-teaching or counter-active situations. The PSPMP study also found that teachers in one-third of government primary schools did not keep their students engaged in the learning process, and most of the instructional methods were pro-active and emphasized memorization and rote learning. Moreover, both the PSPMP and the Education Watch 2000 studies found that few teachers prepared or followed lesson plans, and PSPMP reported that nearly one-third of government primary school teachers were unorganized and uncertain about how to conduct the class and two-thirds did not prepare for class.

2. *Teacher Attendance*

Bangladesh's primary schools suffer high rates of teacher absenteeism and tardiness. The PSPMP study reports that 13 percent of teachers were absent on the day of its school visits, and about a quarter were late, many by more than one hour. Similar figures were found by Education Watch 2001: factoring out authorized leave and absences, 12 percent of teachers were "illegally" missing from schools on the day of the school visit, with the percentage being twice as high in rural schools than urban ones.

3. *Student Attendance*

The average nationwide daily attendance of students in all primary schools has gone up significantly from around 48 percent in 1995 to over 74 percent in 2001. Although the government reports a 61 percent attendance rate in government primary schools, Education Watch 2001 found 59 percent attendance on the day of the schools visit, with higher rates in urban schools than rural ones. Attendance figures tend to match the school seating capacity, which leads researchers to speculate that many children do not attend school because of lack of space, although government primary schools were found to have more capacity.

The PSPMP study also found that 58 percent of students were in attendance in government primary schools the day of the visit, although the attendance rate had been recorded at percentage points higher the preceding day, causing some doubt about the authenticity of school records and the reliability of school data. It also found that nine percent of government primary school students arrived late on the day of the visits, with a higher percentage in rural schools than urban ones.

The student attendance problem has been explained by several factors, which include: students' illness, involvement in household or farm-level work, and inadequate seating capacity at schools.

4. *Related Issues*

Several factors and observations were found to be relevant to the issue of teacher and student attendance and contact time, such as:

- Prevalence of private tutoring is indicative of the poor educational quality that results from low contact time and its ineffective use. Education Watch 2001 found that 23 percent of students in government primary schools received private tuition.
- Remedial teaching was almost non-existent in the government primary schools visited. There was no individual attention to slow learners, with most of the teacher attention going to the higher-performing students (Education Watch 2001).
- Only 66 percent of government schools received books on time during three years; 16 percent never received books (PSPMP 2000).
- School operations in half the schools observed were disturbed by outside noises (PSPMP 2000).
- Teaching was not the first choice of a profession for 39 percent of teachers in government primary schools (PSPMP 2000).
- Distance between the school and local educational authority was a negative predictor of student achievement. The more visits a UPEO made to the school the higher the student performance levels (Education Watch 2001).
- Schools with lower student-teacher ratios (40 or less) had higher levels of student performance (Education Watch 2001).
- The highest correlating factor with student achievement was time in school (r=0.50) (PSPMP 2000).

III. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

A. Approach

Previous surveys—such the PSPMP *Primary Education in Bangladesh Study* (2001) and the World Education Watch 2000 *A Question of Quality* (2001)—had addressed the issues of student and teacher attendance in primary school, using relatively large sample sizes (186 schools and 150 schools respectively). Together, these research studies had provided data on the rates of student absenteeism, teacher attendance and punctuality, contact hours, and the use of time. The intent of this *Time to Learn* study was to confirm these statistics, but—more importantly—to identify and understand the factors that caused them. Consequently, the approach used was a hybrid of quantitative and qualitative methods, concentrated in a small number of schools. At the schools visited, survey questionnaires were administered to teachers and students to obtain quantifiable data. This data was augmented by interviews with:

- Head-teachers,
- District Primary Education Officers (DPEO),
- Upazila Primary Education Officers (UPEO),
- Teachers' union representatives,
- School Management Committee (SMC) members,
- Teacher focus groups, and
- Parent and community focus groups.

In addition, opportunistic and informal conversations with individual teachers, parents, and students, as well as home visits with students, enriched the understanding of the school, the community, and the individual context. (See Table III.A.1)

Table III.A.1 Methods Matrix

Tools/Methods	District I: Nilphamari				District II: Jamalpur				Total
	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5	School 6	School 7	School 8	
Teacher Questionnaires	7	3	2	3	4	3	1	3	26
Student Questionnaires	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	144
Head-Teacher Interviews	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Student Head-Counts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Class Room Observations		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		12 classes
DPE and/or UPEO Interviews	✓ both	✓ both	✓ both	✓ both	✓ both	✓ DPEO	✓ DPEO	✓ DPEO	✓ DPEO
SMC Chair/ Member Interviews	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	7
Teacher FGD	✓	✓			✓				3
Head-teacher, Teacher Union, DPEO, UPEO, and FGD	✓				✓				2
Parents and Community FGD	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
Home Visits	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	5

B. Sampling Frame, Sample Selection, and Sample Description

The sampling frame was defined by the following variables:

- Disadvantaged districts identified by poverty indexes
- Disadvantaged upazilas identified by local education authorities
- Government primary schools
- Schools serving disadvantaged children identified by local education authorities
- Schools in urban and rural areas
- Single- and double-shift schools
- Disadvantaged students identified by a rapid poverty appraisal

The disadvantaged districts—Nilphamari and Jamalpur—were selected based on a poverty index. Once in the field, the DPEO and local educational authorities were consulted in order to identify upazilas that conformed to the sampling frame. Initially, the UPEOs were asked to identify schools that served disadvantaged children, but—during the second school visit—it was found that the head-teacher had been given advanced notice about the impending visit.[17] This approach was abandoned in favor of surprise visits to schools, achieved by obtaining a list of schools that fit the characteristics of the sampling frame, often from local informants other than the educational authority.

[17] The UPEO did not have time to warn the first school visited.

The sample consisted of eight government primary schools serving poor children. Five schools were located in rural areas (three in "charland" or sandbar areas), and three schools were located in urban areas. Two were single-shift schools, and the remaining six were double-shift schools. Of the eight head-teachers, two—in urban schools—were female. Of the 26 teachers interviewed, 15 were female, all but two served in urban schools. All but one of the 11 male teachers interviewed served in rural schools. Of the 144 students interviewed, 48 percent were girls and 52 percent were boys. Three students were interviewed per grade (grades one through five) at each school.

While all of the educational authorities and all but one of the SMC members were male, the parent and community focus group discussions included almost equal proportions of men and women. In the less structured discussion, men tended to dominate, but women were specifically encouraged to vocalize their opinions and were able to contribute. Women, in particular, approached the researchers afterwards for private chats and invitations to visit their homes, thus ensuring that their views were represented in the analysis.

Among the schools, there were several intervening variables that were both noted and considered in the analysis. The five rural schools were all participating in the new Primary Education Stipend Program (PESP). In Jamalpur District, three schools were recipients of a school snack program funded by USDA/Land O' Lakes. Also in Jamalpur, most of the head-teachers and teachers at the schools had received training through the IDEAL Project.

Table III.B.1, on the following page, provides a descriptive overview of the schools visited.

Table III.B.1: Sample Description and Basic School Information

	School Code[18] and General Location	Region/ Location	No. of Students	Girls Student Percent	Av. Attendance Rate Percent	No. of Teachers[19]		Teacher Student Ratio[20]	Sex Ratio[21] Student	Shift	Status of School	Class Rooms	Stipend Program	Other Project	Distance from Dist/UZ HQ km	Infrastructure and Other Facilities			
						Total	F Percent									Made of	Elect	Toilet	Tube well
1	School # 1 Nilphamari Sadar, Nilphamari	U	405	49.6	79	8	7 (87.5)	50.63	98.5	1	A	8	X	X	2	Brick/ Concrete 3 Stored	✓	✓ 4 M=2, F=1,T =1	1
2	School # 2 Nilphamari Sadar, Nilphamari	U	257	53.3	89	5	5(100)	51.40	112.3	2	A	5	X	X	0.5	Brick/ Concrete 2 Stored	✓	✓ 3 M=1, F=1,T =1	1
3	School # 3 Kishoreganj, Nilphamari	R	137	59.8	65	3	0 (0)	45.7	149.1	2	B	1 long room	✓	X	8	Bamboo Wall, Tin Shed	X	X Aban-doned (1)	1
4	School # 4 Nilphamari	R	290	46.6	67	5	1(20)	58	87.1	2	A	3	✓	X	7	Concrete Single Stored	X	1	1
5	School # 5 Jamalpur Sadr, Jamalpur	U	332	53.9	73	6	5(83.3)	55.3	117.0	1	B	5	X	SFP	1	Brick/ Concrete 2 Stored	✓	2 M=1 F=1	1
6	School # 6 Dewanganj, Jamalpur	R Char-land	310	51.6	62	4	1(25)	77.5	106.7	2	B	3	✓	IDEAL	10	Concrete Single Stored	X	X (2 not in use)	X (1 not in use)
7	School # & Islampur, Jamalpur	R	307	51.5	85	3[22]	1(33.3)	102.3	106.0	2	B	3	✓	SFP IDEAL	5	Concrete Single Stored	X	X (2 not in use)	1
8	School # 8 Islampur, Jamalpur	R	350	45.4	78	4	1(25)	87.5	83.3	2	B	5	✓	IDEAL	8	Brick Built Single Stored	X	X (2 not in use)	X (1 not in use)
Total			2388			38	21												
Total Average		3 U,5 R	298.5	50.7	74.7	4.7	(55.3)	62.8	102.9	1-2 2-6	2A 6B	4.1	5						
Rural Average			278.8	49.8	71.4	3.8	(21.05)	73.4	107.9		B	3					X		
Urban Average			331.3	52.0	80.3	6.3	(89.5)	52.3	99.1		A	6					✓		

[18] School names are omitted to honor the commitment of anonymity made by the researchers.
[19] Includes head-master
[20] Does not include double shift. TS Ratio=Total No. of Students /Total No. of Teachers
[21] Girls per hundred Boys Students
[22] The female teacher has been absent/on leave for a long time due to physical and mental illness.

C. Instruments, Process, and Procedures

The instruments used in the study comprised:

- Teacher questionnaire
- Student questionnaire
- Head-teacher questionnaire (for school data)
- Head-teacher interview guide
- Teacher Focus Group interview guide
- Parent Focus Group interview guide
- SMC member interview guide
- Teacher Time Observation form
- Class Time Observation form

The research, its analysis and drafting of the report were carried out between October 19th and November 26th, 2003. One week was spent in each district, on average one day per school. Because of the Ramadan holidays that would close the schools by mid-November, field research was concluded by November 9th.

The research team comprised two international researchers, a Bangladeshi field research coordinator, and six Bangladeshi research assistants. The international researchers and local coordinator were primarily responsible for DPEO, UPEO, and head-teacher interviews, and focus group discussions with parents, communities, SMC members, and others. The local research assistants conducted head-counts, administered the teacher and student questionnaires, and conducted teacher and class-time observations. The entire team engaged in individual chats with teachers, parents, and students and visited homes.

Upon arrival in the district, the international researchers and local coordinator met with the DPEO and other educational authorities to present the letter of introduction from MOPME/DPE and ask for permission to conduct the study at the schools, as well as to arrange for interviews with the local education authorities.

Schools were selected on the basis of several key criteria including: most disadvantaged/ poor socio-economic status of the community, distance from district headquarters/center, remoteness and access to communication facilities, student-teacher ratio, size (student body), and the number of shifts.

Following school selection and upon arrival at the school—generally at the official opening time—the team introduced itself to the head-teacher, asked permission to collect information at the school, and arranged for the various interviews to be organized and scheduled. Research assistants immediately entered the classroom to identify the three students per grade level to be interviewed.

Students were selected according to (i) the gender breakdown of the school (if more girls than boys, then two girls were selected) and (ii) an assessment of their relative poverty.

A rapid wealth-ranking method was employed. Students who were identified as being frequently absent were also identified for consideration. The selected students were then taken from class one-by-one to be interviewed individually. The sixth research assistant conducted head-counts of students, noted teacher time use, and observed the classes. All the teachers (except the head-teacher and those teachers who were absent the day of the visit) at the schools were interviewed using the teacher questionnaire. The research assistants conducted interviews during breaks and after school hours, in order to reduce class-time disruption.

The procedures followed for school-based focus group discussions varied according to whether the school was an urban or rural one. In urban areas, following the interview with the head-teacher, SMC members were interviewed. Later in the afternoon, the teacher focus group was conducted, as was the parent and community focus group (the latter scheduled for the next day if necessary). The process was orderly with the groups isolated in separate rooms, unattended by on-lookers or possible "contaminants". For example, the head-teacher was not included in the teacher focus group, and only parents of students participated in the parents' focus group discussion.

The situation at the rural schools was much more fluid and chaotic. The lack of facilities at the schools—no extra classrooms available for privacy or to isolate groups—and the high level of interest by teachers, parents, community members and students in the research team made it nearly impossible to enforce any meaningful separation of the parent, community and SMC member groups. Most often, the focus group discussions were conducted on the ground in the schoolyard and included parents, community members, older students, un-enrolled children, and SMC members. In several cases, the interaction among the parties revealed the local controversies, power struggles, and divisions associated with the school, SMC membership and management, and—especially—the stipend program. The focus group at the worst school visited was terminated quickly as it appeared that the discussion might end in a fistfight. (At another school it was reported that a few weeks earlier several community members had been injured in a fight over the SMC chairmanship.) Ultimately, the wide range of participants and their interactions served to enrich the researchers' understanding of the school and its context. In no case, however, did teachers participate in these discussions.

After the various researchers concluded their assigned tasks, they chatted individually with parents, students, and community members, and made home visits. Originally, it was intended that a few students and teachers be observed throughout the day (a 24-hour period), but this was not feasible. First, because the researchers (even the Bangladeshi ones) evinced such a high degree of interest and because time in the community was limited, the mere presence of a researcher staying by the side of a child or teacher after school would change the pace, time allocation, and dimensions of the subject's particular day. The lack of anonymity in the community also made it impossible to surreptitiously observe how teacher and students were spending their time outside of school. In the end, it was decided to interview students and teachers about there time allocations outside of

school, and to observe them in school where the local researchers' presence was less of a disruptive factor. For such after-school observations, it is recommended that in the future a village secondary student be recruited and trained, or an unobtrusive ethnographer or local NGO employee who lives in or is a familiar sight in the community undertake such ethnographic research.

D. Limitations of the Study

The reader should be aware of the following aspects or limitations of this study:

1. *Representativeness*

- The sample size was deliberately kept small to allow for a deeper understanding of the issues affecting school, teacher and student use of time. Therefore, its representativeness may not extend to all schools, or even all government primary schools, in Bangladesh.

- The sampling frame called for and the sample concentrated on the most disadvantaged students and their teachers in the most disadvantaged schools in the poorest upazilas in the districts with the least favorable poverty profiles in Bangladesh. Therefore, the data and analysis presented in this report is likely to be skewed to the worst-case scenarios rather than the better—or even average—case scenarios. In particular, schools in major municipalities were not included.

- The student sample is probably biased towards those students who are comparatively regular in their attendance because the students interviewed were selected from among those students present at school the day of the visit. The chronically absent students are likely to be under-represented as the chance of them being at school is less than those who attend regularly. Therefore, the data presented on students is probably a better reflection of the fairly regular students (e.g. hours on homework and free time) than of the students who are habitually absent.

Nonetheless, none of the major statistical trends or findings contravene the findings of previous studies with larger and wider sample sizes, suggesting that all government primary schools suffer from similar problems in teacher attendance and punctuality and student attendance.

2. *Reliability and Validity*

- Ramadan—entailing a month of fasting for most practicing adult Muslims—was already underway when the field research started. Although it was feared that the schools might have altered their schedules, this was generally found not to be the case. In the two instances that this was mentioned as an excuse for early afternoon school closings, adjustments were made to the analysis. Before children were asked questions about breakfast patterns of consumption and hunger, they were asked

whether they were fasting that day. For the few who responded affirmatively, the questions were adjusted so that a true picture of typical habits could be obtained.

- Because of the time constraints –a five week window and imminent school holidays—affecting the study, it was decided to interview students about their time use, rather than their parents about their children as is generally recommended. Older students were able to respond quickly and with apparent accuracy to the questionnaire; it was necessary to spend more time working with younger students, and preparatory grade (grade zero) students were eliminated from the sample. Time, in particular, is a difficult concept for younger children and even older students did not have watches. Consequently, the researchers employed a variety of techniques (e.g. asking whether it was dark outside or whether prayer had been called) in order to help children reconstruct their days according to a timetable. Parents and teachers were also consulted in an effort to triangulate.

- Head-teacher and teacher time use and attendance can be a particularly sensitive subject, as most schools, head-teachers and teachers do not comply fully with government rules and regulations. However, the degree of frankness was surprisingly high. Even the few head-teachers or teachers who attempted to conceal the extent of their irregular attendance were exposed by parents, community members, and students. Certain practices, such as "contract" teachers, blanket letters requesting leave, falsified attendance registers, and other unethical practices—where a high degree of deception and complicity may be involved—were unlikely to be uncovered during the short visits undertaken by this study. Effort, however, was made to check documentation and consult with key informants to verify information provided, and inquire about some of the deceptive practices that had been flagged in earlier studies.

- Finally, best and worst case scenarios for contact and instructional time have been developed to cover the possible range of situations at the schools. However, in either case, the contact time may be overestimated because of misrepresentations made by the teaching staff and the effect of the research teams' visits. For example, the rate of teacher absenteeism was probably reduced and transformed into tardiness, when teachers at some schools learned that the team had arrived at their school, precipitating their arrival.

A Technical Note, in Annex 1, provides an expanded review of methodological considerations and the approach to teacher and student time use. Other annexes to the report contain the field research schedule and the instruments.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the findings from the study and field visits, combining both qualitative and quantitative data to illustrate and analyze how schools, teachers and students use time scheduled for school and instruction. The chapter is divided into four sections according to a straightforward analytic framework. Section A examines the policies and actual practices of schools that relate to the school calendar (i.e. the number of school days). Section B looks at the school day, how it is organized, how teachers use their time, and class-time management and use. Section C presents information about teachers' use of time in terms of attendance, absenteeism, tardiness and early departure and explores the factors affecting them. Section D presents information about students' use of time, also in terms of attendance, absenteeism, and tardiness/early departure and explores the factors behind them. Section E examines some of the crosscutting issues that emerged in the course of this study that relate to school, teacher and student time management. Each section outlines the major policies that lay the foundation for the issue under scrutiny, presents the findings and related factors, and concludes with a summary analysis and a list of suggestions pertaining to the issue.

A. The School Year and Calendar

Study Findings:

- The schools take more holidays—both with and without approval of the proper educational authorities—than provided for in the school calendar.
- Schools are likely to operate for significantly fewer days (19 percent to 55 percent less) than called for in the school calendar.
- Schools do not always record the days the school is closed for definitional and /or concealment reasons.
- At least one month of contact time with students at the beginning and at the end of the school year will be sacrificed to administrative and non-teaching activities.
- Disasters (i.e. flooding) annually close some schools for about one month, but no strategies have been put in place to compensate for lost school days.
- Rural, marginally staffed schools are vulnerable to closing because of training and official demands made on teachers.
- Some schools' teaching staff takes advantage of their remoteness and circumstances to close the school unnecessarily.

This section examines the school calendar, i.e. the number of days in a year that the schools operate. The number of programmed school days, school adherence to the school calendar, and the actual number of days the schools are operational set the foundation for the amount of time allocated to the contact hours and instructional time that students receive. How policies are interpreted and applied, the institutional, management, and other factors that affect the school calendar, and school-based practices are assessed in terms of their impact on the number of days a school is open for instructional purposes.

1. *Policies Governing the School Calendar and Days of Operation*

The school calendar—establishing the number of operational days per year and the holiday schedule—is determined by the national government. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) is responsible for adjusting the calendar annually, and publishing and distributing a circular and cardboard handout to its offices and personnel (down to the school) that delineates the schedule and holidays. Schools are required to operate according to these parameters.

In 2003, 238 days of school were scheduled.[23] The schools operate on a six-day week (Saturday-Thursday) and are off on Friday, a day of religious observance for the Muslim population. In total, 75 national holidays were programmed for the 2003 school year, which is the same as the calendar year (January through December). These holidays are a mix of secular celebrations (e.g. Independence Day) and religious observances (e.g. Eid ul Fitr), the latter encompassing days of significance for Muslims, Christians and Hindus. Two vacation periods are also incorporated into the holiday schedule: summer vacation (18 days in June) and winter vacation (six days in December). Finally, three "contingency" days are included to cover unforeseen events (such as local celebrations or events).

While the national holidays are specified by the national government, the local Upazila Primary Education Officer (UPEO) has the authority—in consultation with other local governing authorities—to declare local school holidays that should be drawn against the three-day contingency "budget". Additionally, head-teachers of primary schools can apply to the UPEO for permission to use a contingency day.

2. *The Findings: Actual School Calendar and Attributing Factors*

Actual School Days

In two districts, Nilphamari and Jamalpur districts, the DPEOs and UPEOs stated that in 2003 the official school calendar had been followed and no local holidays have been declared. One head-teacher, with confirmation by parents, stated confidently that his school had been open all 75 scheduled days of the total 90 days in July, August, and September; the school register confirmed this statement. Similar examination of the school registers in other schools indicated that they were open and operating per the official school calendar. Unfortunately, in several cases, this appeared to be solely a paper phenomenon for two reasons.

First, at least two rural schools misrepresented the operational days. In one example, the head-master showed a register that indicated the school had been open the previous day, but students, parents and community members bluntly refuted this, and eventually the head-master admitted that the one present teacher could not open the school. In another

[23] Rather than publishing the number of days schools should operate, MOPME indicates the number of holidays. The 238 figure was determined—in consultation with various education authorities—by starting with 365 days (a year) and deducting 75 days for holidays and 52 days for Fridays.

example, there was a wide discrepancy in the number of school closings in flood-prone areas claimed by the head-teachers and those claimed by the parents.

Second, the definition of an "open" school is subject to wide variation. The definition used for this analysis requires at least one teacher to arrive and organize attending students into classes with the intention of teaching (in some fashion). Several other interpretations, however, do not consider instruction (of some sort, at least) to its students as a critical component of an operationally "open" school. Further interpretations offer dubious legitimacy. For example:

- Some schools (i.e. head-teachers, teachers, and some SMC members) considered the schools open even if unattended by teachers and students. Neither teachers nor educational officials considered the schools closed, nor was a local school holiday declared in Nilphamari, when the celebration of "Meena Day" emptied the schools of its teachers. As a result, students at one school, at least, were not obligated to attend and many received an unexpected holiday.[24] School registers, consequently, did not record that the schools were closed. Similar reports were made about other "official" events, such as immunization days, and election days.

- Head-teachers in other schools exercise more suspect logic. When teachers were absent from school during the day and, alternatively, collecting their salaries and banking their pay, one head-master considered these activities "official duties," and therefore marked the school open. Similarly, when teachers leave a school unopened/unattended for training purposes, such as for the bi-monthly sub-cluster training at the Upazila Resource Center, the school should be considered open.

- In a more understandable instance, a head-teacher at a rural school in a "charland area" (inhabited sandbars in the midst of rivers) explained how the annual flooding that accompanied the seasonal monsoons complicates an attempt to quantify the number of days a school was open. While his schools may be frequently closed for "official" disaster days, it remains effectively closed for many more days when (i) a teacher is able to reach the school, but students are unable, (ii) students are able to reach the school, but a teacher is unable and (iii) when at least one teacher and some students are able to reach school but classroom conditions are dangerous (damage and rising waters).

Thus, days of schooling lost to "disasters"—flooding—do not appear to be counted as deviations from the school calendar, although local educational officials clearly understood and deplored the impact on schooling and learning. While stating that the school calendar had been adhered to last year, educational authorities in one district disclosed that in 2002, 15 percent to 20 percent of the schools were closed for 24 days, a figure considered to be average. At best, classes are delivered on an "irregular" basis during the three-month monsoon season.

[24] The 'Meena' campaign is intended to illustrate an example used to justify school closing. Negative remarks about the holiday, per se, are not intended by the authors.

In fact, schools following all the prescribed holidays in the annual calendar are considered to have adhered to the official calendar according to some educational authorities and school personnel. Closings due to a *force majeur* (be it a flood or an official event) are not considered the fault of the school and therefore do not warrant attention on the register, unless specifically authorized with prior permission by the UPEO. Schools taking additional unauthorized holidays are clearly not likely to be recorded.

List of Holidays: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Holiday	Date	Day	Number of Days
Shree Panchami (Saraswati Pooja)	6th February	Thursday	1
Eid-ul-Azha, Maghee Poornima, Shaheed Day and International Language Day	10th-21st February (Except Fridays)	Monday-Thursday	10
Hijree (Arabic New Year)	5th March	Wednesday	1
Ashura (10th Muharram)	14th March	Friday	0
Dole Jatra	18th March	Wednesday	1
Independence and National Day	26th March	Tuesday	1
Chaitra Shankranti (End of Bengali Calendar)	13th April	Sunday	1
Bengali New Year	14th April	Monday	1
Easter Sunday	20th April	Sunday	1
Akheree Chahar Shomba	30th April	Wednesday	1
May Day	1st May	Thursday	1
Eid-e-Miladunnabi and Buddha Purnima	14th May	Wednesday	1
Summer Vacation and Fateha-e Yeajdaham	7th-19th June (except Fridays)	Saturday-Thursday	12
Asharee Purnima	12th July	Saturday	1
Janmashtamee	19th August	Tuesday	1
Madhu Purnima	9th September	Tuesday	1
Shab-e Meraj and Mahalaya	25th September	Thursday	1
Durga Pooja, Laxmi Pooja, Probarona Poornima, and Shab-e- Barat	3rd - 14th October (except Fridays)	Saturday-Tuesday	10
Kaali Pooja	24th October	Friday	0
Solidarity Day	7th November	Friday	0
Ramadan, Shab-e-Kadar, Jumatul Vida and Eid-ul Fitr	15th November-4th December (except Fridays)	Saturday-Thursday	18
Victory Day	16th December	Tuesday	1
Akheree Munajat of Ijtema	Undecided	Not decided	1
Christmas Day and Winter Vacation	23rd-29th December (except Fridays)	Tuesday-Monday	6
Contingency Days per UPEO's decision			3
Total			75

Source: Annual Calendar 2003 published DPE/MOPME/GOB, 2003

Consequently, it is difficult to estimate the number of days schools do and do not operate with accuracy. However, it is clear that all of the schools visited did not operate for all 238 days in 2003 for a variety of reasons (discussed below). A discussion with one head-teacher of a flood-prone school disclosed that his school had been closed for 31 days for the first three months of the school calendar, in addition to all the scheduled holidays. But the actual closed days were probably underestimated since the same school had already lost more than a month of contact time (13 percent of the total scheduled days) in 2003. (See box)

The Shrinking School Calendar

School Six in Jamalpur district is ten kilometers and three rivers away from the Upazila headquarters. The area floods each year during the monsoon and the school has been relocated to higher ground. For the first three months of the school calendar in 2003, the head-master admitted that the school was closed 31 days, in addition to the scheduled holidays. School closings as a result of teacher absence during this period were attributed to:

- 15 flood days
- Six cluster meeting days
- Three contingency days (anticipated for Eid)
- Three election days (one spent in training)
- Two immunization days
- Two unscheduled school-level "contingency" days

The students, parents and community members say that the head-master did not include the days that all the teachers did not appear for personal reasons, the days the school was closed at the beginning of the year because there were no books, and the additional 13 days the teachers did not come to school during the flood period, even though the school was accessible.

Factors Affecting the School Calendar and the Number of School Days

Education authorities, school personnel, SMC members, parents, and students provide various explanations for why schools do not open as planned. Many unintended school closings have almost become "institutionalized" through their wide acceptance by education authorities and teachers alike as undesirable but legitimate reasons for not holding classes.

The Beginning and End of the School Year: The opening and closing months of the school year are marked by non-teaching demands. No schools visited for this study operated at full capacity on a regular basis during these months, although there was considerable variation in the degree of disruption that occurred among these schools.

The academic year commences slowly as educational authorities and school personnel organize the demanding logistics of registering students, receiving and distributing materials, and understanding new government policies or programs. The short six-day vacation period between the old and new school years is taken by teachers as well students, precluding a preparation period for school staff, unless teachers volunteer their vacation time. (No teacher interviewed claimed to do so.) In January, the entire

Bangladeshi education system participates in National Education Week, a government information campaign designed to encourage parents to enroll their children in school. New teachers are oriented and experienced teachers are informed of changes in rules and regulations and tasked with administrative duties such as registering students and preparing requisitions for supplies. Throughout January, teachers are expected to recruit students by making visits to homes, markets, and other public places to meet parents. Often teachers are expected to organize and attend community and cultural events in order to create awareness for parents and attract students to school. Teachers must also prepare registration records with proper documentation for each entering student. Recruitment and registration efforts may continue beyond January and into March, with the end of March as the final closing date for registration. Education officials and teachers in the participating schools said that the recruitment and registration efforts for 2003 were further complicated and increased by the introduction of the new Primary Education Stipend Program (PESP), which required that 40 percent of the poorest students be selected for inclusion and that identity cards for mothers/guardians be completed with photo and signature.

The obvious consequence for the school is that, while it may have officially opened in January, teaching staff is not available to conduct classes. Many parents stated that they would send their children to school in January, only to have them return home saying that the teachers were not there or were not holding classes. The teachers in all the schools visited admitted that January was a chaotic month and if any classes were conducted, it was generally on a sporadic basis. The students corroborated this. (See Table IV.A.1)

Table IV.A.1: Students' Perspective on the Start of the School Year

	Urban	Rural	Total
Percent Students Starting School in: (N=106)			
January	42.2	24.6	32.1
February	42.2	49.2	46.2
March	15.5	26.2	21.7
Percent Students stating: (N=132)			
Closed school	3.7	0.0	1.5
Open School but No Classes	35.8	51.9	45.4
Open School but Occasional Classes	50.9	34.2	40.1
Open School and Full Classes	13.2	7.6	9.8
Open School and Full Classes but Teacher Teaches Previous Lesson	0.0	3.8	2.3

The government's policy of providing textbooks to students in government and registered non-government schools necessitates that teachers document textbook requirements, collect old textbooks from former grade three through five students, and gather and distribute new textbooks.[25] Textbook management takes teachers' time away from

[25] Government policy mandates that grades one and two students receive new textbooks and grades three through five receive 50 percent new textbooks and 50 percent recycled or old textbooks every year.

instructional duties, particularly in January, and the arrival and availability of textbooks in the school influences the running of classes.

Textbooks are the major teaching tool in Bangladesh, and are relied upon by many teachers, both as an instructional aid and as a crutch to compensate for their lack of mastery of the material and lack of preparation. (The PSPMP study found that two-thirds of government school teachers attend class without any lesson preparation.) Although one UPEO conceded that teachers could teach without books, he noted that they become increasingly reluctant to do so in the upper grades as the content becomes more complicated. Consequently, since "teachers feel they can't teach, classes will start later and only in earnest when the books arrive."

Some other teachers offer a slightly different perspective of the problem. Although they acknowledge that schools may not open and classes may not be conducted because the books have not arrived, some teachers claim that they are at school ready to teach, but students are unwilling to attend classes without textbooks. Parents said that student attendance could improve with the delivery of timely and free textbooks..[26]

Textbook distribution is erratic and often late, although education authorities and teachers believed that it was better in 2003.[27] The schools visited presented a wide variation in the receipt of textbooks, but in all cases, a workable number of books were not available until late January or early February and sometimes even March. Classes, even in the best school visited, did not start until February 2003. At that point, although there were not enough books for each student, teachers said that sufficient books were available, particularly in the upper classes where old books were re-used or children were asked to share books, to allow them to start classes.

[26] Several parents reported that students were required to pay fees for free textbooks. This is consistent with the finding of several other studies, such as *Bangladesh: Improving Governance for Reducing Poverty*, World Bank, 2002 and 2002 World Bank *Bangladesh Urban Service Delivery: A Scorecard*.

[27] The Education Watch 2001 report (2002) found that in 1998, about 33 percent of the students received books in January, 75 percent in February, and about 4 percent never received them. It also reports that fees were collected.

By the (Text) Book

School 1 (urban school): Parents express anger over textbooks that arrive four months late in April. The SMC chairman acknowledges the problem but says he "can't take on the government" and suggests his only option is to write a letter to the authorities. He did not do so.

School 3 (rural, one-room school): By March, about 80 percent of grade one to two books had arrived and 40 percent of Grade 3-5 students had books. The lack of books was exacerbated by the lack of chalkboards, which the head-master had lent to the local madrasah where he sits on the management committee.

School 4 (rural, main route school): Most of the books had arrived by the end of January. Classes "promptly" started at the beginning of February.

School 5 (urban, close to UPE Office): The first installment of books arrived at the end of December and the rest by the end of January. Classes started "in full" at the end of January.

The end of the school year is also characterized by very little—if any—instructional contact time. In 2003, the final two months were complicated by Ramadan and the Eid holiday, which closed the schools for at least 18 days starting in mid-November. Nonetheless, even without these holidays, the month of December in Bangladesh's government primary schools seems to be largely teaching-learning free, as end-of-year exams are scheduled. In 2003, exams were scheduled from December 6th to 21st, thereby precluding instruction. As soon as students sit for their exams, they are dismissed for the year and teachers concentrate on marking and recording their scores. Teachers may also leave "unofficially" once they have completed these duties, although a few may return on December 28-29 to proctor the grade five scholarship exam.

In conclusion, at least two months or 45 days (nearly 20 percent) of potential instructional contact time is allocated to primarily administrative purposes.

Contingency Days: The school calendar provides for three contingency days. These days can be used at the discretion of the UPEO to close schools for unforeseen but meritorious events, such as the funeral of an important local personage (an MP or school founder), a fair or festival affecting the entire upazila, or the days following Eid. Although the two districts had not "used" these days yet, the educational authorities presented it as a foregone conclusion that at least three extra Eid-related holidays would be granted. In short, contingency days are not only viewed as allowances for the unanticipated event, but more significantly as "floating holidays" to be used by the end of the school year.

At the school, the head-teachers say they can close the school for up to three "contingency" days, with the prior approval of the UPEO. The head-teacher in an urban school explained that the school had already used two contingency days, one for holding the annual grade five picnic at the local agricultural facility. Even though it was open only to grade five students and not all teachers were required to attend, the entire school was closed that day. The head-teacher stated that he intended to apply for the third contingency day, so that the school and its staff could "enjoy full leave."

It is important to note that these school-based "contingency" days do not appear to be drawn against the three-day "contingency budget" specified in the national school calendar. They are simply added to the holiday schedule, totaling up to 78 official and quasi-official days and reducing school days to 235 for the year. Moreover, these days are not applied to the annual "disasters" that befall many communities.

Disasters: School days lost to "disasters" are a common occurrence in Bangladesh, and were a "fact of life" in Jamalpur District. Its low-lying "charland" areas—with communities built on sandbars and the terrain intersected by a network of rivers and streams—are particularly vulnerable to flooding. Inevitably, every school year in the flood-prone communities is disrupted during the three-month monsoon season (July-August), although for varying amounts of time. In 1988, at least 25 percent of the schools were closed for six months; in 1998, more than 25 percent were closed for three months; in 2002, they were closed for about one month; and in 2003, they were "officially" closed for about two weeks. The DPE estimates that, on average, schools are closed in flood-prone communities about one month every year, although in some cases the schools are completely destroyed and must be rebuilt. This entails a lengthy bureaucratic process, taking up to a year or more, as various authorities are applied to for approval of budget and plans to rebuild the school. Generally, a temporary school is not opened in the interim, so in some communities, more than a year of schooling has been sacrificed.

The days lost to disaster are not factored into the official school calendar, no provisions are made for covering "contingency" days, and no strategies are in place to mitigate its impact on students' schooling. The educational authorities do not set up temporary "learning posts" or provide for the option of home study. Students who are stranded at home help their families by minding livestock or "roam aimlessly." Students whose families find refuge in communities where the schools are still operating are not permitted to enroll temporarily until they can return to their homes because the unaffected schools "do not have the capacity to accept them and [acceptance] would hamper administration of the stipend program."

Teachers—who are liberated from their duties at the flooded school—receive a paid holiday, as many of them live outside the community in towns unaffected by the rising waters. If they were re-assigned on a temporary basis to other schools, the DPE said he would face "technical problems," explaining that these teachers would not accept returning to their old schools, which are less attractive and entail longer commutes, after the waters have receded. They would either defy his authority or use their influence with the MP to see that they never returned to their "charland" school post. Similar difficulties would also present themselves if teachers were asked to work longer hours in an extended school day to recoup some of the lost contact time after the flooded school had re-opened; the teachers would appeal to the teachers' union and MPs for either relief or greater pay.

Consequently, the de facto "make-up" strategy for lost school time practiced at schools is that when classes restart, "the teachers resume the curriculum, try to go faster, but in the

end they probably won't complete it." The burden is placed on the individual student and his family. In one community, a few parents hired an unemployed, unsuccessful SSC candidate (grade eight) to tutor their children, but did not share his services with other students whose families were too poor to pay.

Furthermore, based on discussions with three schools in "charland" areas, it appears that the DPEO has underestimated the number of days the schools are closed, even if the disaster is relatively mild. As noted earlier, the "effective" days a school is open not only depends on teacher presence and on the condition of the school, but on the presence of the students. Students are likely to have fewer options for reaching school than teachers because of poverty and the lack of physical maturity to navigate flooded areas. A mother stated that, even if it were an option, it was too expensive to send the student to school in town by boat. The SMC at one school tried to build a bamboo bridge over flooded waterways but was unsuccessful in mustering community support. However, as soon as flood waters begin to recede, students risk potential danger in attempting to attend school by wading through streams with their books over their head or by building rafts to float the younger children across.

A Difference of Opinion

There is considerable disparity between the estimated numbers of days three "charland" schools were closed during the flood season in 2003.

	The head-teacher says…	*The community says…*
School 6:	15 days	28 days
School 7:	5 days	28 days
School 8:	10 days	20 days

Teachers at the "charland" schools appeared to show less initiative than the students as they felt the option of taking a boat was too expensive for them (it could be arranged for 100 Taka/month); the flooded waters were too dangerous to wade through, even if they lived in the community; and the reduced student attendance did not merit their effort. The discrepancy between the number of days the school was closed as reported by the educational authorities and indicated by the head-teachers, on one hand, and those reported by the community, on the other hand, ranges from 100 percent to 600 percent, with community estimates always higher. In fact, it appears that in some cases the hardship of a natural disaster is taken as an opportunity by teaching personnel to avoid their work.

Teacher Training and Other Official Duties: Other "institutional" factors also impinge on the number of days a school operates. Teacher training and non-instructional duties (both related and non-related to the school) generally result in teacher absence, and in

some instances, cause the school to close for the day or days. This generally occurs in schools that have a small number of teachers (four or less) and schools that are at some distance from the upazila headquarters.

Table IV.A.2 shows that the teachers interviewed estimated they were absent from school, on average, for more than four days in a typical month because they were dealing with non-teaching duties (stipends, book collection, and salary collection) and/or were in training. Teachers in rural schools were absent nearly twice as many days, about one week per month. These schools are more vulnerable to such demands because of a smaller number of teachers and the travel time to participate in activities; discussions with head-teachers of rural schools revealed that they are more likely to close rather than operate with fewer teachers. Training and other tasks (generally identified as non-school related official duties) account for most of the days absent.

Table IV.A.2: Average Days Per Month Teachers Estimate Absence Due to Official Duties

No. of days	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
School Duties	0.14	0	0.15	0.08	0.01	0	0.12	0.09	0.13
Training	1.32	1.00	1.35	2.75	2.80	2.50	1.98	2.64	1.50
Other	1.61	1.00	1.65	2.83	2.90	2.50	2.17	2.73	1.77
TOTAL	3.07	2.00	3.15	5.66	5.71	5.00	4.27	5.46	3.27

(N=26)

Because pre-service teacher training is not required for the hiring of a primary school teacher, the government has developed a system of in-service training. After a primary school teacher has been on the job for two or three years, he or she can apply for extended leave to participate in the 10-month Certificate-of-Education at the Primary Teacher Training Institute. On-the-job training comprises six days of training from the district education officers through "sub-cluster" training.[28] Table IV.A.3 shows that nearly 58 percent of teachers participated in some form of training in 2002 and on average missed six days during the year.

Table IV.A.3: Incidence of Training and Average Full or Partial Days Missed in 2002

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of Teachers Receiving Training	64.30	100	61.50	50	60	00	57.70	63.60	61.50
Average Number of Days Missed Due to: N=15									
In-service Workshops	4.00	1.00	4.38	1	1	0	2.8	1.00	4.40
Certificate Training	0	0	0	2	2	0	0.80	1.71	0
Refresher Training	0.67	0	0.75	0.83	0.83	0	0.73	0.71	0.75
Language Training	0.67	0	0.75	1.67	1.67	0	1.07	1.43	0.75
Other	0.11	0	0.13	1.17	1.17	0	0.53	1.00	0.13
TOTAL	5.44	1	6	6.7	6.70	0	5.93	5.86	6

(N=26)

[28] *Bangladesh Education Sector Review: Report No. 1 Overview of the Basic Education Sector*, BEPS, Creative Associates International, Inc.

In 2002, the two rural schools that had lost a teacher to training either managed with one less teacher or obtained a temporary teacher, an unusual occurrence. However, when minimally staffed schools experience teacher loss due to extended leave for training or other reasons, they become more vulnerable to closing. Head-teachers in three of the five rural schools visited indicated that teacher participation in training activities had required them to close the school. The bi-monthly sub-cluster training for teachers requires their presence at the Upazila Resource Center or some other central location one day every two months. In two schools, rather than stagger teacher attendance by leaving at least two teachers at the school to carry on with instructional duties, all teachers attended the meeting. One head-teacher explained that it was a requirement for all teachers to attend and he would get in trouble if he and his teachers were not present. Another implied that it was not worth it to leave just one teacher at the school, as he could not manage the students on his own and would end by closing the school anyway.

Another example of the effect of training on the school calendar was the IDEAL Project training that was taking place in Jamalpur District. Although the official policy governing training is that schools stagger teacher participation and that substitute teachers be provided, this does not always appear to be the case. Reportedly, private arrangements are made by teachers with the local education officers to suit their convenience. For example, in one understaffed rural school, the head-teacher was a master trainer at the URC, and his three-teacher school (including himself, one functioning teacher and one teacher on extended leave for "mental problems") was often closed when both he—as a trainer—and his sole teacher—as a trainee—were in training. In all, this head-teacher estimated that he missed about 45 days of school because of his participation in training, although he claimed the school was open during his absence. Parents disagreed, saying that either the single teacher left in charge did not appear at the school or decided not to open it after he had completed his pre-school day coaching class for grade five students. The irony that the head-teacher was undermining the education of the students at his own school, while he was instructing others on how to be a good teacher, appeared not to occur to the head-teacher. (He had not applied for a temporary or substitute teacher to fill the deficit as one other school had done.)

Official duties—not always directly related to the school—also affect whether a school opens or not. Table IV.A.4 shows that over 90 percent of the teachers interviewed (excluding head-teachers) undertook some official duties *while school was in session during the school day*, averaging nearly three days during the year. The majority of teachers participated in activities that were not of an instructional nature, but did in some way benefit students and other children, through immunization campaigns or the Meena rallies (promoting girls' education). All the schools reported closing for the day of the Meena rallies held in town, although few students (and no rural students) attended, so the educational value was reduced. Other duties undertaken by teachers were of a civic nature, such as voter registration and manning election polling stations. Again, several of the rural schools were reportedly closed for these activities.

Table IV.A.4: Non-school-related Duties by Teachers During the School Day in 2002

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of Teachers Undertaking Non-School Duties Such As: N=24	92.80	100	92.30	91.7	90	100	92.30	90.90	93.30
Voter Registration	7.70	0	8.50	0	0	0	4.20	0	7.14
Elections	7.70	0	8.50	0	0	0	4.20	0	7.14
FFE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stipend (e.g. PESP)	7.70	0	8.50	0	0	0	4.20	0	7.14
Vaccination	61.50	100	58.30	81.80	88.90	50	70.80	90	57.10
Meena Rally	38.50	0	41.70	18.20	22.20	0	29.20	20	35.70
Iodine Campaign	15.40	0	16.70	9.10	11.10	0	12.50	10.00	14.30
Vitamin Campaign	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Average Days/Teacher	2.78	6	2.50	2.45	1.88	3	2.64	2.61	2.57

(N=26)

3. *Conclusions about the School Calendar and Suggestions*

From the above discussion, it is clear that schools in the two districts visited will not operate as teaching-learning institutions for the full 238 days as implied by the official school calendar.

Schools are closed and the number of school days is reduced by:

- The chaotic and erratic opening and closing months of the academic year.
- The significant number of "unofficial" holidays that augment the official 75 scheduled.
- The inevitable, but unplanned for, disasters that occur annually in many communities.
- The demands of teacher training programs and other official activities on under-staffed schools, particularly those in rural areas.
- The opportunistic strategy on the part of some schools' teaching staff to close the school when such closures could be feasibly avoided or prevented.

While none of these situations are unknown by the educational authorities, no steps have been taken to deal with them. No make-up policies or strategies are in place to recoup school days lost to annual flooding or to compensate for school closings due to the "institutionalized" demands made on teaching staff.

Teaching resources may be squandered for up to five months of the year in terms of school days because: teachers are not re-assigned to schools or given professional duties during the one to three month period when many schools are closed for disasters; planning for the new school year (at least at the school level) does not take place during the "teaching-light" month of December, but consumes most, if not all, of January; participation in training and official activities is allowed to go "unstaggered" and empty

rural schools of teaching staff; and no substitute or temporary teachers are available to assist under-staffed schools to remain open.[29]

Moreover, perhaps "protected" by distance and inaccessibility, some rural schools seem to take exceptional liberty in determining whether they will open or not. They were often reported closed for more days than the situation warranted. There appears to be little fear of enforcement or penalty. However, schools are not all closed by stealth or subterfuge. The educational authorities themselves approved school applications for contingency days, over those allocated in the school calendar. While one UPEO believed that the number of holidays was excessive and detrimental to student learning, teachers—not surprisingly—expressed satisfaction with the school calendar and did not wish to see it altered. The prevailing attitude appears to be that there is little harm in squeezing as many holidays and off-days from the school year as possible, and teachers complain that they are unable to take their full complement of earned leave. (See Section C for discussion.)

How Many Days of the Year Do Primary Government Schools Operate? While it is impossible to calculate with exactitude the number of days a school operates, a range can be estimated based on the two districts visited. (See Table IV.A.5.) Of course, caution must be exercised in interpreting the estimates. First, the location, the size of the teaching staff, and the attitudes of the head-teacher and teacher will influence the number of days. Second, schools within the same districts, as well as other districts, will be subject to different natural conditions (either more or less susceptible to flooding or other natural disasters) and varying levels of severity from year to year. Finally, these figures may be under-estimated as it is unlikely that all the days a school was closed were reported in interviews with head-teachers and community members. (See Table IV.A.5.)

Table IV.A.5: Best and Worst Case Estimates of Actual Number of School Days in 2003

Days Closed Due To:	**Best Case Scenario**	**Worst Case Scenario**
	Non-disaster Prone Urban School	Disaster-prone Rural School
Beginning of Year	24 *	58 *
End of Year	17 *	17 *
School Contingency	3	3
Disaster	0	28
Training (cluster)	0	6
Other Training	0	10
Meena Day	1	1
Health Campaigns	0	2
Election	0	3
Other	0	2
Total Days Lost	45	130
Total School Days	186	101
Percent of Total Days Lost	19-percent	55 percent

* Holidays in 2003 excluded.

[29] In only one case was a temporary teacher assigned to a school. This was a school where the head-teacher had been particularly insistent with the UPEO that the number of students merited an additional teacher.

Nonetheless, the encroachments on the school calendar are substantial. The best case school is likely to routinely lose 45 days or 19 percent of its scheduled school days merely to institutional demands, while the worst case school, beset by flooding, is likely to lose 130 days or 55 percent of the scheduled days.

Some Suggestions About the School Calendar:

- Reduce the number of holidays.
- Develop local strategies to deal with the recommencement of schooling during periods of disaster.
    - Set up temporary learning posts staffed with teachers from flooded schools.
    - Provide distance education (e.g. radio) and self-guided instructional materials for students to use at posts and at home.
    - Provide boat transport for teachers and students to temporary posts or schools.
    - Assign teachers from closed schools to other schools or giving them other duties.
    - Use scheduled vacation to compensate for school days lost.
    - Use "float" vacation days to suit local conditions (e.g. floods and other disasters, monsoon period, and harvest) in order to reduce days lost.
- Schedule preparation for the up-coming school year in December (last month of the school year).
    - Require all teachers to be present during December (eliminate breaks for teachers).
    - Schedule no classes after exams start (to confront pretense that classes are in session).
    - Consolidate exam days (do not spread over the month with some students still in class).
- Guarantee delivery of a partial, but workable, percentage of textbooks to all schools by the end of December (providing for the remainder to be delivered later).
- Provide all teachers with teaching strategies and abridged instructional guides by the end of December for the first months of the academic year to alleviate lack of textbooks.
- Regularize and limit the use of contingency days—two for UPEO and one for school for a total of three only.
- Do not close the school for local events or ceremonies, i.e. allow one teacher representative per school.
- Schedule cluster training for off-days or Thursdays (early closing day).
- Schedule other teacher training during times when schools will be closed in local areas (vacations, expected disasters).
- Enforce staggered teacher participation in training policy, such that no more than one or two teachers per school are in training at a time.
- Establish a substitute teacher corps, using retirees or secondary school graduates.

B. The School-day and Class-time Use

Study Findings:

- Three of eight schools did not start on time.
- Urban schools are more likely than rural schools to conform to the official school day schedule, primarily because of the proximity of the school to the teachers' residence and the Upazila Primary Education Office.
- Rural schools seldom observe the prescribed official school schedule, delaying opening to allow for non-resident teacher travel time and Koranic school attendance by students.
- The instructional time at rural schools is further reduced by the "effective" hours of operation, which are constrained by late arrival and early departure of non-resident teachers.
- Teachers believe that the concentrated blocks of time allocated for instruction are too long for both the children and the teachers.
- Teachers manipulate school resources—staff, classrooms, materials—to lighten their work burden and shorten the work day
- Teaching or "instruction" occupied on average 63 percent of the class time in the classes observed
- The estimated contact hours for double-shift schools fall far short of the contact hours estimated for 2003, with contact hours for grades one and two at best totaling 419 (out of 654 hours) and contact hours for grades three to five at best totaling 729 (out of 932 hours).

While the preceding section examined the number of days a school operates and the policies and factors that affect a school's operation, this section examines the organization of the school day and the use of class time. The hours of operation of the school, its conformance to them, and the amount of time it allocates to instruction are important determinants of the potential amount of instructional time that students receive. However, these are not the sole factors. Conditions of the school controlled by the educational authorities—such as the number of teachers and the number of classrooms—have an effect on how the school day is organized by determining whether the school is a single- or double-shift school. Also how the school's teachers decide to work within these parameters, organize their classes, and manage their time also influences the instructional time (and its quality). School-based practices can alter the student-teacher ratio and the class-teacher ratio, resulting in class sizes that either facilitate or hinder classroom management. The way the school day is organized and the amount of instructional time provided might also be affected by external factors, such as the existence of special non-academic programs for students that require teacher time.

Specifically, this section will outline the official policies that set the parameters for the school day and report the study's findings about school hours of operation. In addition, it will explore some of the other factors that affect how school and class time is used: length of the school day, teaching load management, time dedicated to teaching and teacher use of class time, and student time on task, and covering the curriculum.

1. *Policies Structuring the School Day and Class Time*

Government schools in Bangladesh operate on a six-day school week (Saturday through Thursday), and are closed on Friday. The schools operate on both a single-shift and double-shift format, the latter introduced throughout the 1990's in order to accommodate the growing numbers of students as Bangladesh moved aggressively to achieve its "education for all" goals. Today, about 90 percent of the government primary schools are double-shift schools, and the relatively few single-shift schools are generally located in urban areas. The government has established a well-defined class timetable and academic program that all government schools are supposed to observe. (See boxes IV.B.2 and IV.B.3.)

In double-shift schools, the first shift—running from 9:30 am to 12:00 noon—is generally dedicated to classes for pre-primary, one and grade two students, and comprises four 30-minute class periods. Following a 15-minute interval for an "assembly," the second shift begins at 12:15 pm for grades three, four, and five and continues until 4:15 pm when the school day concludes. The program for the upper primary grades consists of six 35-minute class periods, punctuated by a 30-minute break for lunch or tiffin scheduled between 2:00 to 2:30 pm. The teachers usually work both shifts, shifting between grade levels and subjects. In other words, one teacher is not assigned one grade or set of students per shift, nor does the teacher necessarily teach the same subject at each grade level.

Single-shift schools operate from 9:30 am to 4:15 pm. Following a 20-minute assembly to open the school day, classes continue until 1:15 pm, when the lower grade students (pre-primary and grades one and two) are dismissed, and the upper grade students (grades three through five) and teachers are allowed a 30-minute break for lunch. Classes for grades three through five students resume at 1:45 pm and conclude at 4:15 pm, except on Thursday when they are also dismissed at 1:15 pm. As in double-shift schools, teachers move between grade levels and subjects.

Table IV.B.1 School Day Schedule[30]

	Saturday-Wednesday	Thursday	Contact Hours/Day	Contact Hours/Week	Contact Hours/Year*
Single-shift School					
Grades 1-2	9:30am – 1:15pm	9:30am – 1:15pm	3h 45m	22h 30m	893 hours
Grades 3-5	9:30am – 4:15pm	9:30am – 2:10pm	6h 45m (4h 40 on Thursday)	38h 25m	1527 hours
Double-shift School					
Grades 1-2	9:30am – 12:15pm	9:30am -12:15pm		2h 45m	16h 30m hours
Grades 3-5	12:00pm - 4:15pm	12:00pm – 2:30pm	4h 15m (2h 30m on Thursday)	23h 30m	932 hours

Source: DPE/MOPME/GOB
*Estimate based on multiplying weekly hours by 39.66 (238 day/ six days=weeks)

The disparity between the double-shift school and the single-shift school in contact (i.e. in school) hours provided per week is a wide one. Lower grade students in double-shift schools are expected to spend approximately 16 hours, 30 minutes at school per week compared with the 22 hours, 30 minutes per week expected of their peers in single-shift schools. Similarly, upper grade students in double-shift schools are expected to spend 23 hours, 30 minutes per week, while their single-shift counterparts are expected to spend 38 hours, 25 minutes. On average, grades one and two students in single-shift schools are provided 37 percent more contact time than students in double shifts. The gap widens in the upper grades: grades three through five students in single-shift schools are provided 63 percent more contact time than those in double-shift schools. Moreover, it appears that the number of contact hours prescribed per week by the Government (18 hours for grades one and two, and 26 hours for grades three through five, as indicated in Table IV.B.4) cannot be achieved in the double-shift schools given their official operating hours. Over the course of a year, a significant deficit of contact time accrues for double-shift students.

Each school is expected to follow the weekly academic program geared to the official primary school curriculum established by the Government. The primary school curriculum consists of five core academic subjects: Bangla, English, Mathematics, Social Science/Civics, and General Science. The prescribed amount of time spent on these subjects varies according to grade level, although the greatest number of instructional hours is devoted to Bangla, Maths, English and—for the upper grades—science (Table IV.B.4). Other subjects covered are: religious studies, physical education, general health education, art, and handwriting. Cultural Studies—which include music, dance, and special programs—are generally scheduled for upper grade students toward the end of the school day.

Guidance is also provided to teachers on how to organize and manage individual class sessions. For example, the teacher should open a Bangla lesson with a "rapport building and concentration" session (e.g. a recitation, a story, or song), followed by an illustrative

[30] Note that there are some minor differences in the time provided in DPE documents detailing class routines and the official time schedule published by the GOB. Both were consulted in putting together the School Day Schedule.

presentation (e.g. visual picture) of what the students should do. The main presentation should be a lecture by the teacher, who should then ask students to read aloud and silently. The period should conclude with short review questions asked by the teacher, and students should be assigned homework.

Table IV.B.2: Double-shift School Weekly Class Schedule and Academic Program

	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
First Shift (30-minute classes for pre-primary, grade one and grade two)							
1st Period 9.30-10.00	Bangla	Bangla	Bangla	Bangla	Bangla	Bangla	Closed
2nd Period 10.00-10.30	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Closed
3rd Period 11.00-11.30	Social Science	Social Science	Social Science	Social Science	Hand Writing	Rhyme and Story	Closed
4th Period 11.30-12 noon	Religious Studies	Religious Studies	Fine Arts	Fine Arts	Sports/Physi-cal Exercise	Practical Health Education	Closed
School Assembly 12.00-12.15*	National Anthem	National Anthem	National Anthem	National Anthem	National Anthem	National Anthem	Closed
Second Shift (35-minute classes for grade three, grade four, and grade five)							
1st Period 12.15-12.50	Bangla	Bangla	Bangla	Bangla	Bangla	Bangla	Closed
2nd Period 12.50-1.25	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Closed
3rd Period 1.25-2.00	English	English	English	English	English	English	Closed
Break 2.00-2.30	Tiffin	Tiffin	Tiffin	Tiffin	Tiffin	Tiffin	Closed
4th Period 2.30-3.05	Social Science	Social Science	Social Science	General Science	General Science	Early Closing	Closed
5Th Period 3.05-3.40	Religious Studies	Religious Studies	Story/ Rhyme	Essay	Essay	Early Closing	Closed
6th Period 3.40-4.15	Writing	Fine Arts	Fine Arts	Physical Exercise	Health Education	Early Closing	Closed

Source: DPE/MOPME/GOB *Both shifts attend assembly

Table IV.B.3: Single-shift School Weekly Class Schedule and Academic Program

		Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Assembly 9.30-9.50 (20 min.)	All Grades	National Anthem	National Anthem	National Anthem	National Anthem	National Anthem	National Anthem	Closed
1st Period 9.50-10.45 (55 min.) Grade	1 2 3 4 5	Bengali Bengali English Bengali Math	Bengali Bengali English Bengali Math	Bengali Bengali English Bengali Math	Bengali Bengali English Bengali Math	Bengali Bengali English Bengali Math	Bengali Bengali English Bengali Math (9.50-10.35)	Closed
2nd Period 10.45-11.35 (50 min.)	1 2 3 4 5	Math Math Math English Bengali	Math Math Math English Bengali	Math Math Math English Bengali	Math Math Math English Bengali	Math Math Math English Bengali	Math Math Math English Bengali (10.35-11.15)	Closed
3rd Period 11.35-12.25 (50 min.)	1 2 3 4 5	English English Bengali Math English	English English Bengali Math English	English English Bengali Math English	English Social Sci. Bengali Math English	Social Sci. Social Sci. Bengali Math English	English English Bengali Math English (11.15-11.55)	Closed
4th Period 12.25-1.15 (50 min.)	1 2 3 4 5	Religion Religion Social Sci. Social Sci. Social Sci.	Religion Religion Social Sci. Social Sci. Social Sci.	Art Art Social Sci. Social Sci. Social Sci.	Art Art General Sci. General Sci. General Sci.	Phys. Ed. Phys. Ed. General Sci. General Sci. General Sci.	Hand Writing Hand Writing General Sci. General Sci. General Sci. (11.55-12.30)	Closed
Dismissed		Grades 1&2	Grades 1&2	Grades 1&2	Grades 1&2	Grades 1&2	All Grades	Closed
Break 1.15-1.45	Grades 3-5	Tiffin	Tiffin	Tiffin	Tiffin	Tiffin	Tiffin	Closed
5th Period 1.45-2.25 (40 min.)	3 4 5	General Sci. General Sci. General Sci.	General Sci. General Sci. General Sci.	General Sci. General Sci. General Sci.	Social Science Social Science Social Science	Social Sci. Social Sci. Social Sci.	Social Sci. Social Sci. Social Sci (1.00-1.35)	Closed

6th Period 2.25-3.05 (40 min.)	3 4 5	Handwriting Bgla. Dictation Letter Writing	Bgla. Dictation Bgla. Dictation Bgla. Dictation	Art Art Art	Engl. Dictation Engl. Dictation Engl. Dictation	Music Music Music	Hand Writing Hand Writing Hand Writing (1.35-2.10)	Closed
7th Period 3.05-3.40 (35 min.)	3 4 5	Bgla. Dictation Bgla. Dictation Bgla. Dictation Engl. Dictation Bgla. Hand Writing English Essay writing	Handwriting Bgla. Essay Engl. Sentence Making	Letter Writing Letter Writing Engl. Sentence	Bgla. Sentence Making Engl. Essay Writing	Recitation Story Telling Debate	No Class (Adm. Tasks, Staff Meeting) (2.10-2.30)	Closed
8th Period 3.40-4.15 (35 min.)	3 4 5	Religion Religion Religion	Religion Religion Religion	Religion Religion Religion	Art Art Art	Testing (1subj) Testing (1subj) Testing (1subj)	Early Closing (2.30)	Closed

Table IV.B.4: Prescribed Class Routine for Government Primary Schools

Class	Subjects	1985-1998		1999 and Onward		Number of Hours Taught Per Week		Total Hours Taught Per Week	
		Minutes Taught Each Period	Number of Period Each Week	Minutes Taught Each Period	Number of Period Each Week	1985-1998	1999 to present	1985-1998	1999 to Present
Class 1 and 2	Bangla[31]	30	10	90	6	5	9	12	18
	Mathe-matics	30	6	60	6	3	6		
	English	--	--	30	6	--	3		
	Religion	30	2	--	--	1	--		
	Civics	30	4	--	--	2	--		
	Physical Training	30	2	--	--	1	--		
Class 3, 4, and 5	Bangla[32]	35	11	40	7	6.42	4.67	19.25	26
	Mathe-matics	35	6	40	6	3.5	4		
	English	35	6	40	6	3.5	4		
	Civics	35	3	40	4	1.75	2.67		
	Science	35	3	40	6	1.75	4		
	Religion	35	2	40	4	1.17	2.67		
	Extra English/ Religion	--	--	40	6	--	4		
	Physical Training	35	2	--	--	1.17	--		

2. *The Findings: Organization of the School Day, Class Time, and Time Use*

School Hours of Operation

The eight schools visited conformed—in principle—to the official weekly schedule. However, several deviated significantly from the official 9:30 am to 4:15 pm timetable set by the government, either by establishing their own "official" hours of operation or by the hours they actually operated in practice, with the result that in at least three schools the children did not receive the prescribed amount of instruction (issues of quality aside).

[31] Bangla also includes handwriting, reciting and drawing.
[32] Bangla also includes reciting, essay writing, handwriting, and drawing.

Starting Time: Although the official starting time for both single- and double-shift schools is 9:30 am, not all schools observe this schedule either *officially* or *effectively*. Of the eight schools visited, no more than three schools *officially* started at the government-mandated time of 9:30 am, as corroborated by parents and students. All of these schools are located in urban areas, their teachers live nearby (within one to two km.), and they are located relatively close to the Upazila Primary Education Office. In fact, one school indicated that it required its teachers to arrive by 9:15 am, in order to start promptly by 9:30 am, precisely because it was on the regular route used by the UPEO. At another urban school, the SMC chairman—who donated the land to establish the original school and who has a granddaughter in grade five—regularly visited the school (15 of 25 days) to monitor its operations. Each of these three urban schools had started (i.e. assembled children into classes with teachers) on time on the day of the visit, despite some teacher absences and tardiness.

The situation is notably different in rural schools. Contrary to statements made by various education authorities at the central, district and upazila levels that all schools—single and double shift alike—are required to begin at 9:30 am; it appears that some head-teachers in actuality may alter the official starting time. Head-masters in four (of five) rural schools indicated a later official opening time for the school, generally starting 30 minutes later at 10:00 am.[33] This later starting time primarily is required to allow teachers—generally living (in town) at some distance from the school—adequate travel time. However, in two rural communities, Koranic schooling was mentioned as a factor for the 10:00 am starting time. In each instance, 30 to 40 percent of the younger children attended Koranic school[34] for one or two hours between 6:00 am to 8.30 am and then returned home to eat breakfast, to help with essential household tasks (i.e. fetching water, herding cows), and to bathe, dress and prepare for school. In another rural school, a "coaching" class for promising grade five scholarship candidates was conducted privately (i.e. for a fee) by a locally-based assistant teacher from 9:00 am to 10:00 am, precluding an earlier starting time as he was only one of two teachers at the school (the other being the head-master who consistently arrived late or was absent).

In some cases, the community's knowledge of the *official* school starting time is confounded by the *effective* starting time, meaning the time that the school starts in actual practice. Members of one rural community engaged in a loud, angry debate about whether the school officially started at 10:00 am or 10:30 am, but easily reached consensus that teachers did not arrive until much later. (On the day the school was visited, the first teacher to arrive did not show up until noon, although students were assembled in the one-room school at 10:45 am). At another remote school—located in a flood-prone "charland" area that was reachable by boat from town—parents and SMC

[33] The teachers in these same schools stated for the formal survey that the school started at 9:30, even though they were aware that the research team had observed them arrive at 10:00 am.

[34] In this community, parents said that older children, in the upper primary grades were less likely to attend Koranic school. The Koranic schools are generally held at the mosque, not the madrasah. There is no academic content or skills transferred, as defined by the official government primary curriculum. Parents and teachers say that the children learn about their religion and the Koran through memorization and recitation.

members stated that the "official" starting time was between 11 am and noon (contrary to the head-master assertion of 10:00 am), and the students indicated that school was conducted from 12:00 noon to 2:00 pm. In any event, the *effective* starting time of the school is established by the arrival of one or more teachers, who undertake to organize the children into classrooms. However, a reasonable complement of teachers is required for the school to function. For example, at the "charland" school, parents reported that the previous day the sole teacher (a local resident) who was present dismissed the students after 30 minutes. Only two of the five rural schools started "on time" on the day of the school visit.

Class Timetable: As noted above, government primary schools are supposed to follow a precise timetable that specifies both the class schedule and academic program. The three urban schools visited conformed to this schedule, signaling the change of periods with a gong or bell. While the class changes in the smaller rural schools were less formally heralded with teachers keeping time by wristwatch, two of the schools appeared to follow an established timetable, with adjustments to accommodate the later starting time.[35] School assemblies were held, shift changes were made, and breaks were taken punctually. (The following of an academic program is another issue, discussed below.) However, in three of the rural schools, the general confusion and disorder caused by the tardiness of the head-teacher and absences of teachers made it impossible to discern whether and to what extent a timetable was being followed. The school day at these essentially dysfunctional schools in no way resembled the prescribed timetable, and it is probable that no set schedule exists, but rather conforming to teacher attendance and proclivity. For example, parents and students at one school reported that one older teacher regularly left class to nap under a tree in the schoolyard.

Closing Time: Official school closing time is also subject to minor variations, with operations "officially" ceasing between 4:00 pm and 4:30 pm. The three urban schools visited concluded classes at 4:15 pm. In fact, all the teachers interviewed indicated that their "quitting time" coincided with the end of the school day. A well-run rural school on a paved road finished class at 4:00 pm, but reportedly held a daily staff meeting from 4:00 pm to 4:15 pm. However, the head-masters at three of the rural schools admitted that their schools closed early as a matter of practice—anywhere from 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm—because they and the other teachers, who did not live in the community, needed the extra travel time in order to arrive home at a "reasonable" hour. In fact, the head-master of the "charland" school—having arrived at noon—blandly stated that if he did not close the school early he "would not arrive home before 10:00 p.m." because of transport availability.[36]

While the teachers largely determined the "effective" school closing time, students at all schools decided when their personal school day was completed and how much instruction

[35] Block teaching—one teacher teaching several different subjects to one class or grade of students—was a frequent practice in most rural schools, and at times class period changes were difficult to discern.

[36] Parents indicated that boats were generally available and could be arranged according to the school schedule.

they would receive (or, in some cases, tolerate). A single-shift urban school serving poor families reported that several of its grades three, four, and five students left school during the mid-day break, because they were hungry and the school did not provide "tiffin." Paradoxically, another urban school that was benefiting from the USDA-Land O' Lakes school snack program lost upper grade students after the distribution of milk and biscuit snacks. "Some students throw their books out the window and climb out after them, after the teacher gives them their tiffin," reported classmates. Reportedly, some schools have solved this problem by distributing the "snack" at the end of the school day, which arguably undermines the effectiveness of increasing a hungry child's ability to concentrate and learn in the classroom environment. Teachers, however, did not express particular concern that grades three, four, and five students—in single-shift schools—were leaving at break, because they believed the post-tiffin afternoon courses to be less important than the morning ones, given that they focused mainly on culture, arts, physical education, and religious studies. (Early departure for students is discussed in further detail in a later section.) Teachers also disclosed that afternoon classes might be cancelled if "enough" students did not show up, apparently believing that a certain critical number was needed for their effort to be worthwhile. No make-up classes were scheduled to fill the deficit.

Length of the School Day

Almost all teachers interviewed (in the functional schools) indicated that the instructional hours were too long for students and teachers alike to use effectively, and that more breaks were needed. In both double- and single-shift schools, the lower grade students (generally age six to eight years) are expected to concentrate on learning tasks for 2.5 hours in double-shift schools and 3.5 hours in single-shift schools, with no play or recess breaks. One 30-minute tiffin break for both grades three through five students and teachers is scheduled per day for both double- and single-shift schools. There are no breaks included in the school day for grades one and two students. Not surprisingly, the initial five to ten minutes at the beginning of each class period, as teachers shift classrooms, are spent attempting to instill order among restless students, further encroaching on the prescribed instructional time.

Upper grade students fare somewhat better, as afternoon classes do not endure more than 2.5 hours at a stretch. However, the teachers in the two single-shift schools visited stated (both in urban areas) that the school day was too long for grades three through five students at six hours and 45 minutes, and that the single break was not sufficient for teachers and students alike. Teachers supervised children's play and tiffin during the break. The single shift was considered particularly onerous for students who may not have eaten breakfast and whose families could not provide them with tiffin. Teachers reported that many children left school at tiffin break and did not return because they became "ill with hunger."

Although both parents and teachers expressed the view that single-shift schools were preferable from an instructional standpoint in order to cover the curriculum (parents at one urban school complained that their children would "fritter their time away by playing" if they weren't in school), they suggested that tiffin should be provided. In fact,

teachers and parents at an urban school indicated that rather than spending money on the government stipend program (i.e. PESP), it would be better spent on breakfast and lunch.[37] Teachers also complained of hunger, and felt that they should also benefit from the feeding program. If a school lunch or snack could not be provided, then it was agreed that double-shift schools were more feasible, allowing students to return home for meals and not requiring the students' same amount of concentration. Of course, the provision of tiffin does not necessarily ensure student attendance for the entire school day, as evidenced by the flight of some students following snack distribution noted previously.

In addition, as noted earlier, the effectiveness of the post-tiffin classes, especially in single-shift schools, is also questionable, as teachers and students alike seem to think that the subjects their school has scheduled for the end of the day, contrary perhaps to the official academic program, are not terribly important. At one school, which appeared to have dispensed its afternoon classes that day, a teacher stated that these classes generally focused on "cultural" or extra-curricular subjects, such as dance. Another teacher volunteered that students could prepare for the primary leaving exam without these classes.

Paradoxically, while education officials, teachers and parents generally agreed that more time should be spent on instruction; reactions to extending the school day were generally negative. Teachers pointed out that scheduling an earlier school starting time was not feasible because of the travel time needed to get to school[38] and the domestic duties and childcare responsibilities of female teachers. In fact, some female teachers suggested that the school day start later at 10:00 am to allow them to complete their household tasks. Poor parents, particularly mothers, also pointed to the time it took to make children ready for school and to prepare breakfast. In particular, poor families in urban areas (rickshaw drivers, tea stall owners, day laborers) had to go to shops to procure food on credit that they would then pay off at the end of the day. Koranic schooling, while not conflicting with the primary school schedule by ending by 8:30 am, left only an hour for mothers to feed, dress and bathe their children. Finally, an AUPEO concluded fatalistically that "Bangladeshis are always late, so they need more time."

Setting a later closing time for schools was also considered not feasible. Teachers voiced concern about travel time, but a definite gender divide was apparent. Male teachers reportedly hurried home to deal with other income-generating activities, such as farming and small businesses. None admitted to private tutoring and no students claimed to receive private tutoring from them. Female teachers resumed domestic and childcare duties and expressed security concerns if traveling after dark. (A UPEO noted that these were the natural, undesirable consequences of the "feminization" of the primary school teaching force.) In fact, with respects to the recurring complaints about teacher compensation, female teachers suggested that it would be helpful if the Government

[37] It should be noted that this school was not participating in the stipend program.

[38] Travel time seemed primarily to be a concern of the male teachers interviewed because they predominated in the rural schools visited, and most lived in town or a fair distance from school. Among the female teachers present for interviews, all were teachers at urban schools and lived nearby.

provided them with an allowance to hire domestic help enabling them to extend the school day (and reduce absences and tardiness.) Educational authorities also suggested that providing a house construction allowance for teachers in rural areas would reduce the travel time, although not a single rural schoolteacher who lived in town proposed this as an option, generally indicating that they preferred to commute regardless of circumstances. To summarize, one head-teacher stated emphatically, "Teachers must survive. We have lives, too."

Teachers and parents also voiced objections to extending school hours out of concern for the students, stating that the children needed time for play, private tuition or study. Poor families in urban areas also needed their children to help them with their small businesses or to earn a few taka or food with small jobs, such as collecting jack-root leaves for fodder, helping at a tea stall, or folding betel nut leaves. Finally, in one very dysfunctional rural school, parents angrily indicated that they did not want the school day extended, and that instruction would be adequate "if the teachers would just show up."[39]

In general, most teachers and education officials suggested that the school day be re-organized within the existing school hours, with preference for 45-minute class periods instead of 30 minute ones. In actuality, it appears that schools and teachers have acted independently to organize their time at school and duties to address some of these concerns, as discussed in the following section.

School-day Time Management

Between the hours of school opening and closing, the way the school uses its resources—teachers, staff, classrooms, materials—can impact time allocation to instruction and its effectiveness. In all of the schools visited, resources and time use were generally organized to accommodate teacher needs and not to improve instruction or suit student requirements, beyond that required by the educational regulations and requirements. Teacher needs primarily included (i) lightening the teaching load, (ii) reducing the administrative load, (iii) providing in-school time for other tasks, and (iv) reducing or eliminating any before- or after-school duties. The sole student need catered to was the provision of coaching classes for promising scholarship candidates. In all instances, the prevailing objective seemed to be shortening the number of hours that a teacher worked and ensuring that work hours were confined to the school day.

[39] While the need for their labor is a major reason why children in rural areas do not enroll in school, those who were enrolled (and the subjects of this study) did not appear to have very demanding work duties or the opportunity to earn money. It is the urban children who have greater opportunities to earn money before or after school.

Table IV.B.5: Average Time Teachers Report Spending On Duties Per School Day

No. of Minutes	**Urban**			**Rural**			**Total**		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Teaching Students	305.40	330	303.50	287.10	278.50	330.00	296.90	283.20	307.00
Supervise Student Play/Recreational Activities	8.21	0	8.85	4.58	5.50	0	6.50	5.00	7.70
Supervise Service Activities of Students	30.00	2.14	0	4.17	5.00	0	3.10	7.30	0
Individual Work with Students	9.29	30	7.69	5.42	4.50	10.00	7.50	6.80	8.00
Assembly	12.14	20	11.54	10	10.50	7.50	11.20	11.40	11.00
Sub-total, Student Contact	*365.04*	*382.14*	*331.58*	*311.27*	*304.00*	*347.50*	*325.20*	*313.70*	*333.70*
Mark Papers	7.86	0	8.46	1.67	0	10.00	5.00	0	8.67
Prepare Lessons	8.93	0	9.62	8.33	10.00	0	8.60	9.10	8.30
Administration	10.36	20	9.62	5.83	7.00	0	8.30	8.20	8.30
School Maintenance	7.50	10	7.31	9.58	11.50	0	8.50	11.40	6.30
Sub-total, Administration	*34.65*	*30*	*35.01*	*25.41*	*28.50*	*10.00*	*30.40*	*28.70*	*31.57*
Meet with Individual Parents	6.79	0	7.31	3.83	4.60	0	5.40	4.20	6.30
Sub-total, Community Contact	*6.79*	*0*	*7.31*	*3.83*	*4.60*	*0*	*5.40*	*4.20*	*6.30*
TOTAL minutes	**378.60**	**440**	**373.85**	**340.50**	**337.10**	**357.50**	**361.00**	**346.50**	**371.70**

(N=26)

Lightening the Teacher's Burden and Work Day: Teachers interviewed on average spent six hours (361 minutes) a day on school duties, of which five hours (297 minutes) were devoted to teaching. (See Table IV.B.5.) Teachers—particularly in urban areas where the standard school schedule was largely observed—consider the work burden to be excessively heavy. They complained that five to six hours of teaching was too long, a minimum of six classes a day was too many, and the breaks from teaching or student supervision were neither frequent enough nor sufficiently long to prepare lessons, tackle administrative tasks, or relax. Although the routine administrative tasks of teachers seemed primarily to be limited to attendance records, teachers complained that complying with administrative requirements and preparing reports were time-consuming and onerous. Indeed, the head-teachers at all schools—even the most dysfunctional—were able to produce an astounding number of records on student and teacher attendance, generally up-to-date although not always truthful and accurate. On average, teachers surveyed spent about 30 minutes per day on administrative tasks, including evaluation of students' papers, lesson plan development, administration, and maintenance. (See Table B.5.) Teachers at two Jamalpur schools—one urban and one rural—complained about the "burden" of the school snack program, requiring the teachers to distribute biscuits and milk to the students.[40]

[40] Teachers at these schools also received milk and biscuits.

Lesson plan preparation varied by school, but on average teachers reported they spent less than nine minutes per day or about 1.5 minutes per class taught. In Nilphamari District, an annual teaching plan with a day-to day schedule had been prepared and distributed by the local Teachers' Union but was considered by teachers and education authorities to obviate the need for daily lesson plan preparation— "there is no need of a lesson plan, it's done already." It was conceded that teachers could adjust the lesson plans if merited by student progress or lack thereof. On closer inquiry, it appeared likely that what the teachers considered a lesson plan was an academic program that detailed subject matter (lessons) to be taught, but that did not address or plan for the teaching-learning approaches. It was agreed by the participants in a focus group of district educational authorities, teacher union representatives, head-teachers and teachers that it was infeasible for teachers to prepare six to nine different lesson plans per day: the school day did not permit the time and it was "unreasonable" to expect teachers to plan lessons on their own time (at home). The PSPMP study (2001) found that two-thirds of government primary school teachers attended school without any preparation.

This attitude was not universal. One exceptional head-mistress in an urban school indicated that she regularly took school work home—worked on records, prepared lessons, and marked homework—in the evening after she had completed her family duties. Another urban school head-master in Jamalpur stated that every teacher prepared multi-day lesson plans that were reviewed and signed by the head-master; the plans were then exhibited for that day.[41] However, for the most part, teachers in both districts visited indicated that their class preparation consisted of reviewing the next day's lesson in the textbooks and "mentally" planning how to proceed. Few indicated that they did this work at home, but mainly found time during the school days. (A following section details the effectiveness of this strategy in terms of class time management.)

Teacher duties also include some tasks that are to be accomplished outside the official school hours. According to government requirements, teachers are expected to make regular visits to children's homes, both to check on absentee students (generally having missed three consecutive days) and to encourage school enrollment during the first three months of the school year. Although teachers at the various schools disagreed on the number of visits per month, educational authorities in both districts indicated that five households per month per teacher was the requisite number. Other possible "off-hour" duties include SMC meetings, staff meetings, coaching classes, remediation, make-up sessions, and planning for parent days and sports celebrations.

The schools and their teachers had several strategies to deal with these demands on their time, depending on the resources they had at their disposal. Not surprisingly, the better-endowed urban schools tended to have more options for minimizing the teacher's workload while still remaining "responsive" to government requirements, while rural schools paid much less attention to standard practices and requirements.

[41] He also volunteered that new lesson plans did not have to be prepared and existing ones could be resubmitted if the textbook for the grade and subject had not changed.

Some strategies include:

- *The Creation and Use of "Surplus" Teachers*: The number of teachers in the eight schools visited ranged between three and eight, with the urban schools having five teachers or more and the rural schools with five teachers or less. Although the average student-teacher ratio in these schools was 63:1[42], exceeding the government standard of 50:1, this picture changed dramatically if the effect of double shift and half-days for grades one and two in single-shift schools was factored in, not to mention actual student attendance. Only in two schools observed, one urban and one rural, would the ratio reach about 50:1. At the other schools, the real student: teacher ratio (assuming 100 percent attendance/deployment of teachers and attendance of students) would range between 25 and 40 students.

  Nevertheless, head-teachers and teachers generally believed that more teachers were needed, not to improve student learning, but to lighten their teaching load. Understandably, head-teachers wanted to be relieved of teaching duties to devote more time to school administration. Teachers believed that with an extra ("surplus") teacher or two, they could add one or two more "free" periods to their day, in order to perform administrative tasks, grade papers, prepare for lessons, or even take a break. Only in one school was it mentioned that more teachers would permit more time to work with students individually.

  No school claimed to have extra teachers, although not all teachers appeared to be constantly occupied with teaching. In the three urban schools, "surplus" teachers were created by combining grades and grade sections (i.e. classes) if the number of students was deemed to be below a certain, undefined level. For example, in one single-shift urban school the pre-primary and primary students were combined into one class. When it was noted that there appeared to be an extra teacher at the school for the afternoon classes, the head-teacher explained that the 70 students in grade three required an extra teacher, but the teacher couldn't teach because an additional classroom was not available to house a second grade three section. He complained that the large number did not allow teachers sufficient time to address the "back-benchers." Teaming two teachers to jointly teach and manage the overly large class had not occurred to him nor was the suggestion met with any enthusiasm. The "surplus teacher" helped him with administration, the teachers "needed rest," and they then—inexplicably—would have to "maintain two registers."

  In another urban school, although the student rolls had necessitated the creation of two sections for both grade one (90 students total) and grade two (also 90 students total), the teachers regularly combined the sections to reflect student attendance. On the day of the visit, the sections for each grade were joined: 63 grade one students in one class with one teacher, and 44 grade two students in one class with one teacher,

[42] Assuming 100 percent attendance.

thus freeing up—in effect—two teachers.[43] Even though the teachers suggested that 30 to 35 students was an ideal class size for management ease and student learning, they were willing to forgo these advantages in order to reduce their workload. When asked about the use of their extra time, they protested that they needed a "rest" and that their 330-minute teaching load was too heavy. Somewhat democratically, teachers appeared to trade teaching duties so the "down-time" was fairly distributed among teachers. Of course, among the negative consequences associated with larger class size are less scope for individualized attention per student by the teacher and more time spent on the problems inherent to managing larger class sizes (i.e. maintaining order and discipline).

- *Canceling Classes*: Teaching staff in urban school also mentioned that they "found time" to undertake their lesson preparation and administrative duties during the school day in the afternoons as often classes were combined (see above) or cancelled because a sufficient number of upper grade students did not return after tiffin. Students who had not left school at tiffin could find themselves dismissed early if teachers did not believe the number of students in the grade merited a class. Teachers said that "make-up" classes were not rescheduled, but that two lessons would be condensed into one for the next day's class if necessary. The classes "sacrificed" did not appear to figure among the important classes (i.e. classes covering material addressed in exam questions), at least in the teachers' estimation.

- *Incorporating Non-teaching Tasks into the School Day:* In addition to lightening the teaching load, teachers also wanted more time during the school day to accomplish administrative tasks, lesson preparation, correction of students' homework and copybook, and other duties that might require after-school time. In general, teachers did not linger at the school after classes were dismissed. Nearly all considered that their work day as a teacher should be finished with the last school bell and most said they "managed" to complete all their teaching and non-teaching duties during school hours. By combining classes and sections and canceling classes (as discussed above), teachers were able to augment their single break with pockets of free time to devote to these activities. Some used class-time for these tasks, while students were reading or completing problems. None, however, felt the time was sufficient to deal with their non-teaching duties.

  Most off-hour tasks—such as the generally infrequent SMC meetings, student home visits, staff meetings—were planned for Thursday afternoons following early dismissal, thus obviating the need to for teachers to work beyond the standard 9:30 am to 4:15 pm workday, although 70 percent of the teachers surveyed said they spent an average of slightly more than two hours in a typical month on SMC or PTA meetings, parent conferences, and community events. (See Table IV.B.6.) No scheduled or ad hoc parent-teacher meetings or conferences were observed to take place either during or after school on the days of the visit (other than the parent and

[43] Actually, more teachers benefited because several teachers taught different subjects to the grade one and grade two students.

community focus groups convened by the research team), although teachers interviewed estimated that they spent about five minutes per day meeting with parents during the school day. Sixty-six percent of teachers estimated they spent an average of 40 minutes per month meeting parents after hours.

Table IV.B.6: Incidence of Teacher After-hours Work and Average Time Spent Per Month

	Percent of Teachers Spending Time After School On:			Average Number of Minutes Spent On:		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
N=18	69.20	81.80	60.00			
SMC Meeting	72.20	88.90	55.60	43.30	53.30	33.30
PTA Meeting	50.00	55.60	44.40	28.33	33.33	23.33
Meet with Parents	66.70	66.70	66.70	39.70	44.40	34.90
Organize a Celebration	16.70	22.20	11.10	7.70	8.70	6.70
Attend Community Meeting or Event	16.70	22.20	11.10	12.20	17.80	6.70
In-service Training	5.60	0	11.10	0.30	0	0.70
Other	5.60	0	11.10	1.70	0	3.30
Total				133.20	157.00	108.90

(N=26)

- *Hiring Administrative and Custodial Staff*: Only one (urban) school among the eight visited had an official administrative assistant ("peon") on the government payroll. Over time, the government has largely eliminated these positions at schools (except for model schools), shifting these duties to teaching staff. However, head-teachers and teachers are unanimous in agreeing the need for such a position and some schools have taken steps to remedy the lack of administrative assistants. Teachers estimated they spent about nine minutes per day on school maintenance. (See Table B.5.) The teachers in the two "peon-less" urban schools pooled their own funds to hire school help, generally to do custodial tasks such as cleaning and ringing the bell. Teachers stated that they would have more time to devote to the children—acknowledging that they used class-time for non-teaching tasks—if they were not expected to assume a growing number of administrative tasks, cleaning up the classroom and caring for and cleaning up after sick children. (Diarrhea was mentioned as a frequent problem.) They also suggested that the administrative assistant could assume responsibility for (i) communicating with the School Management Committee, (ii) maintaining student records, (iii) taking and recording student attendance in the register, (iv) ringing the class period bell, and (v) making home visits to check up on absent students.

  The rural schools visited generally had few "legitimate" options for lightening the teaching load. These schools generally had three or four teachers (including a head-teacher). As each teacher was generally responsible for teaching a grade level ("block teaching"), they had little room for creating surplus teachers. Instead, the teachers reportedly created free time in the school day by combining classes, dismissing individual classes, and assigning work to students during class-time and then exiting the classroom.

- *Addressing Student Needs:* Although it would be unfair to say that teachers did not care about students, student needs do not appear paramount in either their practices or suggestions about how to improve time use during the school day. In addition to the scheduled class time, two main activities were required of teachers to respond to student needs. In both cases, the schools and their teachers arranged these services so that they occurred—as much as possible—during the school day, thus impinging on instructional time and reducing contact hours. They are coaching classes and home visits:

  - Coaching Class: While it appears that it is not a government requirement, the head-teachers at the seven schools where coaching classes were provided to promising grade five students who have a good chance of passing the primary scholarship exam implied that it was an expected practice and indispensable convention.[44] (Nothing extra is done for the average grade five students, who are left to struggle with the primary scholarship exam on their own.) Schools also have their own motivations. In addition to the prestige and reputation as a "good school" garnered by boasting scholarship recipients, government primary schools participating in the primary education stipend program (PESP) must ensure that at least ten percent of their grade five students sit for the exam if the school is to continue participation in the program.[45] A good school will attract more students to increase enrollment, which in turn will make it eligible for more resources that are based on capitation (e.g. teachers, classrooms, and materials). Some schools (and teachers) also assess a monthly fee from the coaching class candidates. These classes generally take place during the school day (in the morning), with one teacher assigned to the coaching class. There is a decided asymmetry in the distribution of teaching resources. The coaching classes are small, consisting of no more than ten students in the largest schools visited. Even in the most teacher-deprived schools with no more than three scholarship students, a teacher is generally allocated to the coaching class. This results in larger classes for the other grades with all the intended negative consequences. In the classroom-deprived urban school mentioned earlier, the nine students of the coaching class occupied one classroom while the 70 students of grade three occupied another of the same size. At a rural school, the coaching class was conducted by a teacher (for a 100 Taka per month per student fee) from 9:00 am to 10:00 am, making it impossible to start school at the 9:30 am starting time initially claimed by the

[44] At the one school visited where there was no coaching class, the head-master stated that there were no potential scholarship candidates among his Grade 5 students, which was not surprising given the erratic teacher attendance and low teacher commitment demonstrated at this rural "charland" school. The parents and SMC member interviewed were unaware of the convention of coaching classes.

[45] Since the PESP has not yet completed its first year cycle, it is impossible to know whether schools have met this target--reduced from 20 percent by the Prime Minister--or have been eliminated from PESP participation.

head-master.[46] Head-teachers in a few schools even stated that they assigned their best teachers to the coaching classes.

- Home Visits: Students who are absent for multiple days should expect to be called by teachers at their home outside of school hours. In Jamalpur District, many of the schools visited could produce a map of the school catchments area designating student houses.[47] The purpose of the home visit is for teachers to determine the reason for the student's absence (e.g. illness, work, family problems, dropout) and encourage parents to send him or her back to school as soon as possible. However, other than encouraging words, the teachers interviewed indicated that they had no other strategy for dealing with the absentee student. Remedial home-work assignments or instruction were not provided. Moreover, it was apparent that only the closer homes—if any—were visited on the teachers' way home from work. Special forays were not made, with parents at the rural schools stating they never received visits despite head-teachers' claims to the contrary. Most head-teachers and teachers in urban areas said that they met parents in the market or around town in the course of their domestic lives, so that home visits were not necessary. Teachers in rural areas, especially those who resided in town, made little pretence that they visited their absentee students' homes, saying that they might meet some parents on the walk home. No records were produced to show that home visits had been made. Teachers, thus, managed to confine their work burden to normal school hours.

Class Time Management and Time Dedicated to Teaching-Learning

As seen, the school day in Bangladesh is tightly programmed with about 90 percent[48] of "scheduled" time dedicated to class-time, although the teachers interviewed for this study estimated about 82 percent. (See Table IV.B.5.) Given that the curriculum requires more time than the double-shift schedule allows, every class-time minute should—in theory—be devoted to instruction. As a consequence, any other activities—regardless of how beneficial to students—tend to infringe on the instructional contact hours. (See Box.)

[46] The head-master at this school says he also coaches the students during "break" and from 4:15 pm to 4:30 pm, although this is unlikely given the school snack distribution requirements during break and the head-master's frequent absence.

[47] The maps were a result of the training provided through the IDEAL Project.

[48] Of the 6.75 hours of the school day, about 0.75 hours is allocated to assembly and the tiffin break.

Eat or Teach?

Biscuits and milk are provided to some primary schools in Jamalpur District through a USDA-Land O' Lakes program. The snacks are very much appreciated by the impoverished parents of these students and their teachers. However, the school snack program in place at two schools visited disrupted the class periods in the morning for pre-primary, grade one and grade two students. The urban single-shift school distributed the snack at 10:00 am during Bangla class. Teachers said that students were allowed to eat snacks during class, as many had had no breakfast, but that 15 minutes or more was lost from the 55-minute period (including a five-minute teacher break). At the rural school, the single teacher present at school that morning abandoned the class he was teaching to distribute the snack at 11:20 am to the bevy of unattended pre-primary students waiting for food in the schoolyard and to the teacher-less students in the adjoining classroom.

Although it was beyond the scope of this study to examine and assess the pedagogical practices of primary school teachers, time use in class—specifically the amount dedicated to instruction—is an obvious variable in the equation for student learning. Similarly, how the students spend their time in response to teacher activities provides an indication of instructional time-on-task.

In order to examine how class time was employed by teachers, several (12) class sessions of various grades and subjects were observed at five of the schools visited. The observers recorded the different activities of the teacher—as well as concomitant activities of the students—and the time sequence. The minutes that the teacher dedicated to particular functions/activities were tabulated using a classification system adapted from Education Watch 2000 *"A Question of Quality: State of Primary Education in Bangladesh"* (pp. 36-37). The teacher functions were divided into two main groups: Instruction and Non-Instruction. "Instructional" activities included teaching activities such as lecturing, employing teaching aids, using the chalkboard, individual student instruction, supervision of student group work (recitation and dictation) and other tasks designed to impart the lesson to students. These were further classified into "proactive situations" in which the teacher dominates the learning environment in a one-way teacher-to-student flow of information or direction, and into "interactive situations" in which the teacher facilitates the environment so that students are actively engaged in learning—asking and responding to questions, discussion, demonstration or group-work (recitation and singing). "Non-Instructional" activities included counteractive situations in which students either do not receive any information from the teacher or the instructional process is disrupted. These situations were classified into "class administration" (e.g. roll call, teacher doing paperwork), "discipline" (e.g. scolding students and calling the class to order), "idle" time (e.g. teacher doing nothing or relaxing while still present in the classroom), and "absent" time (teacher absent from the classroom).

Because the activity of each student can not reasonably be accounted for, student activities in response to the teacher were simply tabulated into two categories: the majority (judgment call by the observer) of students regarding the teacher's directions and the majority of students disregarding the teacher's directions.

Teachers' Use of Class Time: While some teachers are able to outline how a class should be organized, especially those who have participated in the MWTL[49] training offered by the IDEAL Project, observations of their classes show a very different picture. With the exception of one class in an urban school[50], none of the teachers observed conducted their class in the prescribed fashion and employed various teaching strategies, or even followed a logical pedagogical sequence. Several teachers were not sure of the lesson that should be taught, or introduced unrelated material to a class (e.g. reciting the days of the week in math class or inspecting dirty fingernails in religious studies), probably attempting to hide their lack of preparation from the observer. Use of teaching aids was very limited—to the blackboard, textbooks, and in one case counting sticks. The latter example was the sole time that a teacher-made instructional aid was observed. A head-teacher at a rural school, who lived an hour from the school, said he stored teaching aids at home and brought them when needed. He had also "loaned" his decrepit one-room school's two blackboards to the local madrasah.

On average, teaching or "instruction" occupied 63 percent of the class time in the classes observed, and 75 percent of the classes observed spent more than 50 percent of their time on instruction. While the time allocated to the observations varied according to the class schedule of the school, it is clear that less than two-thirds of the class time is spent on teaching or instructional activities by the teacher, indicating the reductions of already short class periods to alarming levels. (See Table IV.B.7.)

The largest percentage of instructional time was spent "proactively" with the teacher lecturing students, writing on the board (with the teacher's back turned to restless class), assigning problems and exercises to be worked individually by students, and then observing their work. In fact, very little actual lesson presentation or lecturing was done; students were largely engaged in individual work. While the tabulations show that 17 percent of the instructional time was spent on "interactive" activities, this may give a false impression of children engaged in active learning. The reality behind the statistic is that most of the interactive activities were of a rote or static nature, almost always confined to recitation, singing, or rhyming. If questions were asked, it was one-way—by the teacher directed at a single student, not the class of students.

Thirty-seven percent of the time in the classes observed was devoted to non-instructional or "counteractive" activities; the largest share (60 percent on average) spent on class administration tasks, such as cleaning the blackboard, taking roll, or marking homework[51] or other papers. Discipline took about 15 percent of the teacher's time, generally taking the form of scolding, rebukes, and making the children stand-up and sit-down repeatedly. One observer reported seeing a teacher hit a student with a switch. On average, teachers

[49] Multiple Ways of Teaching and Learning.

[50] It should be noted that this class—the first observed—was largely a "sham," in that it was later found that the teacher was teaching an early lesson in the syllabus for the "benefit" of the observer and not the lesson planned for the day. Once alerted, the observers found three other teachers who also attempted to substitute different lessons from the one planned, one starting with the first English lesson of the year. Unfortunately, even with the fake lessons, the teachers did not follow recommended pedagogical techniques or sequences. Nonetheless, the students made no complaint nor displayed mystification.

[51] In one case, a quick review of the "corrected" papers showed several undetected mistakes.

spent 16 percent of their time out of the classroom. A frequently observed ploy of teachers was to give the students an assignment and then leave class for several minutes. Students at one rural school reported that the teacher asked them to recite and then would "shut his eyes and take a nap," not reacting when they made mistakes, apparently in a deep sleep, to their amusement.

Table IV.B.7: Teacher Use of Class Time (percentage)

Percent of Class Time Allocated To:	**Average Percent**			**Range of Percents**			**Percent of Observations >50 Percent**		
	Total	*Urban*	*Rural*	*Total*	*Urban*	*Rural*	*Total*	*Urban*	*Rural*
Instruction, o/w Percentage is:	63	72	56	25-100	54-86	25-100	75 (9/12)	100 (5/5)	57 (4/7)
▪ Proactive	83	73	90	40-100	50-100	40-100	83 (10/12)	80 (4/12)	50 (6/7)
▪ Interactive	17	27	10	0-60	0-50	0-11	8 (1/12)	0	14 (1/7)
Non-instruction o/w Percentage is:	37	28	44	14-75	14-46	0-75	17 (2/12)	0	29 (2/7)
▪ Class Administra-tion	60	81	45	25-100	38-100	25-100	58 (7/12)	40 (2/12)	57 (4/7)
▪ Discipline	15	13	17	0-50	0-33	0-50	0	0	0
▪ Idle	1	0	2	0-11	0	0-11	0	0	0
▪ Absent	16	6	23	0-68	0-31	0-68	17 (2/12)	0	29 (2/7)

N=12 class observations (five=urban, seven=rural) in five schools (two urban, three rural)

The differences between urban and rural schools are notable. On average, teachers in rural schools in the classes observed spent 56 percent of class time on instruction, while teachers in urban schools spent 72 percent of class time on instruction. While teacher-centered, proactive teaching predominates in both urban and rural schools, rural teachers are more likely to allocate instructional time to proactive teaching (90 percent) compared with urban teachers (73 percent). Allocation of instructional time to interactive methods represents a greater percentage in urban schools than rural ones, although the reader is again cautioned to regard the term with reservations as to the pedagogical validity of the interactive techniques used by most teachers.

In urban classes, the non-instructional time (on average 28 percent of teacher time in class is spent on counteractive functions) is primarily devoted to class administration (81 percent) and a much smaller amount to discipline (13 percent). No teachers were found to be idle in class and few left the classroom. In rural classes, the non-instructional time (44 percent) was mainly spent on class administration (45 percent), discipline (17 percent), and leaving the classroom (23 percent), the latter generally for "administrative purposes." At one rural school, the single teacher present had to leave repeatedly to check on the other class and to distribute the USDA and Land O' Lakes snack to the pre-

primary students.[52] At another rural school, the teacher spent 50 percent of his time on student discipline, repeatedly asking them to stand up and sit down to focus their attention.

One SMC Chairman Assessment of Contact Time and Instructional Quality

The SMC chairman at an urban school serving very poor children takes a proprietary interest in the school as he donated the land for the school in 1982 and has a granddaughter enrolled. Since he works nearby, he visits the school nearly every day. (He notes that other SMC members are not as active.) He queries the head-mistress about teacher and student absences and makes notes to discuss at the next SMC meeting. When he occasionally visits the classroom, he determines quality by:

- Administering a "pop" quiz to four students on the lesson of the day (if three of four can answer correctly, then quality is good).
- Determining if the classroom is not overcrowded (if there are only five students per bench, then quality is good).
- Seeing that the teacher is teaching or marking papers (if he or she is not looking out the window or sitting idle, then quality is good).
-

He suggests that contact time can be improved if classes are lengthened to 45 minutes and the number of classes is reduced. His level of interest and knowledge of the school was unprecedented, and not observed at any other school.

Students' Use of Class Time: Inevitably, it must be asked how students spend their time in class, given the teacher performances described above. *Do the students comply with the teacher for both instructional and non-instructional activities? For example, if a teacher directs to students to copy a sentence from the board, do the majority of students do so?*

Table IV.B.8: Student Use of Class Time

Percent of classes observed where the majority of students are:	Responding to Teacher Instructions			Not Responding to Teacher Instructions		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
	57	84	38	43	16	62

As shown in Table IV.B.8, the majority of students in only 57 percent of the observed classes responded to the teachers' instructions. Interestingly, the rate of compliance was greater in urban classes where the class sizes were larger and potentially prone to more disciplinary problems: in 84 percent of the classes observed, the majority of students complied with teacher instructions. The situation was dramatically different in rural classes. In only 38 percent of classes observed, did the majority of students follow teacher directions, whether it was listening to the lecture, doing the problem, reciting the lesson, or reading the book.

[52] The class observations in this school were not used, given the untenable situation, but are probably representative of the amount of time that students receive in instruction at this particular school, which suffers frequent teacher absences or tardiness.

Example from a Class Observation

School Code: 4		
School Type: Rural Double-shift School		
Grade: 4		
Class: Bangla		
Time	***The teacher is….***	***Most students are…***
12.15 (class starts)	Not yet in class.	Gossiping.
12.20	Entering class and asking the students to recite a poem, and leaves the class.	Gossiping. A few are reading, and some are looking at the "observer."
12.35	Not in class. He is engaging in some administrative work in the head-master's office.	Gossiping. One or two are concentrating on their books.
12.45	In class and is asking the students to write down the first six lines of the poem, and sits down at desk to work on papers.	Writing and two-thirds are copying from each other's homework copy ("khata").
12.48	Walking around classroom and observing the students.	Writing.
12.50	Marking the students' "khata" (the homework copybook). (The observer notes that although one student's "khata" is marked with a tick and signed by the teacher, five incorrect words had gone un-noted.)	Sitting quietly. Some are still writing and others are looking out the window.
13.00 (period ends)	Starting the math class.	Concentrating on math problems.

Generally, a large proportion of students would quarrel or gossip during individual assignments, while a classmate was solving a problem at the chalkboard or the teacher was working with another student. In part, frequent absences of the teacher contributed to this problem—few students adhered to the teacher's admonition to work on a problem or study a book when he or she was out of class. Moreover, relatively fewer students in rural schools had the materials or textbooks in which they could direct their attention.

A high degree of chaos was allowed to reign in most rural schools, with children running in and out of classrooms at will, talking to other children (both un-enrolled students and those playing "hooky") through the window, or gazing at the community "plaza" or playing field that typically fronted the schools and served as a community cross-roads with external noise and disturbances. One rural school—so dysfunctional that classes could not feasibly be observed—was housed in a one-room "bashe" hut, with students of all levels sitting around the perimeter on benches. The noise level was deafening, and several students had poked small "windows" in the woven reed walls so they could

observe the village activities. The SMC chairman said they planned to relocate the school to a more isolated spot to reduce noise (although it was not clear whether he believed the source of the noise was the students or the villagers.) Urban schools visited, in contrast, were enclosed by walls and gates and were inaccessible to the casual visitor, and windows did not provide much of a view.[53]

The clear conclusion is that the modest 63 percent of class time that is devoted to instructional activities on average is further eroded by the lack of student attention to the instructions provided by the teacher and failure by the teacher to keep students engaged in learning activities throughout the class. The situation is even worse in rural schools where only 56 percent of class time is devoted to instruction by the teacher, yet in only 38 percent of the classes do the majority of students comply with teacher instructions.

Covering the Curriculum: Although most teachers believed that the amount of contact time for instruction was too short (and the school day too long), only about 15 percent (four out of 26) revealed that they felt they had a problem covering the curriculum in the course of the school year. However, their knowledge of the curriculum and its particulars was somewhat suspect, as most framed their responses in terms of "covering the textbook" for the core subjects. No reference was made to the fundamental skills or 53 competencies students are expected to acquire. The teachers interviewed generally believed that the curriculum was covered if every page or lesson in the book had been reviewed in class.

Table IV.B.9: Teachers NOT Able To Completely Cover the Curriculum and the Reasons

Variable	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of teachers NOT able to completely cover the curriculum in year	7.1	0	7.7	25	20	50	15.4	18.2	13.3
Percent of teachers claiming that there is/are: N=4									
Not enough time	100	0	100	0	0	0	25	0	50
Too many subjects	0	0	0	33.3	50	0	25	50	0
Not enough teachers	0	0	0	66.7	50	100	50	50	50

(N=26)

Several analyses of the primary curriculum in Bangladesh point out that it is very tightly sequenced and requires all (or more) of the contact time allowed by the academic calendar and school schedule. This leaves no scope for repeating lessons or addressing either general or individual student lack of mastery of the prescribed skills. The curriculum warrants the teacher to inexorably move ahead, regardless of student needs or levels of learning.

Discussions about covering the curriculum and remedial strategies with the teachers confirmed this predicament. When asked how they dealt with a school schedule and

[53] A similar observation about the level of disturbances in rural schools is made in the "Findings of the PSPMP: 2000 (December 2001).

contact time that was often infringed on by unexpected events (e.g. disaster days, unexpected official events, and teacher absences), the teachers indicated that they did not schedule make-up or remedial classes, but "managed to cover two lessons in one class" by going over the material faster so as not to fall behind the academic program. When asked about why schools could hold a coaching class for exceptional students and not a remedial class for struggling ones, teachers at two different schools explained that the coaching class was required by the government (it is not). Another said that if parents request that their child participate in the coaching class, they are allowed to attend but will be dropped if they can not "carry the load." The negative consequences for student learning are obvious.

Both the fault for not learning the lesson and the onus for remediation is most often put on the individual student. The frequently mentioned reasons for why students failed to perform academically were that "their families aren't aware of the value of schooling," "their families are too poor to properly support the child in school," and "some students are naturally slow or problematic."[54] Teachers did not seem to accept that entire classes of children could fail to master the class materials (not to mention the competencies) due to short-comings of the instructional system, the school, or even the teacher. The few achieving students in a class were pointed to as evidence that the system was working, but the students (and their families) were not. Teachers in one urban school indicated that they suggest—and occasionally facilitate—peer tutoring[55], essentially asking another student to help a classmate, or that they will try to find time in class to review the student's work individually. There appear to be very few one-on-one out-of-class teacher-student consultations.

Teachers in nearly every school suggested that students who fall behind should work with a private tutor, although some admitted that the students' families were too poor to afford private tuition. Private tutoring is one way of supplementing instructional contact hours. To quote one rural parent, "The only way for my son to learn is to get a private tutor, even if he stayed in this school for a hundred years. Even teachers say to get a private tutor if you want your son to do well."

Parents and teachers shared similar perceptions about the purpose of private tutoring. Generally, it was recommended for students who wanted to continue to secondary school, for students who wished to win a merit scholarship, and for students who needed help with their homework. This latter reason was the one most often cited by parents in the poorest communities, who said that their illiteracy prevented them from helping their children and that the children "were afraid to go to school without their homework." Further questioning revealed that teachers would scold and, in some instances beat, the child who could not present his homework. Homework is another way of compensating for insufficient instructional contact time, essentially requiring that a student study on his own time. However, the efficacy of homework as an instructional tool was limited, as it appeared that not all teachers reviewed the homework presented by students and few

[54] One head-master declared that "50 percent of the children are slow" in his school.
[55] No peer tutoring was observed to take place at the school during the day of the visit.

bothered to actually correct it, giving little feedback or encouragement to the students who had prepared it and signaling that it was not considered all that important by teachers. (The prevalence and incidence of homework assignments is discussed in section IV.D.)

Finally, only one professional in the education system—a UPEO—suggested that private tuition might be needed because there was a problem with the curriculum. However, he seemed to think that the curriculum does not cover the lessons well enough, rather than vice versa. He also conceded that children "may not be getting good instruction."

The inability of the schools to adequately impart to their students the fundamental competencies identified in the national curriculum has been well documented. For example, the Education Watch 2000 report found that only two percent of the students tested that had completed five years of primary education acquired all (27) cognitive competencies. Random and opportunistic (and unscientific) questioning of the students at the schools visited—particularly the three rural schools where school operations were erratic—showed similar discouraging results. Very few of the students—other than the scholarship candidates—were able to read simple words in Bangla, write an English letter, or do a simple math sum. Nonetheless, even in the most dysfunctional schools, children clutching battered notebooks waited hours after the school starting time had passed for a teacher to appear and begin the school day.

3. *Conclusions about Class Time and Suggestions*

Several analyses of primary education have observed that the contact hours in government primary schools in Bangladesh are relatively short, due to the academic calendar, in comparison with neighboring countries.[56]

Structurally

The requirements of double-shift schools and staggered timing of lower and upper grades for single-shift schools foreshorten the school day even further. Not only does this result in major disparities in contact hours between single- and double-shift schools, but the contact time offered by double-shift schools does not meet the specifications for contact hours needed to cover the curriculum as prescribed by the government. Each week, grades one and two students in double-shift schools fall short by 1.5 contact hours (eight percent of required weekly time) and grades three through five students fall short by 2.5 contact hours (about ten percent of required weekly time). Their counterparts in single-shift schools, largely located in comparatively more affluent urban areas, enjoy a "surplus" of contact hours.

[56] Both the World Bank's Education Sector Review and the ADB's PSPMP study cite the lesser number of contact hours in Bangladesh government primary schools. However, it appears that the standards of comparison used—444 contact hours—are outdated and do not necessarily reflect the post-1999 changes in the school calendar and timetable effected by the government. Our calculations, using 2.75 hours per day for grades one and two shows more potential contact hours scheduled (e.g. 654 for grades one and two in double-shift schools).

Moreover, the structure of the school day is so tightly scheduled in all schools, that any activities not included in the school program—be they beneficial or disruptive, planned or unanticipated—can only impinge on the contact time, most of which is allocated for instruction. There is no room for interruptions, special programs, teacher fatigue, or even the high-spirits and unruly behavior of normal school-children. These "time consumers" will all exact their price from the time budget allotted to the teaching-learning process. By the sheer unpredictability of life in general and school children in particular, it is a given that fewer contact hours than planned will occur and precious quarter-hours will be lost each day.

Operationally

School contact hours may be further eroded by how the school is organized and managed by its teaching staff. Several of the rural schools had decided to put forward their starting time by one-half hour, without commensurate adjustment made to the school closing time. This reduced the potential contact hours available for grades one and two to two hours and 15 minutes. Ironically, the DPEOs interviewed could only say that there was no authority at the school, upazila, or district to extend school hours, but apparently the same could not be said for shortening them.

Nearly 40 percent (three out of eight) of the schools in the sample started late on the day of the school visit, because the head-teacher and/or a sufficient number of teachers had not arrived on time to open the school. Some communities reported that the school would simply remain closed or students dismissed if enough teachers did not arrive. Early closings were also revealed by parents, but also—perhaps unwittingly—by head-teachers and teachers, who indicated that their personal travel concerns could force them to close early or that attempts to teach students in post-tiffin classes were generally unproductive. On the day of the school visits, the latter part of the school-day seemed irregular in rural and urban schools alike. Four of the eight (50 percent) visited were found not to have fully completed the school day. Similarly, the PSPMP study (2001) found that half the teachers surveyed said that their school frequently shortened the school day.

The school day is also vulnerable to a variety of disruptions. In some cases, meetings or training programs at the Upazila Resource Center or headquarters may take teachers from their classes. School participation in a school-feeding program takes time from class for distribution and consumption. Community fracases (or visits from research teams) in centrally-located rural schools create diversions that attract the attention of students and teachers alike, pulling them from class work.

Moreover, the attempts by teachers to lighten their workload and teaching burdens by creating "surplus" teachers and free periods generally result in increased class sizes, which reduce the amount of contact time per student, in theory, and increases the time spent in classroom management rather than instruction, in reality. Education Watch 2000 found student performance better in schools with classes with 40 or fewer students per teacher.

By defining their work day as the school day, teaching staff ensure that non-teaching duties must be accomplished during school hours, almost necessarily at the expense of instructional time. Teachers absent from class use class-time to complete administrative duties, paperwork, and other activities. Only 63 percent of class time, on average is used for instruction.

The quality of this instruction is generally of the sort that seldom engages the student in the learning process, further reducing the "time on task." It is questionable whether the curriculum is ever covered or even understood by many of the teachers interviewed. The time allotted to the school day, its organization, the teaching practices of the teachers, and the lack of any strategies for making up lost time make it unlikely that the 53 competencies of the curriculum will be even imparted by the teacher, much less acquired by the students, without the extra assistance found in additional contact time. In the communities visited, contact time deficits of the school were addressed for a few lucky students with private tuition and coaching classes.

Although education professionals at the schools, upazilas and districts agreed that more time should be spent on instruction, none wanted to extend the school day. Some even argued for shorter hours. The general solution offered by teachers and parents alike was to increase the number of teachers, although for very different reasons. Teachers wanted to lighten their work load and teaching burden, and ensure they could acquit themselves of administrative and other non-teaching tasks during working hours. Parents, seeing that their children were not learning, wanted more teachers not only to decrease the class size but also to serve as a panacea/substitute for some teachers that they thought were clearly not performing.

How Much Contact Time Do Children Get in the Course of a School Day? The factors related above clearly support the response "not enough." Although the time and methodological limitations of this study preclude exact calculations, some estimates can be made. Certainly, grades one and two students in double-shift schools under ideal circumstances receive only 2.75 hours of potential contact time (654 contact hours per year) and 2.5 hours of potential instructional time (excluding the 15 minutes for assembly). At rural schools, which start at 10:00 am rather than 9:30 am, these students potentially receive only 2.25 hours of contact time and two hours of instructional time. Given that three of five rural schools started late on the day of the visit, all by at least one hour, we can speculate that the children in such schools will receive less than two hours of instructional time per day (say, for example, one hour, 50 minutes if—improbably—these schools start only one hour late per week and experience no disruptions).

Similarly, grades three through five students in many double-shift schools are likely to receive less than the daily 4.25 contact hours (932 contact hours per year) and 3.5 instructional hours (excluding assembly and tiffin break), as many schools close early—particularly in rural areas—or do not follow a rigorous teaching schedule for the late

afternoon classes. This is also a single-shift school phenomenon, where many upper grade students reportedly leave after break, thus reducing their school day to three hours 45 minutes. In these schools, it was found that the last two or three periods of the day tended to be conducted on an ad hoc basis and in some cases effectively dismissed, which would reduce potential student contact time to 5.25 hours.

These estimates, of course, do not include the contact time lost to disruptions, teacher absences, ineffective instruction, and general poor school management. A frequently-cited 1992 study conducted by UNICEF estimates that, on average, the effective time devoted to teaching-learning activities in formal schools was less than 40 minutes per day.[57] In some of the schools visited during this study, it is likely that this is the case. Simply taking the instructional hour estimate for grades one and two students in double-shift schools (one hour 50 minutes) presented above and multiplying by the average percentage of class-time found to be spent on teaching learning activities in rural schools (56 percent) would result in about 62 minutes devoted to teaching per day. If the low rate of student compliance with teacher instructions is assumed to be a proxy for learning (only 38 percent of the classes in rural schools were the majority of students following teacher instructions) and factored in, then this figure could be reduced even further. Since the study methodology assessed classes and not individual students, a mathematical calculation can not be done to adjust the instructional minutes.

It is possible, however, to calculate the annual number of contact hours and instructional hours students are likely to receive. Contact time measures the potential time a school operates (class periods plus assemblies and breaks), while instructional time measures the potential time that is spent on instruction during the days. Because there is variation in the factors used to estimate contact and instructional time, calculations for best case and worst case scenarios according to data and observations of the eight schools have been developed for grades one and two and grades three through five in double-shift schools. The point of departure for establishing the minutes of contact time is based on an urban school (best case) starting at 9:30 am and a rural school (worst case) starting at 10:00 am and starting one hour late one day per week (a probable underestimate). The worst case for grades three through five also assumes that children depart school after the afternoon break for tiffin.

Table IV.B.10 shows that under the best of circumstances observed at schools during the study, total annual contact hours for grades one and two are estimated at 419 and total annual instructional hours at 301. The numbers are notably lower if the worst of circumstances observed are used: 227 total annual contact hours and 104 total annual instructional hours.

Similarly for grades three through five, the best-case scenario estimates total annual contact hours at 729 and total annual instructional hours at 435. The numbers are

[57] We were unable to locate the mimeograph prepared by AHM Karim, "School-based Primary Education in Bangladesh: Review," UNICEF, Dhaka (1992).

shockingly lower if the worst of circumstances observed are used: 523 total annual contact hours and 99 total annual instructional hours.

In either case, the estimated contact hours fall far short of the 444 hours previously identified in earlier studies,[58] and do not approach the 654 contact hours estimated for grades one and two (64 percent at best, 35 percent at worst) and the 932 contact hours for grades three through five (78 percent at best, 27 percent at worst). Contact hours are dramatically less than the 750 hours recommended by PEDP II.

Table IV.B. 10: Best and Worst Cases for Total Annual Contact and Instructional Hours*

	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Minutes Per Day of Contact	Minutes Per Day in Class	Percent Spent on Instruction	Number of Actual School Days	Total Annual Contact Hours [a x d]/60	Total Annual Instructional Hours [b x c x d]/60
Double-shift Grades One and Two						
Best Case	165	135	72	186	419	301
Worst Case	135	110	56	101	227	104
Double-shift Grades Three Through Five						
Best Case	235	195	72	186	729	435
Worst Case	150	105	56	101	253	99

*Based on double-shift schools

The figures worsen if contact hours and instructional hours were to be redistributed over the 238 days in the school calendar (e.g. dividing the contact and instructional hours by 238). For grades one and two, the average minutes per day in contact time for the best case would be 105 minutes for the best case and 57 minutes for the worst case. In terms of instructional time, the best case would be 86 minutes and the worst case 26 minutes. For grades three through five, the average minutes per day in contact time for the best case would be 184 minutes for the best case and 64 minutes for the worst case. In terms of instructional time, the best case would be 110 minutes and the worst case 25 minutes.

Coupled with the data reported in other studies of contact hours in Bangladesh, the data from this research leads to the conclusion that contact time for children in school on a daily basis is far less than planned, disturbingly less than that prescribed by the government in double-shift schools, and tragically less than is needed to ensure that school children acquire fundamental skills of literacy, language, math, and critical thinking.

[58] The 444 contact hour figure is based on a 2.5 hour school-day for grades one and two, cited in The World Bank *Bangladesh Education Sector Review : Volume II* (2000), p.14.

Some Suggestions about School Day Organization:

- Re-organize school day to a shorter single shift.
- Combine smaller upper grades (e.g. combine grades four and five).
- Start earlier in morning at 9:00 a.m. (at least for teachers).
- Allow no 10:00 a.m. or later starting times.
- Increase class time to a longer block of time (e.g. 45 minutes).
- Incorporate one or more additional breaks into the school schedule for students.
- Provide sufficient teachers, especially to schools with small staffs (three or four teachers).
- Develop a remedial strategy for students (assign teachers, develop materials).
- Use distance learning strategies (e.g. radio broadcasts) to supplement classes and for remediation.
- Assign one teacher on a rotating basis to stay after school to help children with homework.
- Eliminate separate classes for culture, art, and handwriting and incorporate into core subjects.
- Eliminate English classes in the early grades (as competent teachers are not available).

C. Teacher Time and Attendance at School

Study findings:

- 13 percent of teachers were absent on the day the school was visited.
- 97 percent of teachers take leave, averaging ten days.
- 20 days of leave are allowed and teachers try to take full amount.
- Domestic tasks, special events, and income-generating activities account for the majority of days missed by teachers.
- 23 percent of teachers and 50 percent of head-teachers were late on the day the school was visited; about half were three to four hours late.
- Most teachers said they were late primarily because of domestic chores and transportation problems.
- Teachers in rural schools travel 53 minutes to get to school compared with 17 minutes for teachers at urban schools.
- The head-teacher sets the standard for punctuality.
- Of the 35 percent of teachers who admitted leaving early one or more days per month, most left because of domestic chores and income-generating activities.
- 40 percent of teachers, mainly men, engage in income-generating activities.
- Non-school-related official duties cause teachers to miss school, be late and leave early.
- No teacher reported ever being criticized or penalized for being absent or unpunctual.
- Schools cope with teacher absenteeism and lateness by enlisting a surplus teacher or head-teacher to take the classes, combining grades and class section, and shuttling between classrooms.
- Teachers believe they are underpaid and unappreciated, but 73 percent of them are satisfied with their job.

Teachers, including head-teachers, are a major determinant of the amount of contact time students receive, and virtually the sole determinant in the amount of quality instructional time provided. As seen from the two earlier sections, teachers play an influential and brokering role in whether schools open or not, how the school day is organized, how many students are in a class, how class time is used, and the type of instructional quality and attention the children receive. This section focuses on teacher attendance and punctuality. It examines the incidence and frequency of absenteeism, tardiness and early departure from school, the reasons for them, and other factors that may have an affect, such as income-generating activities, attitudes, and job satisfaction. It also looks at the consequences of irregular attendance on the teachers, and the coping strategies used by schools, students, and parents to deal with teacher absenteeism, tardiness and early departure.

1. *Policies Governing Teacher Attendance*

Teachers are expected to undertake all school-based activities related to teaching and school operations. They are to be present at the school during its scheduled hours of operation; teach the classes assigned to them according to the school timetable and government guidelines and academic programs; undertake class preparation and lesson plan development; and respond to administrative requirements, such as recording student attendance, maintaining student files, marking homework, and grading exams. Teachers are expected to interact with parents and the community on matters relating to the school and its students, by attending meetings of the SMC, PTA, and other school community events, and visiting homes of students and other school-aged children in the school catchment area. Teachers are required to participate in and support government educational activities, such as student recruitment drives, Food for Education (now terminated), school feeding programs, and the stipend program. As government employees, they may also be called on to assist other government programs and activities, such as child immunization, voter registration, and manning the election polls.

The teacher's immediate supervisor is the school head-teacher, who is responsible for monitoring teacher attendance and performance to ensure the teacher is present, undertaking assigned work, and effectively teaching the students. The head-teacher is expected to provide guidance to teachers on pedagogical and class management issues, lead them in instructional quality improvement efforts, and create a school environment conducive to student learning with the participation of teachers, parents and the community. The head-teacher reports to an Assistant Upazila Primary Education Officer (AUPEO), who is charged with providing administrative and academic support and supervision of the school through periodic visits. The AUPEO is responsible for the collection and verification of school statistics, and ensuring the accurate reporting of teacher and student attendance. The SMC is also expected to monitor the school overall, work with the head-teacher and teachers to ensure smooth operations and compliance with government guidelines, and report problems that can't be solved at the school to the UPEO.

Teachers are subject to the same provisions and regulations governing leave time as all government employees. There are no special provisions made for teachers to differentiate them from other civil servants (as in the case of police and military). Teachers earn and apply for leave according to five major categories: earned leave, casual leave, maternity leave, sick leave, and study leave. Like every government employee, teachers can take twenty days of leave in a calendar year, although no more than ten days at a time. Teachers can accrue up to four months of earned leave annually. (See box.)

Teachers are required to apply in advance for leave in writing. A teacher must write the head-teacher a letter requesting authorization prior to taking leave from his or her post. The letter will be maintained in the teacher's file for the AUPEO's review.

Unauthorized teacher absenteeism and tardiness are prohibited. Head-teachers are expected to maintain a register recording teacher attendance. Records of teacher attendance are supposed to be sent to the UPEO in the quarterly report of the head-teacher, who is expected to flag any teacher attendance and disciplinary problems. If the absences are unauthorized or contravene regulations and the tardiness is excessive, the UPEO is to notify the teacher that his or her behavior is considered a problem and will be monitored. A "show cause" letter will be sent and the teacher will have to provide an acceptable response. If the answer is deemed unsatisfactory, then "appropriate" action will be taken. Possible penalties include docking salary, transfer (generally to a less desirable school), and—ultimately—losing one's post.

Summary of Leave Policy for Government Employees (including teachers)

Earned Leave: The leave is accrued at a rate of one day in eleven working days during the working tenure.

There are two types.

1. It is $1/11^{th}$ of one's total working days and will be accumulated up to four months as earned leave. But if the total due exceeds four months the rest will be added to different leave categories (such as medical leave, leave for higher education).

   Example: If an employee completes a working period of five years, ten months and a day. His earned leave by definition, will be -

   {(5×365)+(30×10)+1}× 1/11=196 3/11 days or six month 13 days.

   So, he can take at most four months as earned leave, and the remaining will be added to a different leave item.

2. This category of earned leave can only be taken for medical treatment. An employee earns it at a rate of one day in every twelve working days. If an employee earned twelve months leave in this category he will be allowed to take six months leave for medical reasons.

Casual Leave: Every government official can take twenty days leave in a calendar year. Taking more than ten days of casual leave at a time is not permitted. The person who takes this leave will not be considered absent from his job. But if public interest is hampered by his not being in the chair, that person and his supervisor who allowed the leave will be held accountable.

Maternity Leave: A female employee is allowed to take up to 3 months of pregnancy leave. But she won't be allowed to take more than 6 weeks leave after the delivery date. So she can take leave prior to the delivery date to get her full due leave of pregnancy.

Sick Leave: If anyone requires sick leave, he can take the needed leave from the 'earned leave' by showing proper evidence. It is bit different for the risky professions like police and the fire brigade.

Study Leave: Only the government can allow this leave. Leave is granted if the government thinks the applicant needs to develop his or her skills or requires higher education that will be profitable for the state. This leave can be taken for two years with pay.

2. *The Findings: Teacher Attendance, Absenteeism, and Tardiness and Attributing Factors*

Teacher Profile

Twenty-six teachers from the eight schools visited responded to the teacher questionnaire.[59] All but two of the 15 female teachers interviewed served in urban schools; all but one of the male teachers interviewed served in rural schools. While not statistically valid, this distribution is largely indicative of the general distribution of male and female teachers in Bangladesh. Teachers were generally middle-aged (around 40 years old), with male teachers significantly older than female teachers. The female teachers in rural schools interviewed were in their 20s. Teachers had between 12 and 13 years of schooling; female teachers had about a year more than men. More female teachers had completed the in-service Certificate of Education course than men.

None of the teachers were inexperienced, with an average of over 17 years of teaching experience. Even the least experienced teachers averaged more than seven years on-the-job. On average, men had more seniority than women as teachers, having worked as teachers about three years longer than women. Teacher tenure at the schools visited were lengthy, averaging over nine years. Teachers had been at the urban schools visited for a longer period of time (11 years) than teachers at the rural schools (seven years).

All the female teachers interviewed were married and most had children. Only one male teacher was unmarried. Teachers, on average, had 2.5 children, with male teachers having larger families than female teachers. About half (46 percent) of the teachers resided in the same community as the school where they taught. Teachers in urban schools and female teachers overall were more likely to live in the school communities. In rural areas, only about one-third of the teachers lived in the same communities as the school.

Table IV.C.1: Teacher Profile

	Urban			**Rural**			**Total**		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Number of teachers	14	1	13	12	10	2	26	11	15
Percent Distribution	53.8	9.1	86.7	46.2	90.9	13.3	100.0	42.3	57.7
Average Age of Teachers	39.9	52.0	38.9	38.6	42.2	20.5	39.3	43.1	36.5
Average Qualification (grade level)	13.0	12.0	13.1	12.3	12.2	13.0	12.7	12.2	13.1
Average Years Working as a Teacher	17.9	30.0	17.0	16.3	18.0	7.5	17.2	19.1	15.7
Average Years Working at Sample Schools	11.6	11.0	11.6	6.8	7.0	5.5	9.4	7.4	10.8
Percent Married	100.0	100.0	100.0	91.6	90.0	100	96.2	90.9	100.0
Average Number of Children	2.1	5.0	1.9	3.0	3.4	1.0	2.5	3.5	3.3
Percent Living in the School Community	57.1	100.0	53.8	33.3	30.0	50.0	46.2	36.4	53.3

(N=26)

[59] Head-teachers (N=8) were not included and four teachers were absent the day of the school visit.

Teacher Attendance and Absenteeism

A high percentage (13 percent) of teachers were absent (not present)[60] on the day of the school visit, although no head-teachers were absent. This is consistent with the proportions reported in other studies, such as the PSPMP study. Two urban and two rural schools each had one teacher who was absent; in the rural schools, the two teachers—who were women—had been absent for several months. In the urban schools, the teachers were in day-long training sessions. None of the absences were considered unauthorized.

Table IV.C.2: Head-teacher and Teacher Absence on the Day of the School Visit

HT=head-teacher; T= teacher	Nilphamari District							
	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4	
	Urban		Urban		Rural		Rural	
	HT	T	HT	T	HT	T	HT	T
Number	1	7	1	4	1	2	1	4
Absent	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Percent Staff	0	0	0	25	0	0	0	25
HT=head-teacher; T= teacher	Jamalpur District							
	School 5		School 6		School 7		School 8	
	Urban		Rural		Rural		Rural	
	HT	T	HT	T	HT	T	HT	T
Number		5	1	3	1	2	1	3
Absent	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Percent Staff	0	20	0	0	0	50	0	0

HT=head-teacher; T= teacher	Total	
	HT	T
Number	8	26
Absent	0	4
Percent Staff	0%	13%

All schools visited experienced teacher absenteeism; all teachers of these schools had been absent over the course of the year. As shown in Table IV.C.3, in 2002, all teachers but one[61] (96 percent), took leave, averaging about ten days of leave, with the lowest number of days for rural male teachers (seven days) and the highest for urban female teachers (12 days). Of those taking annual leave, nearly 82 percent took an average of nine days personal leave, which covers a wide variety of personal reasons (except illness), ranging from attending a relative's funeral to caring for a sick child. The next largest percentage (28 percent) took medical or sick leave, averaging about one day.

[60] In Bangladesh, "absenteeism" to a teacher generally means unauthorized leave, so it is important to specify that by *absent,* one means "not present" at the school whether or not on authorized leave

[61] Only one female teacher in a dysfunctional rural school--frequently closed due to teacher absence--claimed not to have taken leave or missed school, which is unlikely.

Table IV.C.3: Percentage of Teachers Interviewed Having Taken Leave in 2002

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of Teachers Taken Leave:	100	100	100	100	100	50	96.2	100	93.3
Percent of Teachers Taken Leave For: N=25									
Medical (hospital, sick, quarantine)	21.4	0	23.1	36.4	30	100	28	27.3	36.4
Maternity			53.8			100			57.1
Disability	7.1	0	7.7	0	0	0	4	0	7.1
Earned Leave	14.3	0	15.4	0	0	0	8	0	14.3
Vacation									
Casual	100	100	100	81.8	80	100	92	81.8	100
Public Holiday	0	0	0	9.1	10	0	4	9.1	0
Other	0	0	0	9.1	10	0	4	9.1	0
Average Number of Leave Days:	12.46	17.0	12.12	7.25	8.3	2	10.06	9.09	10.77

(N=26)

Discussions with teachers, parents, and students at the school revealed that teachers were absent more often than the school attendance register recorded or they themselves admitted. The attendance register in one school for the day previous to the visit showed all teachers present, when parents and students indicated that three of four teachers were absent. In fact, the register had not been changed to reflect that a new female teacher had replaced a male teacher six months earlier.

Teacher estimates of the average number of days they were absent from school the previous month indicate that teachers are absent for more days than their official leave would imply. Sixty-five percent of teachers said they had missed one or more days of school "last month." Female teachers estimated that they missed nearly three days, and men nearly four days. If repeated over twelve months, this would result in an astounding rate of absenteeism, approximately four to five times higher than the ten days of leave reported for 2002. Even if reduced by half, it would still mean that teachers could miss between 20 and 30 days of school a year.

There is no notable gender difference in terms of teacher absenteeism. Although on the day of the school visit, three out four of the teachers absent were female, the patterns of leave-taking in 2002 and the percentage of self-reported teacher absences in October ("last month") do not break down along gender lines overall.

There is one obvious gender difference, however; about half the female teachers have taken maternity leave, although not in 2002 or 2003. Several have taken more than one maternity leave over the course of their career. The number of days taken for their maternity leave averages 76 (almost exactly the three months allowed), with one rural female teacher taking only 56 days. In understaffed schools or those with only three or four teachers, the extended leave taken for pregnancy or for any other reason could seriously compromise school operations. A system of substitute or temporary teachers

was not well established in the districts visited and the supply of such teachers was reported almost non-existent by education officials.

Finally, most students (79 percent) assess their teachers' absences—perhaps generously—as "sometimes," with nearly 90 percent of the students in urban schools agreeing that their teachers occasionally missed school. Rural children showed more variation: while the majority agreed that their teacher was absent on occasion, nearly 15 percent stated their teacher was "never" absent and ten percent "often" absent.

Table IV.C.4: Student Assessment of Frequency of Teacher Absence

	Urban	Rural	Total
Percent of Students Assessing Teacher Absence as:			
Never	7.4	15.6	12.5
Sometimes	88.9	73.3	79.2
Often	3.7	10.0	7.6
Very Often	0	1.1	0.6

(N=144)

The teachers interviewed frequently complained that, although they accumulated 20 days of "casual " leave per year, they were unable to use all of it due to the demands of the job. It should not be forgotten that this leave is in addition to the 75 holidays that include both summer and winter vacation, so that it is applied to an already reduced work year.[62] From the 238 potential workdays, teachers managed to take about ten days (or four percent). This means that the typical primary school of five teachers would be short one teacher for one week out of every month (or 25 percent of the school year).[63] If the total leave weeks are calculated as a proportion of the *operational* school days estimated for the best and worst case scenarios (see Section IV.A), then:

- Under the *best case*, the school would be short one teacher every three weeks (33 percent of the time).
- Under the *worst case*, the school would be short a teacher every other week (59 percent).

The strain on the school, its operations, and the negative impact on students would essentially double if most teachers were to take the full 20 days of leave allowed.

"Casual" leave is to be used for illness, emergencies and other life events that require the teacher to be absent from school. It is not intended to serve as vacation time, but teachers generally view it as an opportunity to be exploited. One head-teacher, who had already taken 14 days of leave in 2003, said that since teachers are faced with losing their casual leave which does not accrue, he is encouraging the teachers at his school to take it before the end of December. Since many of the eight teachers at the school had ten or more

[62] In comparison, in the United States, teachers in the typical school district are allowed up to five days of leave for illness (doctor's excuse if more than two days in a row), including one personal day in a school year.

[63] This is based on the total number of leave weeks (five teachers x roughly two weeks leave) as a proportion of week in the school calendar (238 days/six days=39.66 weeks).

unused leave days remaining in mid-November, the impact on class operations could be considerable, had the head-teacher not pointed out that the last month of the academic year entailed very little teaching anyway.

Although there are multiple reasons for teacher absenteeism, the preponderance of them falls into three categories. Table IV.C.5 shows that in 2002, the 96 percent (25 of 26) of teachers who were absent missed nearly five days due to domestic tasks, four days due to events (such as funerals, festivals and celebrations), and two days to income-generating activities.

Table IV.C. 5: Average Number of Days Missed in 2002 for Various Reasons

Reasons	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Illness	1.14	0	1.23	1.67	1.80	1.00	1.38	1.64	1.20
Female-specific Illness or Pregnancy									
Sub-total, Illness	*1.14*	*0*	*1.23*	*1.67*	*1.80*	*1.00*	*1.38*	*1.64*	*1.20*
Child Care	1.79	0	1.92	0.42	0.50	0	1.15	0.45	1.67
Care of Sick Relatives	1.36	0	1.46	0.33	0.40	0	0.88	0.36	1.27
Housework (cooking,cleaning, fetching wood or water, other)	3.07	0	3.31	1.33	1.40	1.00	2.27	1.27	3.00
Other Domestic Duties	0	0	.00	0.75	0.90	0	0.35	0.82	0
Sub-total, Domestic Duties	*6.22*	*0*	*6.69*	*2.83*	*3.20*	*1.00*	*4.65*	*2.90*	*5.94*
Farming	1.21	17.00	0	2.08	2.50	0	1.62	3.82	0
Family Business	0	0	0	.33	0.40	0	0.15	.36	0
Private Tutoring									
Work for Employer									
Other Income-generating Activities									
Sub-total, Income-generating Activities	*1.21*	*17*	*0*	*2.41*	*2.90*	*0*	*1.77*	*4.18*	*0*
Lack of Transportation to School									
Funerals, Wedding, Ceremonies, Festivals	2.50	0	2.69	0.25	0.30	0	1.46	0.27	2.33
In-service Teacher Training Programs									
Official Duties									
Other Events	2.36	0	2.54	1.08	1.30	0	1.77	1.18	2.20
Sub-total, Events	*4.86*	*0*	*5.23*	*1.33*	*1.60*	*0*	*3.23*	*1.45*	*4.53*
TOTAL Average Days Missed	11.10	17	10.6	7.20	8.20	2	9.3	9	9.5

(N=25)

The reasons for absenteeism break down along gender lines. Female teachers missed nearly twice as many days as male teachers for domestic reasons, while male teachers missed three times more days because of income-generating activities. These findings

were reflected in the comments of the teachers who said that women were unlikely to engage in income-generating activities—including private tutoring—because their domestic responsibilities, such as child care and house work, did not allow them the time to pursue other activities. Although most female teachers said that they had domestic help, they indicated they missed school due to food preparation and cooking tasks when the maidservant was ill or away. Most of the male teachers interviewed—even those who lived in town—owned small farms or had some income-producing land that supplemented (but reportedly did not rival) their salaries as a teacher.

Notably, teachers did not report that they were absent because of training or other official duties. As the data presented below show, this is not actually the case. The reason for the omission in teachers' responses is that teachers do not consider themselves "absent" if they are engaged in an authorized official activity or training, even if it takes them from the classroom. The figures in Table IV.C.6 indicates that the real rate of teacher absenteeism *from the classroom and teaching duties* is higher than the amount of leave days taken or the reported absences (in Table IV.C.5) would imply.

Nearly 60 percent of teachers said they missed full or partial days of school in 2002 because they participated in training, averaging about six days a year (which would allow for the bi-monthly sub-cluster training). Nearly four of these days were spent in in-service workshops and refresher training (see Table IV.A.3 for break down).

The teacher absences from school caused by training can be considerable, especially if the teacher is also a trainer. The head-teacher of the rural "charland" school who missed 45 days in 2002 conceded that perhaps missing so much school was "not right, but I will never turn down training. I must respond because it is an upazila office order." There are other incentives, as well. Teachers are paid 125 Taka/day if they are trainees, and 225 Taka/day if they are trainers, in addition to their salaries. These amounts are nearly equal to their daily earnings as classroom teachers.

Over 90 percent of teachers absented themselves from the school in 2002 because of official duties, required as part of their jobs as a teacher (e.g. stipend program) or as a civil servant (e.g. health campaigns). Seventy-one percent were involved in the vaccination campaign, 29 percent in the Meena Rally, and over four percent in voter registration and elections (see Table IV.A.4 for breakdown). It should be noted that these figures are less that the 4.27 days that teachers said they missed in a typical month because of training and official duties (see Table IV.A.2).

Table IV.C.6: Incidence of Teacher Absence for Training and Official Duties in 2002

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of teachers absent full or partial days for training	64.3	100	61.5	50	60	00	57.7	63.6	61.5
Average days missed for training (N=15)	5.44	1	6	6.7	6.7	00	5.93	5.86	6
Percent of teachers absent for official duties	92.8	100	92.3	91.7	90	100	92.3	90.9	93.3
Average days missed (N=24)	2.78	6	2.5	2.45	1.88	3	2.64	2.61	2.57

Teacher Tardiness

On the day of the school visit, 23 percent of the teachers and 50 percent of the head-teachers were tardy. Of these, 50 percent of head-teachers and about 40 percent of teachers were between three and four hours late, enough to completely shut down the morning shift of the small-staffed rural schools where they were concentrated. In fact, many of the teachers may have planned to be absent, but they received word that a research team had arrived and therefore put in an appearance. Ironically, as mentioned previously, all the teachers at the rural schools in question misrepresented the "official" school starting time by 30 minutes; yet they were late even for the actual starting time (10:00 am).

Table IV.C.7: Head-teacher and Teacher Tardiness on the Day of the School Visit

	Nilphamari District							
	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4	
	Urban		Urban		Rural		Rural	
	HT	T	HT	T	HT	T	HT	T
Tardy	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	1
0-1 hr	1							1
1-2 hr		1				1		
3-4 hr					1	1		
Percent	100	14	0	0	100	100	0	33
	Jamalpur District							
	School 5		School 6		School 7		School 8	
	Urban		Rural		Rural		Rural	
	HT	T	HT	T	HT	T	HT	T
Tardy	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	0
0-1 hr					1			
1-2 hr				1				
3-4 hr			1	2				
Percent	0	0	100	100	100	0	0	0

	Total	
	HT	T
Tardy	4	7
0-1 hr	2	1
1-2 hr	0	1
3-4 hr	2	3
Percent	50	23

More than 40 percent of the teachers interviewed indicated that they were late one day or more per month, with the incidence of tardiness about twice as high among teachers in rural schools (58 percent) as among teachers in urban schools (29 percent). Most students (58 percent) say their teachers are "sometimes" late, but 20 percent say they are "never" late and 15 percent say they are "often" late.

Table IV.C.8 Teacher Tardiness per Month

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of teachers tardy one day or more per month	28.6	0	30.8	58.3	60	50	42.3	23.1	19.2
Average tardy days by teachers who admit tardiness	1.25		1.25	1.57	1.50	2.0	1.45	1.50	1.40

(N=26)

Table IV.C.9: Student Assessment of Frequency of Teacher Tardiness

Variable	Urban	Rural	Total
	Total	*Total*	*Total*
Percent of students assessing teacher tardiness as:			
Never	29.6	15.6	20.8
Sometimes	55.6	60.0	58.3
Often	14.8	15.6	15.2
Very often	0	8.9	5.5

(N=144)

The largest percentages of teachers are late for school because of domestic chores (36 percent) and transportation problems (27 percent). Distance from school, income-generating activities, official duties, and simply "no reason" accounted for about nine percent (i.e. one teacher) each of primary teacher reasons for tardiness.

Table IV.C.10: Incidence of Primary Reason for Teacher Tardiness

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of teachers tardy primarily due to:									
Transportation problems		0	25		33.2	0	27.3	33.2	20
Distance to school	0	0	0		16.7	0	9.1	16.7	0
Sleep late	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Domestic chores		0	75			100	36.3		80
Income-generating activities	0	0	0	0	16.7	0	9.1	16.7	0
Official duties	0	0	0		16.7	0	9.1	16.7	0
No reason	0	0	0		16.7	0	9.1	16.7	0
Total	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(N=11)

Like the reasons for teacher absenteeism, female teachers (80 percent) were most likely to name domestic chores—preparing breakfast and readying children for school—as the primary cause of tardiness. Male teachers (about 50 percent) were most likely to cite transportation and its corollary, distance to school, as the primary reasons for tardiness.

Seventeen percent of male teachers also identified income-generating activities as the primary reason for their tardiness.

Urban-rural differences reflect the distribution of teachers by sex, with most female teachers in urban schools and most male teachers in rural ones. Transportation and distance to school are more significant problems in rural areas: only 25 percent of urban teacher mentioned it as a problem, compared with 33 percent of rural teachers. Urban teachers did not mention distance to school at all, compared with 17 percent of rural teachers. This is not surprising as most teachers in rural school had to travel considerable distances. Only 33 percent of rural teachers lived in the school community, in contrast to the 53 percent of urban teachers who lived in their school community.

Table IV.C.11: Average Travel Time (in minutes) to School and Mode of Transportation

	Urban			**Rural**			**Total**		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Average Travel Time	17.4	5.0	18.3	53.0	43.6	100.0	33.8	40.1	29.2
Percent of Teachers Traveling by:									
Private vehicle or motorcycle				16.7	20.0		7.7	18.2	
Private Bicycle				50.0	60.0		23.0	54.5	
Commercial transport (bus, boat, rickshaw, etc.)	78.6		84.6	8.3		50.0	46.2		80.0
Walk	21.4	100.0	15.4	25.0	20.0	50.0	23.1		20.0
Mixed				27.3			13.0	27.3	
Other									

(N=26)

The average one-way travel time to school for teachers was 34 minutes, but teachers in rural schools spent 53 minutes on average versus the 17 minutes spent by teachers in urban schools. Nearly half the teachers (46 percent) take some form of commercial transport—whether bus, rickshaw, or boat; 23 percent each either walk or use their bicycles (men only). Only about eight percent of teachers—all men—own and use a private vehicle, most often a motorcycle. Nearly 30 percent use multiple modes of transportation. For example, in one school, the head-teacher explained that he and two other teachers traveled one and a half hours to reach the school, crossing three rivers, and alternately walking, taking a rickshaw, and a boat. He admits that "We are late and leave early as we don't live here. We must catch the ferry. If we don't leave early we won't get home before 5:00 pm or even 10:00 pm during the monsoon."

Finally, the influence of the head-teacher in setting the standard for punctuality cannot be ignored. In three of the five schools where teachers were tardy on the day of the visit, the head-teacher was also late. Teachers seemed to gauge the degree of their tardiness to match the head-teachers'—the later the head-teacher, the later the teachers. The PSPMP study also found that the punctuality of the head-teacher influences teacher punctuality and attendance.

The Punctuality of the Head-teacher Sets the School Schedule

Eight kilometers from the Upazila headquarters, School # 7 sits next to the river, about a ten-minute walk from the end of a dirt track, where vehicles must be abandoned. There are three teachers at this school, including the head-teacher, but one has been on leave for at least six months.

At 9:30 am, one teacher is in the one of the three classrooms coaching three students for the grade five scholarship exam. Another classroom is occupied by ten women who are taking a tailoring class. A crowd of about 50 children is gathered in the yard in front of the school. Most indicate that they are students in the school, and raise their books carefully encased in plastic bags to validate their claim. A 9-year old grade two student says that school starts at 10:00 am, but it won't "really" start until the head-master comes. He arrives at 10:30 am. Parents and students say he arrives late three or four days per week. He also leaves early, often by 3:00 pm.

Since the one teacher present cannot manage school alone, it opens when the head-master arrives and closes when he leaves.

Early Departure from School

It was impossible to assess early departure the day the school was visited, as teachers would not leave the school until the research team did. However, there were several reports of early departures by teachers, particularly in rural areas. In fact, one head-teacher insisted he had to close the school early (between 2:00 pm and 3:00 pm) so that three of the four teachers could reach town before 5:00 pm. Interestingly, none of the teachers at this school indicated an earlier quitting time during their interviews, all stating that the school closed at 4:15 pm, which was clearly a fabrication, given both the head-teacher's statement and community feedback.

Table IV.C.12: Teacher Early Departure Per Month

	Urban			**Rural**			**Total**		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of teachers leaving early one day or more per month	21.40	100.00	15.40	50.00	50.00	50.00	34.62	54.50	20.00
Average number of days of early departure: N=9	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.63	1.80	0.80	1.76	1.83	1.60
Range : 1-3 days									

(N=26)

Thirty-five percent of teachers said they leave school early at least one day a month, estimating on average that they leave early two days per month. Teachers at rural schools were more likely to depart before the official end of the school day than their urban counterparts. Female teachers in urban schools appear most likely to remain to the end of the school day throughout the month, but this is the result of the distribution of teachers, not gender. Fifty-one percent of the interviewed students assessed that their teachers "sometimes" left school early, with a greater percentage of rural students agreeing. 13 percent of urban students said their teachers "often" left early.

Table IV.C.13: Student Assessment of Frequency of Teacher Early Departure

	Urban	Rural	Total
Percent of students assessing teacher early departure as: N=143			
Never	44.4	34.4	38.5
Sometimes	40.7	57.8	51.7
Often	13.0	4.4	7.7
Very often	0	3.3	2.0

(N=144)

Nearly 68 percent of the teachers said that they left school early because of domestic chores (predominately female) and income-generating activities (all males). Distance to school was cited by 11 percent of teachers (all male), as was attendance at a special event (all female).

Table IV.C.14: Primary Reason for Teacher Early Departure

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of teachers leaving early due to:									
Transportation problems	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Distance to school	0	0	0	16.7	20	0	11.1	16.7	0
Domestic chores	66.7	0	100	16.7	20	0	33.4	16.7	66.7
Income-generating activities	33.3	100	0	33.2	40	0	33.3	50	0
Official duties	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Special events	0	0	0	16.7	20	0	11.1	16.6	0
Students leave	0	0	0	16.7	0	100	11.1		33.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(N=9)

The education authorities say that in "charland" schools early departure is a particular problem because teachers reserve boats for only a few hours, necessitating they leave early. Teachers say that they can arrange boat transport for about 100 Taka/each per month, but that they must conform to the boatman's schedule. They say that they receive no special transport allowance when their school is a hard-to-reach one.

Even at a well-run rural school, the highly-regarded head-teacher estimates that teachers will have to leave early one or two days per month, closing the school early, mainly because they must pick up their pay and bank it.

Eleven percent of teachers also said that they left school early because the students leave early. Teachers will decide to close the school (and leave early) if they determine that there are not enough students to teach, rather than there not being any students at all.

The Effects of Income-generating Activities and Non-school Duties on Teacher Attendance

Ten of the 26 teachers interviewed (about 40 percent) indicated that they earn extra money from other jobs over the course of the year. If the six head-teachers (of eight) who said they earned extra money were included, the percentage would increase to 47 percent. Most of the teachers who earned extra money did so on an annual basis rather than on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, probably reflecting that most were engaged in agricultural activities that would produce income only after harvest or periodically.

Teachers at rural schools (58 percent) were more likely to engage in income-generating activities than their urban counterparts (21 percent). All but one of the male teachers earned extra income through farming. The male teachers did not engage in farming themselves for the most part, but managed the laborers they employed. In fact, one urban teacher used his 17 days of leave for farming. The only male teacher who was not engaged in agriculture was a "rural physician" who was late on the day the school was visited because he had to attend a medical emergency.

Four of the five male head-teachers interviewed also said that they supplemented their income by farming, as their teacher salary was not sufficient for their family's needs. None said that they could earn more money as a farmer, however. One head-master estimated that his land produces about 4,000 Taka per month, while he earns 6,500 Taka per month as a senior teacher.

Table IV.C.15: Incidence of Teachers Earning Extra Money, Frequency and Means

	Urban			**Rural**			**Total**		
	Total (14)	*Male (1)*	*Female (13)*	*Total (12)*	*Male (10)*	*Female (2)*	*Total (26)*	*Male (11)*	*Female (15)*
Percent (Number) of teachers who earn extra money	21.4 (3)	100 (1)	15.4 (2)	58.3 (7)	70 (7)	0 (0)	38.5 (10)	72.7 (8)	13.3 (2)
Percent (Number) of teachers earning extra money: N=10									
Daily				14.3 (1)	14.3	0	10 (1)	12.5	0
Weekly				14.3 (1)	14.3	0	10 (1)	12.5	0
Monthly				14.3 (1)	14.3	0	10 (1)	12.5	0
Yearly	100 (3)	100	100	57.1 (4)	57.1	0	70 (7)	62.5	100
Percent (Number) of teachers earning extra money by: N=10									
Tutoring students	12.5 (1)	0	50	0	0	0	10 (1)	0	50
Farming	66.7 (2)	100	50	85.7 (6)	85.7	0	80 (8)	75	50
Village doctor	00 (0)	0	0	14.3 (1)	14.3	0	10 (1)	12.5	0

(N=26)

Only two of the 15 female teachers said they earned extra money. One owns a small property that her family manages for farming; another said that she tutors students sporadically, primarily before exams.

Despite reports of other studies that teachers frequently earn extra money as tutors (withholding instruction in class in order to extract funds from their students afterwards), private tutoring *by teachers* in the schools visited was a rare phenomenon, possibly because the sample was limited to very poor areas and schools. In fact, parents complained that they had difficulty in locating qualified tutors for their children. Female teachers hurried home to do domestic chores and male teachers preferred to concern themselves with other activities, such as farming, participating in the teacher's association, and serving on the managing committee of the local madrasah (as two head-masters did). Also, there is probably very little financial incentive for teachers to tutor. The ability of poor parents to pay is limited. Parents reported that they paid 100 Taka per month to secondary school students for private tuition. Even if adjusted upward for teachers, this amount would hardly rival the 4,000 Taka per month earned from farming. However, several schools did assess charges for coaching classes provided to grade five scholarship candidates.

Nearly half (46 percent) of the teachers interviewed claimed that the duties they were expected to undertake as government employees, not related to their jobs as teachers, had a deleterious impact on their work as teachers. Of them, 46 percent reported that these non-school duties required an early departure from school, although only nine percent said that these duties made them late for school. Nearly half (45 percent) said that these duties resulted in absenteeism: either the teacher was required to miss the entire day of school (27 percent) or was too fatigued by the non-school activity to attend school and resume teaching activities the next day.

Table IV.C.16: The Effect of Non-school Duties on Teachers

	Urban			**Rural**			**Total**		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of teachers claiming non-school work affected teaching:	61.5	100	58.3	27.3	33.3	0	45.8	40	50
Percent of teachers claiming non-school duties: N=11									
Made me late for school	12.5	0	14.3	0	0	0	9.1	0	14.3
Made me leave school early	37.5	100	28.6	66.7	66.7	0	45.5	75	28.6
Required that I miss the entire school day	37.5	0	42.8	0	0	0	27.3	0	42.8
Made me too tired to attend school	12.5	0	14.3	33.3	33.3	0	18.2	25	14.3
Other									

(N=24)

Coping with Teacher Absenteeism, Tardiness, and Early Departure

None of the eight schools visited is untouched by teacher absenteeism, tardiness or early departure. All have experienced a shortage of teachers, most on a regular basis. *How do schools and students deal with the rampant teacher absenteeism, tardiness and early departure?*

Penalties: Although the official policies and education supervision system have been established to address and deal with teacher attendance problems, in actuality there seems to be no enforcement of the procedures and rules. There are few, if any, negative consequences in store for excessively absent and tardy teachers. None of the teachers interviewed reported that they had ever been penalized or even criticized for attendance lapses. None of the head-teachers interviewed reported that they had ever initiated action against a teacher for excessive absences or tardiness.

Table IV.C.17: Incidence of Actions Taken Against Teachers for Poor Attendance

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Absenteeism									
Percent of teachers criticized	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of teachers paid for ALL days missed	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Tardiness/Early Departure									
Percent of teachers whose pay had been adjusted	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of teachers criticized	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

(N=17)

In large part this appears to be due to the generous interpretation of the rules and regulations governing teacher attendance and leave. First, virtually all teacher absences are considered legitimate, if the teacher provides a note in advance—even the morning of the day he or she is absent. One head-teacher produced a letter from a female teacher that she submitted on November 1 to notify him—not request permission—of her planned absence for November 2-3.[64] Second, if the teacher can provide an "acceptable" excuse the next day, the absence is approved. For example, a head-master at one school says that if a teacher is absent and he has not been provided with prior notice, he puts a "red mark in the attendance register, and gets the reason the next day." If the teacher's excuse is not satisfactory, he could write to the UPEO. But, he adds, this has never happened.

At the schools visited there seems to be a general tolerance of absenteeism and lack of punctuality. No complaints were heard against chronic offenders. In part, this is likely because the head-teachers are often as culpable themselves of poor attendance and punctuality. A frequently-late head-master said he could give a verbal reprimand to the teachers for being late, but that he understands why they are and "it is not their fault."

[64] This did not appear to be a pre-prepared letter as it was dated.

Also, as the teachers appear to want to maximize the leave time they take, there is probably a "give and take" type generosity exercised.

All excuses appear acceptable. One head-teacher justified his own three-hour tardiness that day by explaining that he had to attend meeting at a madrasah where he is on the management committee (not part of his official duties). "It's not my fault, it's an obligation," he declared. "Why should my pay be docked?"

Personal ties also come into play. At the same school, the SMC chairman said, "Teachers are tardy which hurts the students and they should be reprimanded, but they are our neighbors and have family obligations too, so we can't rebuke them."

Both the Education Watch and PSPMP studies found that inspection visits by local authorities are seldom made to schools on a regular or frequent basis, and that schools located at a distance from the upazila headquarters may go a year without a visit. When they occur, inspection visits by the upazila education officers generally consist of an hour or so with the head-master examining the school records, which may be deliberately inaccurate or "cooked" to conceal the true extent of teacher absences. None of the school communities reported that the AUPEOs attempted to meet with parents to verify the veracity of the teacher attendance records. At most, attempts by the education authorities to control for absenteeism appears to be focused on students to ensure that attendance criteria stipulated by the stipend program are met, rather than any criteria for teachers.

School Coping Strategies: Schools generally deal with the teacher deficit that teacher absence, tardiness and early departure create in a limited number of ways:

- If the head-teacher has no teaching duties, then he or she will assume responsibility for teaching the absent teacher's classes.
- If there are no "surplus" teachers, then the head-teacher will combine two grades or sections and assign them to one teacher.
- If the class sizes are too large to fit in one classroom, then the teacher assigned to them will "shuttle" back and forth between the two, having the students in one class do individual or group work assignments while he or she teaches the students in another class.

In one unusual instance, a persistent head-teacher was able to obtain the deputation of a "temporary" teacher to his school for the year to cover the extended leave of another teacher. However, educational authorities in both Jamalpur and Nilphamari said that there was no pool of substitute teachers of which they could draw upon. At most, teachers from schools where the student-teacher ratio was not as high, teachers might be temporarily re-assigned if they were amenable. Reportedly, many are not, as the neediest schools are the least desirable and they are afraid they may lose their permanent posting.

Schools may also compensate for teacher absences (and insufficient contact time caused by limited school days and school operating hours) by assigning homework to students,

expecting them to learn at home what could not be or was not taught in class. Ninety percent of students interviewed said they were assigned homework and, on average, spent about ten hours per week on it. (See Table IV.D.21 in next section.) Most schools reported that they give little written homework, but mainly give reading assignments. Frequently mentioned constraints to this "instructional" approach were the inability of illiterate parents to assist their children and the obvious problems posed by some children's lack of textbooks.

The ultimate "solution" is to close the school for the day if not enough teachers are present, as had been reported in several schools. Finally, there were no reports by teachers, of course, or parents that teachers hired "contract" teachers, to serve in their stead. However, the one-day visits to the schools were not conducive to uncovering acts of deep subterfuge and complicity.

Student and Parent Coping Strategies: Students also must deal with teacher absenteeism, tardiness, and late departure. Table IV.C.18 shows how students said they responded to failures in teacher attendance. According to 64 percent of students, absences are generally dealt with by another teacher or the head-teacher taking over the class. (This appears to be less often the case in rural schools) However, 46 percent of the students say that they play, sing or gossip, and ten percent say they simply go home. It also appears that the "shuttle" strategy schools use, with a teacher moving between two classes is only partially successful: only 18 percent of students seem to be able to study independently, while the others (16 percent) "stay idle" or even leave.

Table IV.C.18: Student Activities When Teacher is Absent, Tardy, and Leaves Early*

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
When teacher is absent, percent of students (N=128)									
Taught by substitute assistant teacher	76.0	85.7	69.0	43.6	40.0	48.5	56.2	54.5	58.1
Taught by Head-teacher	12.0	4.8	17.2	5.1	4.4	6.4	7.8	4.5	11.3
Playing, singing, gossiping	34.0	38.1	31.0	53.8	55.6	51.5	46.1	50.0	41.9
Studying, preparing task	24.0	23.8	24.1	14.1	17.8	9.1	17.9	19.7	16.1
Staying idle	10.0	4.8	13.8	20.5	22.2	18.2	16.4	16.7	16.1
Returning home	2.0	4.8	0.0	15.4	13.3	18.2	10.1	10.6	9.7
When teacher is tardy, percent of students : (N=114)									
Playing, singing, gossiping	60.5	75.0	50.0	85.5	86.7	83.9	77.2	83.6	69.81
Studying, preparing task	39.5	43.8	36.4	34.2	31.1	38.7	35.9	34.4	37.7
Staying idle	28.9	18.8	36.4	40.8	37.8	45.2	36.8	32.8	41.5
Returning home	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.0	3.2	0.9	0.0	1.9
When teacher leaves early, percent of students (N=101)									
Playing, singing, gossiping	52.9	61.5	47.6	55.2	53.5	58.3	54.4	55.3	53.3
Studying, preparing task	41.2	53.8	33.3	28.4	25.6	33.3	32.7	32.1	33.3
Staying idle	35.3	23.1	42.9	25.4	23.3	29.2	28.7	23.2	35.5
Returning home	5.9	7.7	4.8	17.9	23.3	8.3	13.9	19.6	6.7
Drawing	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	2.3	0.0	0.9	1.8	0.0

(N=128 for absenteeism, 114 for late, 101 for leave early)
* Multiple answers per student

When a teacher is tardy, most (77 percent) students occupy themselves with playing and gossiping. One community complained that students—unattended because of multiple teacher tardiness—would fight and that parents would have to come to school to resolve the problem. 36 percent indicated that they studied or worked on the assignment given by another teacher. However, only a few (three percent) said they left school. In contrast, early departure by the teacher precipitates the departure of 14 percent of the students.

Parents with the means often turn to private tutoring as a way of dealing with the lack of instruction caused at least partially by teacher absenteeism and tardiness. Nearly half the students interviewed said they received private tutoring. (See Section IV.D for discussion.) Parents generally turn to local secondary school students, in one instance pooling their funds to hire a student to coach their children in the crumbling "bashe" building of a former school.

But parents who can not afford private tutoring express frustration, anger, and despair at the paucity of schooling their children are receiving. Although many are uneducated, parents realize the students are not getting essential skills. They know that their child needs help with homework and that he or she has not mastered rudimentary skills of reading, writing, and simple math. They are aware that teachers are not spending the requisite time at school, that this results in down-time and high class sizes, and identify it as a major factor in the low quality of schooling provided. "I don't expect a stipend for my children, but I need quality education for my children. I am frightened for my children's future. My brain is stymied," said one parent. (See box.)

No Learning Takes Place at This School

Head-teacher and teacher attendance is a problem at this rural school. Three of the four teachers live 1.5 hours away in town. Parents report that teacher absenteeism is high and tardiness is even higher. The head-master is always late, if he comes at all. Two other teachers are irregular in attendance, and their effectiveness when they do come to school is questionable. The gray-bearded grade two teacher routinely takes time out of class to nap. The teachers always leave early to catch the boat back to town. The one local teacher—who lives within view of the school—is the most regular, but often he is the only teacher present.

"Yesterday he was the only teacher who came, he stayed for ½ hour and then left." The students waited for the school to re-open, but it never did. They say they like school: it's better than staying home where parents always have a chore. At school, they can play and gossip while they wait for the teachers to arrive.

Today, the local teacher runs to the school at 11:15 am when the research team arrives. The head-teacher arrives about 12.30 pm; he was late because of "administrative duties." The two other teachers arrive 15 minutes later; they could not get to school sooner because they had to collect and bank their pay. This happens routinely because "The banks are only open during school hours. We have no option."

The parents know the rules and they know that they "are not being treated correctly." They know that if teachers came, the classes would be smaller. They also know that their children are not learning. One father shows how his grade three son cannot write his father's name. A mother asks her grade two daughter to read from her book; the child cannot. Several parents push their children forward to demonstrate their lack of reading, writing, and math skills. Another parent who despairs of his grade five son's chance at secondary school declares, "No learning takes place at this school."

The SMC vice chairman says that he has talked to the Upazila education office, but there was no action and the teachers always have excuses. He explains, "If the school operated regular hours, we would make sure that the students attended all the time. We even tried to negotiate with the head-master that the school stays open until 3:00 pm, but we didn't get it."

Parents nodded in agreement as one angry father shouted, "All the teachers in this school should be transferred to the Hill Tract areas to be punished. Our children are simply ruined."

Teacher Attitudes Affecting Their Attendance and Punctuality

The sense of relative deprivation is strong among the head-teachers and teachers interviewed. Many believed that they were underpaid in comparison with other government employees. The pay scale was discriminatory because there was no difference in the levels of qualifications, there was no career ladder beyond head-teacher, and there was no recognition or reward system for conscientious work.[65] In Nilphamari District, discussions with head-teachers, teachers, and other education officials generally led to recommendations to improve contact time that centered on improving the financial position of teachers.

Many indicated that they were also demoralized by the increasing amount of "red-tape," administrative requirements, and demands on their time by non-teaching duties. "It's hard to be a good teacher," said one female teacher in an urban school.

Others felt that they were not accorded much respect by the government or educational authorities. They noted that they were placed in the lowest category of professionals in the civil service, and that a beginning teacher makes less than a "peon" (clerical worker), indicating their low status within the system. A group of teachers related that they had to close school on Meena Day to attend the rally, but that the DPEO did not even ask a teacher to speak at the occasion, even though "teachers are the builders of children." They said that they needed "psychological incentives" to do a better job as teachers.

While the data and observations presented in the above section are bleak, several teachers demonstrated that they did care about their students. Teachers at the three urban schools mentioned that they helped students pay for exam fees and put in extra time coaching scholarship students before the exam. Other teachers said they had helped children with books and medicine. Eighty-five percent of teachers said they had attended on average two community events in the past month, most often an SMC meeting. However, teachers in urban schools seemed to maintain regular contact with their students' parents, compared with teachers in rural areas, few of whom reported meeting with parents in the last month.

[65] Teachers earn between 4,000 Taka and 6,300 Taka per month, depending on their rank as untrained, trained, or head-teacher. Teachers did not compare their salary in relation to the community standards in which they lived and worked, but rather in relation to other civil servants. A day laborer may make only 1000 Taka a month. Teachers were considered well-off by the local community. "They are all rich. They have concrete houses," said one SMC chairman.

Table IV.C.19: Percentage Distribution of Teachers NOT Satisfied with Their Present Job

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent teachers who are NOT satisfied	35.7	0	38.5	16.7	20.0	0	26.9	18.2	33.3
Why NOT : N =7									
Salary is not satisfactory	20.0	0	20.0	0	0	0	14.3	0	20
Teaching is hard work	20.0	0	20.0	0	0	0	14.3	0	20
Every one searching better opportunity	60.0	0	60.0	50.0	50.0	0	57.1	50.0	60.0
Faulty education system	0	0	0	50.0	50.0	0	14.3	50.0	0

(N=26)

Finally, when asked whether they would choose to be a primary teacher if they could choose any other profession, 73 percent said that they would and 27 percent indicated they would choose another profession. Female teachers were more dissatisfied than male teachers. The reason four teachers (57 percent) gave for job dissatisfaction is somewhat general, vague, and philosophical: essentially, that everyone is "searching for a better opportunity." The remaining three teachers each said that the salary was not sufficient, teaching was hard and frustrating, and the education system was "faulty" and created a discouraging environment. Said one highly-regarded, senior male head-teacher nearing the end of his career, "I would like to continue working in education, but if I had to do it again, I would work in the upazila or district education office, not the school."

3. *Conclusions about Teacher Time and Attendance and Suggestions*

The high rate of teacher absenteeism from school and teachers' lack of punctuality obviously have serious—often catastrophic—consequences for school operations and student learning. Individual teacher absences reduce the contact time per student, produce increases in the student-teacher ratio, and cause class sizes to swell, making instruction and class management more difficult and undermining the instructional quality provided to the class as a whole. If a critical mass of teachers is absent on the same day it is likely that the school will simply close, reducing the contact and instructional time for the entire student body.

Teacher tardiness and early departures also erode the amount of contact and instructional time. Often the late arrival and early departure of teachers, especially the head-teacher, determines the effective hours of operation of a school. Chronic teacher absence and tardiness is likely to negatively affect student attendance. Of the eight schools visited, the three with the lowest student attendance rates were those where the teachers' attendance was reported to be the most problematic. These schools were also among the

furthest in distance from the local education authority, thereby limiting the potential for non-scheduled oversight of the school and its teachers.[66]

The high rate of teacher absence from school is caused in part by institutional reasons and part by a lack of teacher professionalism. The casual leave policy is so generous—granting 20 days of leave—that it cannot fail to significantly reduce contact and instructional time. Teachers view it as one of the perquisites of the job, and exploit the number of days to full advantage. Moreover, teachers are frequently called away from school to work on other official duties, such as health campaign and elections. Some teachers interviewed will knowingly sacrifice their students' learning in order to take advantage of training opportunities that pay an incentive; others will avoid school altogether for no apparent reason other than that the supervisory or accountability system is so weak or ineffective that they can get away with not showing up for school.

Teacher absence, tardiness and early departure are not only a direct result of the regulations, but also can be partially attributed to the lack of enforcement of the regulations. Despite the high incidence of absenteeism and lack of punctuality, not a single teacher interviewed had ever been reprimanded nor had a single head-teacher ever issued a rebuke. The regulations governing leave and the procedures for applying it are so liberally interpreted that it would be unusual if a teacher could actually be found in an unauthorized absence. Further, it appears that both teachers and their immediate supervisors (the head-teachers) may be equally guilty of excessive absences and tardiness, so that it is mutually beneficial not to report poor attendance. Higher educational authorities say they are deterred from intervening because of the influence of teachers' unions and pressure from MPs.

The overall impression from interviews with head-teachers, teacher focus group discussions, and conversations with individual teachers is that teachers tend to view their job as a task that must conform to the time demands and schedule of the other—more important—activities of their private lives. If a madrasah managing committee calls a meeting, the teacher is justified in being late for school to attend it. If it takes an hour and a half to make the trip home after school, then the teacher is justified in leaving school early in order to allow for a 4:30 pm arrival at home. If the family farm needs tending, then a teacher is justified in taking leave. Moreover, it appears that all other professional duties—training, administration, special programs—all are accorded precedence over actual teaching duties (i.e. time in the classroom spent on instruction) both by the teacher and by the educational system.

Teachers believe that they are underpaid and unappreciated by higher authorities. Their determination to limit the amounts of time they spend in school and on the job, as well as take advantage of the loopholes and weakness of the system, may be a means of rationing to adjust for perceived shortfalls in remuneration. The less time they must spend working, the greater their salary. And the more free time they have, the greater the

[66] The Education Watch 2000 study found that student achievement was positively associated with distance between the school and education authority.

opportunity for maximizing personal gain—either from other income-generating ventures or from spending time on family and household.

Teacher attendance at school is the foundation of a functioning educational system, which is able to impart the required skills to its students. The PSPMP study found a strong correlation between regular head-teacher attendance and teacher punctuality, on the one hand, and student achievement, on the other. The shockingly low rates of teacher attendance and the practices associated with absenteeism and lack of punctuality observed in the eight schools visited virtually guarantee that most of the students in these schools will never receive the instructional time necessary to adequately master the fundamental skills of literacy and numeracy.

Some Suggestions About Teacher Absence, Tardines, and Early Departure:

- Reduce the casual leave and revise the leave policies for teachers to be consistent with contact hour requirements.
- Revise teacher payment procedures to eliminate the need to deal with them during the school day.
- Institute and enforce a system of incentives and penalties for teacher attendance and performance.
- Create a system of rotating substitute teachers.
- Limit the amounts of training a teacher can pursue, either as a trainer or trainee.
- Terminate government policy of taking teachers from the classroom to deal with non-teaching duties.
- Initiate an IEC campaign aimed at teachers and the public about teacher attendance and punctuality (the requirements, the consequences, and the procedures to deal with non-conforming teachers).
- Enforce the "enforcers" in taking appropriate action against teachers and head-teachers who are excessively absent or tardy.
- Empower the community and parents to deal with schools and teacher attendance and performance problems, and establish a system of accountability to parents and the community

D. Student Time and Attendance at School

Study Findings:

- In the eight schools studied (surprise visits), the percentage of those enrolled who were in attendance on the day of the visit ranged from four percent to 67 percent.
- Teachers estimated that at least 20 percent of the children had excessive absences, another 30 percent were absent enough to cause worries about their achievement, and about 50 percent of the children were very regular in their attendance.
- About half the students studied had missed at least one school day the previous week. Most had missed because of illness but substantial numbers reported having to do domestic work (especially among girls) or work outside the home (urban boys). Farm work did not seem to be a frequent reason for absenteeism of rural boys.
- About half the students reported having been tardy at least one day the previous week; girls reported household duties as the main reason; travel time (averaging about ten minutes walk in all schools) did not seem to be important in causing tardiness.
- Stipend and school feeding programs significantly improve attendance and regularity; some students reported feeling hungry during the day to the extent it affected their concentration.
- In neither urban or rural schools does the need to do paid work figure high among the reasons for absenteeism and tardiness, though some urban students must help parents with small businesses occasionally.
- Attendance at Koranic school early in the morning did not appear to have a significant effect on tardiness.
- Many rural children seemed to have little sense of time; this may have affected the number of times they were tardy.
- A third to a half of the students in the studied schools reported having left school early at least one day the previous week. Some left after they had received food in schools with school feeding.
- Most children seem to get a good night's sleep. Rural children retire a bit earlier than urban children, especially if they do not have electricity and television.
- Most children, both urban and rural, report around two hours of free time during school days and from six to 16 hours daily on weekends and school holidays. The perception of many children is that boys have more free time than girls.
- Care of siblings takes up some of the out-of-school time of children, though many see this as play rather than work..
- Most students reported doing homework averaging between nine and eleven hours a week. This may include time with tutors.
- Nearly half of all students, urban and rural, reported using out-of-school tutors to help them.
- At most, the teacher asks students why they were absent or late (about half the students so reported). A few indicated that they had been scolded or beaten. About a third of rural students indicated that nothing happened while only ten percent of urban students reported no consequences.
- Teacher action to contact and counsel parents of absent or dropout children is infrequent, despite the regulations indicating that they should do so.
- Schools have established no pro-active strategies—remediation—to deal with student absenteeism.

Student absences and tardiness must be considered in conjunction with data in the previous section on teacher time. Obviously, when teachers are absent or late and classes or entire schools do not open or open late because teachers are not there, then the students miss in-class time. In addition, enrollment and non-enrollment figures for the catchment area of the school must be included for a complete understanding of children who are not getting sufficient class time.[67]

Analysis in this chapter is based on responses to student questionnaires plus observation data, interviews and focus group discussions with parents, head-master record books, and interviews with SMC and PTA chairs and members.

1. *Policies Governing Student Absences and Tardiness*

Primary education is compulsory, but there is little emphasis in official orders and regulations on how to assure that students actually attend school. At best, such regulations suggest that students are to report to school on time, and that the head-teacher and assistant teachers are to counsel them if they are not on time and talk to their parents if they are regularly late. The SMCs and the PTAs are also charged with monitoring enrollment, absenteeism, and tardiness as well.

Head-masters and teachers are required to keep careful records of absenteeism and tardiness and other data on the school. The school registers are meticulously maintained not only because of the regulations, but because many resources are allocated by the government to the district and upazila education offices and to each school based on head counts. Such programs include student stipends (in rural schools), the number of teachers, and budget for school resources, and even allocation of food when this is provided to the students under various programs. To avoid inflation of student head-counts in order to obtain more resources, a system of regular school visits—some scheduled, some by surprise—by the upazila education officers to check on actual enrollment has been established.

When there are student absences and excessive tardiness, the teachers are supposed to visit with parents to see what is wrong and to urge the parents to improve attendance regularity of their children. The regulations—as reported by the local education authorities—require that each teacher must make five home visits per month.

[67] Despite the compulsory primary education policy of the government, estimated non-enrollment (including dropouts) ranged from 25 percent to 33 percent in most of the rural schools studied. These included a small number of handicapped children who are generally not admitted to the regular school, even though there seems to be a mainstreaming policy. Teachers and education officers have some incentives to increase enrollment. Certain budget lines and allowances are based on school head count, for instance.

2. *The Findings: Student Attendance, Absenteeism, and Tardiness and the Factors Affecting Them*

Student Sample

In the eight schools, in two districts studied, 144 students were interviewed using the structured student questionnaire. The percentage distribution of students in the sample is presented in Table IV.D.1. Slightly more boys than girls were interviewed, except at the fourth grade level. More than half the students interviewed were from rural areas.

Table IV.D.1: Percentage Distribution of Students Interviewed by Grade, Sex, and Residence

	Urban			**Rural**			**Total**		
	Boys	*Girls*	*Total*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Total*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Total*
Student Distribution	31.6	44.1	37.5	68.4	55.9	62.5	52.8	47.2	100
Grade Nursery	2.8	13.3	16.7	15.4	18.4	16.7	54.2	45.8	100
Grade I	20.8	13.3	16.7	15.4	18.4	16.7	54.2	45.8	100
Grade II	16.7	16.7	16.7	19.2	13.2	16.7	58.3	41.7	100
Grade III	16.7	16.7	16.7	17.3	15.8	16.7	54.2	45.8	100
Grade IV	12.5	20.0	16.7	15.4	18.4	16.7	45.8	54.2	100
Grade V	12.5	20.0	16.7	17.3	15.8	16.7	50	50	100

(N=144)

Student Absenteeism, Tardiness, and Early Departure

In the eight schools visited during the study, the percentage of those enrolled who were in attendance on the day of the visit ranged from 43 percent to 67 percent, averaging 53 percent overall (see Table IV.D.2). Teachers and head-teachers generally estimated that: at least 20 percent of the children had excessive absences, another 30 percent were absent enough to cause worries about their achievement, and about 50 percent of the children were very regular in their attendance. In one rural school, that seemed to be operating well in general, the school records showed that only 88 to 107 of 155 boys had been in class in recent weeks.

Table IV.D.2: Actual Attendance Rate in the Sample Schools on the Day of Visit

School Code	Class-I			Class-II			Class-III			Class-IV			Class-V			Total			Percent Attending
	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	
1	31	38	69	20	21	41	22	22	44	15	19	34	7	13	20	95	113	208	51
2	14	16	30	23	14	37	15	15	30	11	20	31	10	16	26	73	81	154	60
3			18			12			15			11			6			62	43
4	22	25	47	24	22	46	20	18	38	14	12	26	9	5	14	89	82	171	59
5			40			36			33			48			23			180	56
6			27			35			38			22			13			135	44
7			58			28			26			21			16			149	49
8	44	43	87	24	22	46	31	13	44	16	18	34	15	9	24	130	105	235	67

The percentages in Table IV.D.3 are based on the initial enrollment figures provided by the school and do not reflect dropouts that may have occurred during the course of the year, which may be considerable in rural schools especially. Focus group discussions with parents and interviews with teachers suggested that some of the absentee students in the schools visited may have been dropouts who had left school because they were falling behind or because the parents no longer felt that schooling was worth it. For example, in one rural school, the net enrollment rate was reported to be around 50 percent of the school-age children. Of the children who enrolled in the first grade, many were reported to have dropped out, if they were not selected to participate in the stipends program (only 40 percent of those enrolled are eligible). In this area, estimates suggested that 70 percent of the families were below the poverty line (although 50 percent owned land), and parents believed that all students should be included in the program. In such cases, they may have been carried on the school records even though they were not attending (to increase head count for resource allocation from education authorities).

Of the 144 students interviewed in the eight schools, nearly half (47 percent) of all students reported having been absent at least one day in the previous week, with a notably higher percentage in urban schools (Table IV.D.3). Seventy percent of the urban girls reported having missed school at least once, in comparison with about a third of rural girls. This suggests that urban girls may be required to help in the house more frequently than rural girls.

There are no discernable patterns of absence according to grade. Grade one in urban schools seemed to have twice as many boys missing school in the previous week as girls. In the upper grades, the percentage of girls reporting absences the previous week in urban areas was more than twice as high as boys. On average students missed about two days, or one-third of the school week.

Table IV.D.3: Students Having Missed School at Least One Day in Previous Week

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	***Male***	***Female***	***Total***	***Male***	***Female***	***Total***	***Male***	***Female***
Percent of Students Having Missed School Last Week	59.3	45.8	70	40.0	44.2	34.2	47.2	44.7	50
Average Days Missed (N=68)	2.3	2.54	2.2	1.9	1.9	`1.8	2.1	2.1	2.1
Percent of Absentees by Grade, Sex, and Region (N=68)									
Pre-school	15.6	18.2	14.3	16.7	13	23.1	100	45.5	54.5
Grade I	18.8	36.4	9.5	22.2	21.7	23.1	100	64.3	35.7
Grade II	12.5	9.1	14.3	19.4	21.7	15.4	100	54.5	.45.5
Grade III	15.6	18.2	14.3	13.9	13	15.4	100	50	50
Grade IV	18.8	9.1	23.8	13.9	17.4	7.7	100	45.5	54.4
Grade V	18.8	9.1	23.8	13.9	13.0	15.4	100	36.4	63.6

(N-144 of which 68 reported absence in previous week)

Table IV.D.4 shows that 51 percent of the students interviewed indicated that they had been late at least once the previous week. The incidence is higher among urban students than rural students. Female students are more likely to be absent than male students. In one rural school, the head-teacher said that about 60 percent of the students were present at the school starting time, about 20 percent of the students arrived just after, and 20 percent arrived even later (missing the first class or more). Some teachers in rural schools indicated that many children and even parents had no sense of time, and few students said they had watches or clocks.

Table IV.D.4: Incidence of Tardiness and Average Tardy Days the Previous Week

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of students late for school	57.4	50	63.3	47.8	42.3	55.3	51.4	44.7	58.8
Average number of days late last week	1.2	1.1	1.3	1	1.2	0.9	1.1	1.1	1.1

N=144, of which 74 reported having been tardy

Students, particularly in grades three through five, also leave school early, before the official closing time. Table IV.D.5 shows that 41 percent reported that they had left school early in the past week; slightly higher percentages among urban students and female students were also reported.

Table IV.D.5: Incidence of Early Departure and Average Number of Days Leaving Early

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of Students Leaving School Early Last Week	44.4	37.5	50	40	38.5	42.1	41.7	38.1	45.6
Average Number of Days Leaving Early Last Week :	1.25	1.2	1.3	1.03	1.25	.75	1.1	1.24	1.0

N=144, of which 60 reported having left early

Reasons for Attendance

Despite high levels of student absenteeism, tardiness, and early departure, many students do attend school regularly. *Why?*

Fear of Punitive Action: Other than attending school because of compulsory attendance laws and because of efforts of teachers and the community to encourage attendance at the beginning of the school year (January), attendance may be encouraged by punitive action taken when students do not attend. Table IV.D.6 shows the consequences reported by 68 of the students interviewed during the course of the study. Around half the students indicated that the teacher asks them the reason for their absence; up to a third suggested that the teacher beats them; and up to a quarter reported not understanding the lesson as

well when they return from an absence. An average of 11 percent of rural children said that their stipend money will be reduced if they are absent. No consequences are reported by a third of rural children versus only around nine or ten percent of urban children, suggesting that the urban teachers are somewhat more strict than the rural parents. Only urban students reported that a notice or letter is sent to the family.

Table IV.D.6: Consequences of Absences Reported by Students

Percent of students reporting that when they miss school :	**Urban**			**Rural**		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
They don't understand lessons as well as others	21.9	9.1	28.6	13.9	8.7	23.1
The teacher beats them	15.6	0	23.8	33.3	34.8	30.8
The teacher scolds them	15.6	9.1	19.0	11.1	13.0	7.7
The teacher asks reason for absence	59.4	81.8	47.6	47.2	43.5	53.8
Someone from the school talks to their parents				2.8	0	7.7
A notice or letter is sent to their family	3.1	0	4.8			
Their stipend money is reduced or cut				11.1	8.7	15.4
Nothing happens	9.4	9.1	9.5	33.3	30.4	38.5

(N=68)

Stipends and Feeding Programs: In the schools visited, it was generally agreed that student attendance was positively affected by two programs, the stipend program for rural students and the feeding or snack programs for selected schools. Table IV.D.7 shows that absenteeism, tardiness, and early departure is less in schools with feeding or snack programs. The stipend program's positive impact seems to be limited to reduced student absenteeism, with little or no difference in tardiness or early departure among students in schools participating in the stipend program and those that are not.

In rural schools where 40 percent of the students receive stipends to attend school, less absenteeism was reported among the stipend students than among non-stipend students. If such students are noted as absent more than 15 percent of the time, the parents can lose part of their full stipend (if absences are reported by the head-teacher and the SMC to the District education officer). It appeared that some schools continued to carry children on the books as enrolled, even though they rarely attended. In rural schools, this helped raise the total enrollment so that more families (40 percent of total enrolled children) could get stipends. One rural school reported that around 80 percent were poor in the school and that the 60 percent of the families who did not receive a stipend had less incentive to regularly send their children to school than those who received stipends.

Table IV.D.7 : Snack and Stipend Program Effects on Student Attendance

Percent of those in each program reporting occasional:	Schools with snack program	Schools without snack program	Total	All rural schools with stipend program	All urban schools without stipend program	Total
Absenteeism	29.4	70.6	100	48.5	51.5	100
Late/tardiness	32.4	67.6	100	52.7	47.3	100
Leave early	36.7	63.3	100	50.0	50.0	100

School feeding programs seem to encourage students to come to school but do not necessarily keep them there. In urban single-shift schools in Jamalpur that have milk and

biscuits program (USDA/Land O'Lakes/WFP), teachers reported that some children seemed to come to school primarily for the food. Some students reported that a few of the grades three through five students would leave their books on the windowsill at the break when the food was distributed and classrooms are closed and locked, so that they could reach in and get their books through the window and leave school after receiving the milk and biscuits. Food as an issue came up constantly in discussions with parents and teachers in many schools, both urban and rural. Some seemed to say that the children needed to be fed before coming to school and that made them late. Others seemed to say that food needed to be provided at school to attract children to school and to nourish them so that they could concentrate.

Reasons for Absences and Tardiness

Student interviews revealed a variety of reasons for recent absenteeism and tardiness. Table IV.D.8 summarizes the reasons given for absenteeism and shows the differences between boys and girls and urban and rural students.

Illness predominated as a reason for absence, although a higher percentage (44 percent) of students in rural areas reported missing school for illness than in urban areas (25 percent). In one school, a teacher who also worked as "rural physician" reported that health problems kept many children home. Such problems included physical weakness, worms, bowel syndrome, fever, and other ailments. Female students were more likely to report missing school for illness than male students, especially in rural areas.

Absences due to domestic work were more prevalent among students in urban schools (25 percent) than rural schools (11 percent). About seven percent of students also reported that they missed school because they had to tend animals, work on the family farm or business, or go to market. Not surprisingly, the percentages were higher among rural students and male students.

Some urban parents had tea shops, betel nut businesses or other small enterprises and the children often were required to help during the school day, causing absenteeism, tardiness and early leaving of the school. One girl in an urban school reported that she had to be absent occasionally to fill in for her mother, a house servant, when her mother was ill. Some schools suggested that parents who kept children home to work did not fully support the education of their children.

Table IV.D.8: Reasons for Missing School the Previous Week *

	Urban			Rural		
Percent of students missing school due to:	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Illness	25.0	18.2	28.6	44.4	34.8	61.5
Care for sick relatives	6.3	1.0	9.5	11.1	13.0	7.7
Domestic work	25.0	27.3	23.8	11.1	4.3	23.1
Non-domestic work (tending animals, working on farm or family business, going to market)	6.3	9.1	4.8	8.3	13.0	0
Income-generating work (work for employer)				5.6	8.7	.00
Attendance of funeral, wedding, ceremony, festival, or event	3.1	9.1	.00	8.3	13.0	.00
Koranic classes	3.1	0	4.8			
Excessive or difficult travel	6.3	0	9.5			
Lack of desire to go to school	9.4	18.2	4.8	5.6	4.3	7.7
Excessive hunger						
Seeing relatives	15.6	18.2	14.3	16.7	21.7	7.7
No reason	3.1	0	4.8	5.6	4.3	7.7
Playing	3.1	9.1	0	2.8	4.3	0
Fasting	9.4	9.1	9.5			
Parents regulation or obligation	3.1	9.1	0			
Teachers did not come				2.8	0	7.7
Dirty clothes				2.8	4.3	0

(N=68) *Multiple responses possible

The rural students often helped their parents at home but they did not seem to be needed, on the whole, in the agricultural enterprises of their parents.[68] The survey team observed no children in the field or in rice processing or in sugar processing or other agricultural activity, other than possibly helping around the immediate household. However, it was reported that the children from very poor families often had to collect jack root and dry leaves to sell for goat food to make a bit of money to help buy food for the family. Girls are often needed after the rice harvest to scour the dry paddies in order to collect any left-over grains of rice. Six percent of rural students reported that they occasionally missed school because they worked for an employer.

A Budding Entrepreneur in Grade One

A student in grade one in one school came to school after distributing milk to customers for his aunt. For this work, he gets one Taka (less than two US cents) each day. He has saved this money to buy a hen, and he indicated that he intends to save more money until he can buy a goat and than a cow. From the profits from his growing business, he intends to pay his educational expenses as he moves up the educational ladder.

About 16 percent of students in both urban and rural schools reported that they missed school to visit relatives. Six percent of urban students and 11 percent of rural ones were

[68] Note that the survey does not include non-enrolled children whom many studies have found need to help with income-generating activities.

absent from school to care for a sick relative. Rural students (eight percent) were also more likely to miss school because they attended an event (funeral, wedding, ceremony, or festival) than urban students (three percent). A notable percentage of both urban students (nine percent) and rural students (six percent) missed school simply because they did not want to go to school. About three percent of students (all male) missed school because they were playing.

Sibling Care: Work or Play?

On a number of school visits, several children, who were absent from class that very day, gathered to watch the visitors (the research team) with a baby in their arms or on their lap. From these observations, the need to care for siblings seems to be a common reason of students' absenteeism or late arrival. But this fact did not surface during questionnaire interviews of the students. In the interviews, the students did not regard the care of siblings to be "household work;" rather they regarded it as playing or sitting idle when at home. Whether or not they were required to be at home to care for siblings, or they cared for siblings while being absent or late for other reasons, is not clear from the data.

Some reasons for absence appear to be limited exclusively to urban or rural students. For example, only rural students reported that they were absent because they had to work for an employer, they did not have clean clothes, or the school was closed because the teachers did not come. Only urban students report that they were absent due to Koranic school, fasting (Ramadan had just begun), or that their parents decided that they did not have to go. In most schools, parents expressed concern that their children were not learning what they should. There were cases of grades three through five students who could not read and write their father's name. This kind of under achievement appeared to discourage some parents to the extent of not seeing the value of sending their children to school.

There appears to be some impact of season on absences (Table IV.D.9). Rural students tend to be more absent during the monsoon and during harvest season than urban students. Ramadan appears to cause more absenteeism among urban students than rural students. Local festivals and the beginning of the academic year seem to cause more absenteeism among urban students than rural students.

Table IV.D.9: Incidence of Student Absence According to Season

Percent of students absent during: (N=107)	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Monsoon	27.3	28.6	26.3	54.1	48.8	61.3	45.8	43.9	48
Harvest period	24.2	35.7	15.8	41.9	51.2	29.0	36.4	47.4	24
Planting period				6.8	11.6	0	2.2	8.8	0
Local/national election									
Local festival	24.2	14.3	31.6	1.4	2.3	0	8.4	5.3	12
Ramadan	27.3	28.6	26.6	9.5	9.3	9.7	14.9	14.03	16
Beginning of academic year	39.4	50.0	31.6	14.9	18.6	9.7	22.4	26.3	18
Winter	3.0	0	5.3	1.4	0	3.2	1.9	1.7	2
Heat spell				1.4	0	3.2	0.9	…	2

(N=144)

The beginning of the academic year (January onward) seems to occasion considerable absenteeism (Table IV.D.10), apparently because it takes time for teachers and the upazila education officers to get things organized and running during the first month of school. Table IV.D.11, in turn, shows that out of 106 students responding on the question of when they started school this year, less than half of the urban students and less than a third of the rural students actually began classes in January when classes officially are supposed to begin. Even by the end of February, there were still 15 percent to 29 percent that had not yet matriculated.

Table IV.D.10: Start of the School Year and Class Routine

Reasons	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	***Female***	*Total*	*Male*	***Female***	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of students starting school in:(N=106)									
January	42.20	38.80	44.40	24.60	24.30	25.00	32.10	29.10	35.30
February	42.20	44.40	40.70	49.20	51.35	45.80	46.20	49.10	43.13
March	15.50	16.60	14.80	26.20	24.30	29.10	21.70	21.80	21.56

(N=106)

A third to over a half of the students reported that early in the school year, there were often no classes even if they came to school (see Table IV.A.1 in earlier section). Most schools seemed to open by February and there were some irregular classes in about a third to half of the schools (according to the students). The responses, of course, depended much on student memory. The interviews were done in November 2003 after some months had elapsed since January, so the recollection of the children may not be absolutely accurate.

Reasons given for tardiness the previous week are listed in Table IV.D.11. This table shows the responses of only 25 of the 49 who indicated that they had been late the previous week; 24 of the reported late students did not respond.

Table IV.D.11: Reasons Given by Students for Tardiness the Previous Week

	Urban			Rural		
Percent of students late due to:	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Household work	34.8	12.5	46.7	34.6	6.7	72.7
Caring for sick relatives	4.3	0	6.7			
Caring for siblings	4.3	0	6.7	7.7	6.7	9.1
Traveling long distance or transport problem	4.3	0	6.7	3.8	0	9.1
Sleeping late						
Illness				7.7	13.3	0
Earning money						
Bad weather	21.7	0	33.3	15.4	6.7	27.3
Working outside	4.3	12.5	0	23.1	40.0	0
Delayed breakfast	30.4	62.5	13.3	15.4	13.3	18.2
No reason	4.3	12.5	0	7.7	13.2	0
Koranic class	8.7	0	13.3			
Preparing tasks, studying	4.3	0	6.7			
Seeing relatives				3.3	6.7	0
No sense of time	4.3	12.5	0	7.7	13.3	0
Minor accident	4.3	0	6.7			
Playing				3.8	0	9.1

(N=49)

The major reason for tardiness, according to the students, was household work. Nearly 35 percent of students (most of them female) said they had household work. An additional 23 percent of rural students (all male) indicated that they had to work outside on the family farm or business.

Delayed breakfast also caused student tardiness in both urban and rural areas, but especially so in urban schools. Some urban mothers reported that they had to visit shops to negotiate food on credit (to be paid at the end of the day) before they could prepare breakfast. Bad weather also figured prominently among the reasons, primarily affecting female students.

Attendance at Koranic school was cited by nine percent of students in urban schools as a reason for tardiness, uniquely by girls. Although the reported schedules of the Koranic schools did not conflict with the government school starting time, children generally bathed, had breakfast, and prepared for school after returning home from Koranic school. Other data on students' use of time do not confirm much impact of attendance at Koranic schools on tardiness or attendance at the government school.

Travel time was noted by a few students as a factor in punctuality, but none of the 144 children interviewed in urban and rural schools reported more than 20 minutes of travel time to school. Most reported around ten minutes (see Table IV.D.12). Some rural children seemed to have little sense of time so some of them may have reported inaccurate travel time. Virtually all children walked to school; none reported taking commercial transportation, though several urban girls reported using their own bicycles occasionally.

Table IV.D.12: Average Student Travel Time (in minutes) to School

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Total*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Total*	*Boys*	*Girls*
Average Travel Time	14.6	10.5	17.8	10.9	11.4	10.5	11.1	11.1	13.8

(N=144)

In general, in discussions among parents and teachers in rural schools, tardiness was mainly attributed to a lack of sense of time among children and their parents, though relatively small numbers of students so indicated in their interviews. Confusion over the school starting time may also contribute to student tardiness. In some rural schools that rarely opened before 10:00 am or later, the parents often assumed that the later hours were the official hours.

Student Use of Out-of-school Time

Student use of time in school is described in earlier sections about teacher and class time. This section will discuss out-of-school use of time. The information is from structured student and teacher interviews, supplemented by impromptu discussions with parents and siblings around homes near the school. The idea of actually following children around to see what they do during the course of a normal day was not feasible. The presence of a team of nine researchers meant that the day was not a normal day and required, instead, the use of multiple approaches in finding out what children had done on the day before the team arrived.[69]

A Typical Day: Tables IV.D.13 through IV.D.18 show the use of out-of-school time on the day preceding the interview of the 144 students in the study.

Table IV.D.13 shows that children rise between 5:00 am and 8:00 am, with most getting up at 6:00 am or 7:00 am. All report having had breakfast between 7:00 am and 11:00 am the previous day, most between 7:00 am and 9:00 am. Nearly 70 percent reported attending Koranic class some time between 6:00 am and 8:00 am (most at 7:00 am and two in the afternoon). All retired between 7:00 pm and 11:00 pm, most by 9:00 pm.

[69] A longer ethnographic study in the future, within which Bangladeshi researchers live in a village and blend in over time so that they can document what children do day by day and week by week, might be worth undertaking. Graduate students at a Dhaka university might well produce some interesting theses from such efforts.

Table IV.D.13: Student Use of Out-of-school Time (day immediately before interview)

	Time of Day															
	AM							PM								
Percent of students:	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	14	15	17	19	20	21	22	23	Total Percent
Rising at:	4.9	71.4	19.4	4.2												100
Attending Koranic class at:	0.7	9.7	48.6	8.3				0.7	0.7	0.7						69.4
Eating breakfast at:			18.1	32.6	29.9	3.5	3.5									87.6
Going to bed at:											9.7	18.1	50	20.9	1.4	100

(N=144)

Table IV.D.14 suggests that, on the whole, students get a good night's sleep. Less than 17 percent say that they had less than eight hours sleep; the majority indicated that they sleep nine hours or more. Around 42 percent said that they do from one to four hours of domestic or farm work at home and most of those indicated one or two hours of such activity. Very few (about five percent) of the 144 students interviewed indicated that they were involved in income-generating activities (although, of course, some activities such as helping on the farm or helping parents generate income).

All students reported that they had some free time for play and recreation. About half the children reported playing for three hours or more a day; slightly less than half said they played from one to two hours a day. Nearly two-thirds of the students reported having done home study the previous day, and most of these indicated two or three hours of study time.

Table IV.D.14: Number of Student Hours Spent in Different Activities*

	Number of Hours													
Percent of students spending number of hours daily on:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total perc-ent
Sleep					1.4	5.5	11.1	13.2	39.6	18.1	8.3	2.1	0.7	100
Unpaid domestic & farm work	20.8	13.2	7.6	0.7										42.3
Income-generating activities	2.8		1.4			0.7								4.9
Study	0.3	38.2	13.9	4.9	2.1							2.1		61.5
Free time and play	15.3	29.9	28.5	11.9	12.5	1.3	0.7							100

(N=144) *Day immediately before interview

Tables D.15 and D.16 contrast urban and rural students' use of out-of-school time and hours spent in different activities. A slightly larger percentage of urban children arose an hour or so later than rural children, and significantly more urban children indicated that they had six hours or less sleep than rural children. More rural students reported attending Koranic class in the morning than urban students, although small percentages of both urban and rural children attended Koranic classes in the afternoon. Nearly the same percentage of children reported having eaten breakfast the previous day, and most in both urban and rural areas had eaten before 10:00 am. Many students (between 26 percent and 37 percent) ate breakfast between 9:00 am and 10:00 am, which is consistent with reports that children were late for school because of breakfast. (School starts at 9:30 am in urban areas, and 10:00 am in rural ones). Finally, rural children retired to bed noticeably earlier than urban children, with 82 percent in bed by 9:00 pm, compared with 70 percent of urban children.

In a typical day, according to parents in one rural school, a student in a household without electricity arises at about 5:00 am and goes to bed around 8:00 or 8:30 pm. In a household with electricity, parents say that the child generally arises around 7:00 or 8:00 am, and retires around 10:00 pm or 11:00 pm (especially in areas where there is television reception). About equal percentages (between 86 to 87 percent) of urban and rural children spent time on study. In both cases, most children played after school and most were not expected to work, with rural children having more free time than urban children.

Table IV.D.15: Urban-rural Student Use of Out-of-school Time (Day Before Interview)

	Percent of students:	Time of Day															
		AM							PM								Tot %
		5	6	7	8	9	10	11	14	15	17	19	20	21	22	23	
U	Rising at:	5.6	62.9	27.8	3.7												100
R		4.4	76.7	14.4	4.4												100
U	Attending	1.9	7.4	35.2	11.1					1.9	1.9						59.4
R	Koranic class at:		11.1	57.7	6.7				1.1								76.6
U	Eating breakfast			25.9	22.2	37.0	1.9										87.0
R	at:			13.3	38.9	25.6	4.4	5.6									87.7
U	Going to bed at:											3.7	5.5	61.1	25.9	3.7	100
R												13.3	27.6	41.3	17.8		100

(N=54) U=urban, R=rural

Table IV.D.16: Number of Urban-rural Student Hours Spent in Different Activities

		Number of Hours													
	Percent of students spending number of hours daily on:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total
U	Sleep					3.7	14.8	13	9.2	37	7.4	11.1	1.9	1.9	100
R								10	15.5	41.1	24.4	6.7	2.2		100
U	Unpaid domestic & farm work	24.1	40.7	9.3											48.2
R		18.9	13.3	6.7	1.1										40.0
U	Income-generating activities	3.7					0.7								3.7
R		2.2		2.2			1.1								5.5
U	Study	14.8	40.7	24.1		1.9							5.5		87.0
R		31.1	37.0	7.8	7.8	2.2									85.9
U	Free time & play	22.2	37.0	27.8	7.4	5.5	1.3	0.7							100
R		11.1	25.6	28.9	14.4	16.7	2.2	1.1							100

(N=54) **Day immediately before interview

Time for Play and Recreation: 88 percent of students indicated that they have free time during their day. On average, they reported that they have around two hours free time a day during school days and five to eight hours of free time on holidays (Table IV.D.17). When they are absent on a school day, they reported that they essentially have a full day of free time (from an average of nine hours to 16 hours.)

Table IV.D.17: Student Free Time

Variable	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of students with free time: N=127	100	100	100	81.1	82.7	78.9	88.2	88.2	88.2
During School Day:									
Average hours of free time	1.9	2.04	1.7	1.9	2.2	1.7	1.9	2.1	1.7
On Off-Days:									
Average hours of free time	5.3	7.9	3.3	7.6	6.5	8.3	6.6	8.2	4.9
On Absent Days:									
Average hours of free time	16.1	13.1	19.9	8.8	10.3	6.5	11.9	13.8	9.8

(N=144)

Most students felt that boys have more free time than girls (though about a quarter of the students felt that there was no difference). Some felt that boys have less free time because they work outside the school; other believed girls have less free time because of domestic chores. (Table IV.D.18).

Table IV.D.18 Girls' and Boys' Perception of Free Time According to Gender

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of students who believe:									
Boys have more free time	69.2	60.0	78.9	60.0	55.6	65.5	63.5	57.1	70.8
Girls have more free time	30.8	40.0	21.1	40.0	44.4	34.5	36.5	42.9	29.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
No difference	26.4	16.6	34.4	25.2	28	21.6	25.7	24.3	27.3

(N=140, 4 =not reported, 104 = differs, 36 =Indifferent)

Time for Koranic Schooling: A majority of children interviewed (101 of 144 or 76 percent) indicated that they go to Koranic school Saturday through Thursday before attending the government primary school (Table IV.D.19). A few children said that they studied the Hindu religion with their parents before school. Children in Koranic schools appear to attend a daily session ranging from less than one hour to between one and two hours. Few students (less than two percent) reported that attending Koranic school ever

made them late for primary school or leave early, and of those half said they were hardly made late for primary school. Tardiness is generally attributed to getting breakfast between leaving Koranic school and attending government primary school. Many Koranic schools have two shifts between 6:00 am and 9:00 am (exact times seem to vary from school to school). Students can attend the first or second shift. Parents reported that the Koranic classes are generally held at the mosque, not the madrasah, and that content is limited to learning about and reciting the Quran, not reading or writing.

Table IV.D.19: Koranic or Religious School Attendance, Hours, Schedule, and Impact

Variable	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of students attending Koranic or religious school (N=101)	63	45.8	76.7	74.4	73.1	76.3	70.1	64.5	76.5
Average number of days per week students attend	5.6	5.5	5.7	5.6	5.7	5.5	5.6	5.6	5.6
Percent of students spending:									
0-1 hours per day at Koranic or religious school	55.9	72.7	47.8	37.3	36.8	37.9	43.6	44.9	42.3
1-2 hours per day at Koranic or religious school	41.2	27.3	47.8	58.2	57.9	58.6	52.5	51.02	53.8
2-3 hours per day at Koranic or religious school	2.9	0	4.3	4.5	5.3	3.4	3.9	4.1	3.8
3-+ hours per day at Koranic or religious school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students who report being late or leaving school early for primary school due to attending Koranic or religious school	5.8	9.1	4.3	00	00	00	1.98	2.04	1.9
Percent of students who are late for school:									
Seldom	50	0	100				50	0	100
Occasionally (few days)	50	100	0				50	100	0

(N=144)

Time for Breakfast: When asked if they ate before coming to school, 90 percent (131 students of 144 interviewed) indicated that they did have breakfast (Table IV.D.20). The majority of both rural and urban students indicated that they had eaten rice; some had had bread or biscuits (especially in urban areas), porridge (especially in rural areas), and a few had eaten puffed rice (especially urban girls). Few reported having eaten any fruit. About half the students indicated that they were sometimes too hungry to pay attention in class.

Table IV.D.20: Incidence and Consequences of Student Hunger

Variable	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of students who ate before school (N=131)	90.7	95.8	86.7	91.1	90.4	92.1	90.1	92.1	89.7
Percent of students who ate: (N=131)									
Tea	14.3	4.3	23.1						
Bread /Biscuit	24.5	30.4	19.2	3.7	4.3	2.9			
Rice	63.3	69.6	57.7	67.1	68.1	65.7			
Porridge				30.5	27.7	34.3			
Egg	2.0	00	3.8						
Puffed rice	16.3	4.3	26.9						
Fruits	2.0	.0	3.8						
Semai	2.0	4.3	00						
Percent of students saying they are too hungry to pay attention in class							53.3	53.9	52.9

(N=144)

Time for Homework: In most schools, not much homework appeared to be assigned to students. In the first two grades, there are two textbooks and lessons are primarily teacher presentations and class recitation with little homework. In grades three through five, there are six textbooks for each grade and the curriculum becomes complex and very subject-oriented. Homework, usually reading assignments, is given, but a third or more of the students appear not to do homework, according to discussions with teachers. However, in student interviews, 130 of 144 students reported doing homework from nine to 11 hours a week (Table IV.D.21).

Table IV.D.21: Incidence of Homework

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of students doing homework (N=130)	98.1	100	96.7	85.6	86.5	84.2	90.3	90.7	89.7
Average number of hours per week	9.49	9.63	9.28	10.18	9.49	11.16	9.88	9.54	10.26

(N=144)

Although most schools seemed to have sufficient textbooks for students, there were occasions when some students needed to share textbooks. In such cases, homework involving reading from the text was not possible for one of the sharing students. Homework appeared to be more extensive in the urban schools (where homes had electricity) than in rural schools (where many homes had no electricity and bedtime came, on the average, earlier than in urban areas).

Grade five homework, however, seems to be substantial in both urban and rural schools because of the impending examinations at the end of the year (both the general examination for passing grade five and the scholarship examination for those who will get a scholarship in grade six). In one upazila, the schools in the town reportedly give an average of two hours homework a night to grade five students, while the more rural schools in the same upazila reportedly gave three hours homework. The implication seemed to be that grade five students in the rural areas needed more preparation for the end-of-year examinations than the urban children. This may have been an implicit admission that the rural children do not get as much class and teacher time as the urban children during the earlier four grades and thus they need more study at the end of the basic education cycle (grade five).[70]

In rural schools, it was noted that most homes were congested, had no electricity and no facilities for quiet study and that it would be difficult for children to do homework at night. At many schools, both urban and rural, children were given reading assignments and little in the way of written assignments in the way of homework, although in the upper grades some written work was usually assigned. In some cases, there was concern that many children did not have enough pencils and paper for written homework. In rural schools, homework of one hour was assigned and some teachers estimated that only around 60 percent of the children would, in fact, do the homework (consistent with what the students reported in their interviews; see Table IV.D.14). Teachers would generally check to see who had done written homework and in the better managed schools would give a grade from one to ten for the homework. Those students receiving low grades were given special make-up work only by a very few teachers, mostly in urban schools. Most often, it appeared that teachers did not check the answers or content of the homework, but instead marked whether it had been done or not.

Time for Private Tutoring: Roughly half (46 percent) of the urban and rural students reported using private tutors to help them with their studies (Table IV.D.22). Boys were more likely than girls to receive tutoring. Those students reporting that they received tutoring (66 of 144) indicated that they spent seven to eight hours a week in tutoring sessions. College students in the neighborhood were generally recruited as tutors, although in urban areas it was reported that some teachers (not in the schools studied, however) moonlighted as tutors. Those who used tutors generally indicated that they needed additional help to understand the lesson, to cover the curriculum and to get better results.

[70] In one unusual rural school, recognized as a grade A school, eight of thirty students in fifth grade sat for the scholarship examination last year and two received the scholarship – one received the highest marks of any student in the upazila. In the same school, 28 sat for the general pass/fail examination (set by the school) and 27 passed. The general pass/fail exam is set by education authorities in the upazila, theoretically in discussions with head-masters in the area, while the scholarship exam is national and is prepared and distributed from Dhaka. Almost all the pass students in this one school reportedly went on to some form of education beyond the fifth grade.

Table IV.D.22: Student Use of Private Tutors

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of students receiving private tutoring	46.3	58.3	36.7	45.6	48.1	42.1	45.8	51.3	39.7
Average number of hours per week (N=66)	7.8	8	7.5	7.4	7.8	6.6	7.5	7.9	7.0
Percent of students saying they need tutoring to:									
Cover curriculum	25.0	23.1	27.3	17.9	17.4	18.8			
Get better results	50.0	61.5	36.4	35.9	43.5	25.0			
Need help to understand lesson	41.7	23.1	63.6	43.6	47.8	37.5			
Teachers are not sincere/careful				12.8	17.4	6.3			
In fear of punishment/beaten by the teachers				7.7	.00	18.8			

(N=144)

Coping with Student Absenteeism, Tardiness, and Early Departure

The high rate of student absenteeism and irregular attendance must have an effect on school operations, but there was no indication that it is considered by the head-teachers or teachers as a negative one. School resources are based on enrollment figures, not attendance rates, so the school does not necessarily sacrifice part of its budget to high student absenteeism. Both the Education Watch 2001 study and the PSPMP study reported that the limited seating capacity at schools could accommodate only about two-thirds of the enrolled students. Consequently, a potential "positive" impact of student absenteeism on the school is that its facilities are not overstrained. Since fewer students in attendance means smaller class sizes, the classroom management burden on the teacher is reduced. Moreover, there is increased potential for the creation of "surplus" teachers resulting in a reduced teaching load, more time for administrative duties, and less need to work after school hours. (See IV.B for discussion.) The students who attend school regularly may also benefit from high absenteeism for similar reasons: an uncrowded classroom, an available seat, a less unruly learning environment, and—potentially—a less harried teacher with more time for individual attention to students. In fact, it appears that there is little incentive to increase student attendance. *What do schools do to deal with student absenteeism, tardiness, and early departure?*

Punitive Action: As shown in Table IV.D.6 (above), about a third of the students in rural schools and nine percent of students in urban schools reported that the school does nothing about their absences. When schools do take action, it appears that most often the teacher will ask the student about the reason for his absence (according to 59 percent of urban students and 48 percent of rural students). Punitive action—either corporal punishment or scolding by the teacher—is not infrequent. 33 percent of rural students and 16 percent of urban students said the teacher beats them. Smaller percentages (16 percent of urban students and 11 percent of rural students) reported that they were reprimanded.

Students participating in the PESP or stipend program are required to maintain 85 percent attendance. Meeting the attendance requirement on a monthly basis will determine the amount of the quarterly stipend disbursement. If a pupil does not meet the condition, the stipend will not be paid for that month. Ultimately, students who do not achieve this level for the year overall will be dropped from the program. Schools participating in the PESP are required to maintain 60 percent student attendance overall or they will be eliminated from the PESP. Individual student attendance records and the overall attendance rate at the school will be checked by a "surprise" visit from an UPEO. If the attendance level is below 60 percent on the day of the first visit, a second "surprise" visit by the UPEO is scheduled. If the school again fails to meet the 60 percent mark, then it will be dropped from program participation. Although the PESP is only in its first year of operation, there appears to be some confusion about how the educational authorities are to deal with non-compliant schools. One school reported that both the number of participating students and the level of the stipend payments were adjusted downward because of the poor student attendance levels at the school. Clearly, no matter how the rules are applied, it is in the interest of the school to misrepresent attendance levels.

Home Visits: Government regulations—as reported by the local education authorities—require that each teacher must make five home visits per month primarily to check on excessive student absenteeism. Some of the schools visited indicated that teachers were required to make a student home visit once a month; others indicated three times a month. However, there was little evidence that such visits were conducted with any regularity, particularly in rural areas where distance and transportation were seen as problematical and non-resident teachers were eager to return home at the end of the school day. In one rural school, the head-teacher ridiculed a map of the students' homes in the catchment area prepared under IDEAL project training as a "formality" and had made no attempt to keep it updated or use it as a student attendance tracking tool. (See box)

Head-teachers and teachers both in rural and urban schools alike indicated a general disinclination for such visits, noting that: there was little time left after school to make the visits, some student residences were inaccessible, female teachers' security was put at risk, an administrative assistance was better suited to make home visits during school hours, and that meetings with parents could be accomplished during the routine of daily life by meeting in the marketplace or around town. Focus group discussions with parents revealed that they are seldom, if ever, visited, by teachers or even asked about their child's attendance record. Only three percent of rural students reported that someone from their school talks to their parents. No students reported home visits in urban areas, although three percent said a letter or notice had been sent to their family.

The IDEAL Way of Tracking Students

A useful way of tracking student absences and then doing something about them has been introduced in some districts (including Jamalpur where four of the schools in the study were located). Under the UNICEF-supported IDEAL program, which functions in 36 of the country's 64 districts, teacher training is provided through a cascade system down to the upazila level. As part of the training, head-teachers and teachers prepare a map of their school's catchment area (usually a radius of up to two or three kilometers from the school in rural areas and perhaps less in urban areas), showing the location of school-aged children's homes, whether they are enrolled, and their sex. Teachers in the school are assigned regions on the map where they are supposed to work with the parents on problems of their children. Pins are placed on the map when a student is absent for three or more days and the teacher assigned to that area on the map should then visit with the parents to investigate the problem. Unfortunately, even in schools in Jamalpur where the head-teacher had been trained and the map prepared, the map was neither up-to-date nor used by teachers to visit parents.

Remedial Strategies: Because of the rigid pacing of the curriculum according to the annual teaching plan and a school schedule that provides for no deviation or repetition, children who miss school even infrequently are likely to fall behind in their lessons. As noted previously (see IV.B), the schools do little in terms of remedial work, although some teachers reported that they assign other children to help those who are behind to catch up with other students. This would seem to be a very weak remedial arrangement at best, even if it is done on a regular basis. Nearly half of all students reported that they have a tutor to help them with their work.

Class Dismissed: Finally, in some cases, it appears that the school and its staff will "declare a holiday" if a sufficient number of students fail to appear. As discussed in IV.A and IV.B, teachers will both close the school for the day or dismiss students early on days when student absenteeism or early departure is high.

Student Attitudes Towards School

Although in group discussions with parents and students, some students said they did not like school, most responses on the questionnaire interview showed generally favorable attitudes toward school (Table IV.D.23). Most students say they like school because they like to learn or study, but a notable percentage say they like school because of their friends and the opportunity to play. This is especially true among urban students. In the course of interviews with students, several mentioned that they liked school because it provides them with an excuse to avoid work at home. In one rural school, parents complained that the children viewed school as a time for socializing, and pointed to the

older girls as particularly guilty of gossiping and not paying attention in class—although, unfortunately, it seemed that class at this school was very irregular. The opportunity to play mentioned by students is not programmed into the school schedule (except for a 30 minute break for upper grades), but appears to be the result of teacher tardiness and late school opening. Students pass the time playing while they wait for school to start or the teachers to put in an appearance.

Table IV.D.23: Students Like School Because…

	Urban			Rural		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Percent of Students Who Like School Due To:						
Learning or Studying	56.6	65.2	50.0	67.4	64.7	71.1
Friends and Company	28.3	17.4	36.7	10.1	11.8	7.9
Opportunity to Learn Rhymes and Songs	7.5	8.7	6.7	3.4	2.0	5.3
Opportunity to Play	35.8	34.8	36.7	22.5	27.5	50.8
Avoiding Household Work	7.5	.00	13.3	3.4	3.9	2.6
Nice Teachers	5.7	8.7	3.3			
Stipend or Foods				9.0	5.9	13.2
Potential for Good Job				3.4	5.9	00
Do Not Know	13.2	13.0	13.3	10.1	10.7	5.3

(N=144)

3. *Conclusions about Student Time and Attendance and Suggestions*

Student attendance in government primary schools is generally low and irregular. On the day of the school visit, student absenteeism averaged 53 percent, ranging from 43 percent to 67 percent of students absent. Although these rates may fall by a few percentage points, if enrollment is adjusted to reflect mid-year dropout, these figures are consistent with those found in previous studies. Teachers estimate that about half the students are frequently or chronically absent, and the students surveyed tend to confirm this: 47 percent of students said they had missed school in the previous week, averaging about two days. In addition to absenteeism, student tardiness and early departure from school also decrease the potential contact hours between the teacher and student. More than 50 percent of students reported having been late for school the previous week, and about 42 percent indicated they had left early. Absenteeism, tardiness and early departure by students were more prevalent among urban students than among rural students. For the most part, however, about half of the students are more or less regular in attendance when the schools are open.

Illness predominated as a reason for absence, with almost twice the proportion of students in rural areas missing school for illness as students in urban areas. Although many children in both urban and rural environments are expected to help the family or help in the family business, not many children miss many days because of this reason. However, absences due to domestic work were more prevalent among students in urban schools

than rural schools. A notable percentage of both urban students (nine percent) and rural students (six percent) missed school simply because they did not want to go to school.

Rural students tend to be absent during the monsoon and during harvest season more than urban students. Although three-quarters of the students reported that they attended Koranic school, only urban students reported that they were absent due to Koranic school, and data on students' use of time confirm little impact of attendance at Koranic schools on tardiness or attendance at the government school. The major reason for tardiness, according to the students, was household work. Nearly 35 percent of students (most of them female) said they had household work.

Schooling is not limited to government school hours of operation only, and additional hours of Koranic schooling, homework and tutoring can make for a long day for some students. A typical day finds most students rising at 6:00 am to 7:00 am, attending Koranic school for one or two hours between 6:00 am to 8:00 am, and eating breakfast before leaving for the government primary school at 9:00 am to 10:00 am. After school, less than half the students do one or two hours of domestic or farm work, and all students report that they have at least two hours a day for play and recreation. However, home work or study occupies about one or two hours of student time in the evening, with about half the students spending an hour or two each day in tutoring sessions. Urban children rise and retire to bed later than rural children.

The government and funding agencies have instituted programs to address demand-side constraints—stemming from poverty—that appear to have a positive impact on student attendance at government primary schools. The difference in student absenteeism, tardiness, and early departure in schools with a snack program and those without is striking. Less so is the difference between schools participating in the stipend program and those that are not: while absenteeism is somewhat less (not surprising given the attendance requirements associated with the program), there is little positive impact on tardiness or early departure. (Comparisons made may be biased as only rural schools are participating in the program.) The positive impact of the stipend program may also be undermined by the reported abuse of and corruption in the student selection and disbursement process, as well as the ineffective tracking and enforcement of attendance requirements.

Other demand-side issues could also be addressed. Given the high rate of absenteeism due to illness, programs supporting certain health interventions (such as de-worming pills) could improve student attendance. Although the degree to which students have to work on domestic or income-producing activities is relatively low, there are seasonal requirements particularly during harvest time in rural areas. There is no system of "floating vacations" or flexible hours in place to accommodate seasonal demands on student time or barriers (e.g. monsoons) to their attendance. Flexible school hours, set by each school in discussions with the SMCs and PTAs, might improve attendance. At the moment, there is no official way that a community can change the school hours to suit its environment, although the National Education Policy 2000 document of the Ministry of Education suggests that such flexibility should be possible.

The impact of supply-side issues on student attendance is discouraging. To a considerable extent, the high rates of student absenteeism, tardiness and early departure appear to be caused by the school itself. For example, irregular school days of operation—due to teacher absences, the slow start-up of the school year, and delayed delivery of books—cause confusion and encourage poor student attendance. Uneven and irregular school hours of operation cause uncertainty and confusion about school starting time and contribute to student tardiness.

Most importantly, the school does not make itself attractive to children or even their parents. The three schools—all rural—that were particularly dysfunctional suffered the lowest rates of student attendance (ranging from 43 percent to 49 percent), while the two best functioning schools—also rural but led by conscientious head-teachers—enjoyed the highest (although still low) rates of student attendance (59 percent and 67 percent).

In many schools observed, the environment is uncomfortable, dark and uninviting; a high degree of chaos and disorder reigns with children running in and out of classrooms and no class timetable being observed; and—in many cases—the instruction provided is uninspired, with a heavy reliance on recitation, aimless activity and individual work. In some schools, teachers not only limit their interaction with students by absenting themselves from class, doing administrative work or taking a nap, but they may be punitive, inflicting harsh words or corporal punishment on students who have not completed their homework or mastered their lesson. High teacher absenteeism also causes teachers to divide their time among classes or increase class sizes, reducing even further any chance of innovative instruction.

The heavy reliance on textbooks for both in-class and home study reportedly depresses attendance among those students who do not have books. Although textbooks are supposed to be provided free of charge and seem generally available (at least to be shared in class), some students did not have books. In one school, the head-master indicated that the number of books ordered by the Upazila Education Officer for his school was based on the previous year's enrollment and that actual enrollment this year was higher. It appears that it takes one to two months for textbooks to arrive at most rural schools after they are published in Dhaka and they often arrive weeks late. Poor textbook durability and deterioration may constrain the ability of schools to meet the textbook recycling requirements and contribute to the book shortage.

The curriculum itself may discourage student attendance. It is not the purpose of this study to examine the curriculum in detail, but it is clear that the curriculum and the way it is now packaged and delivered is not producing the desired results nor is it creating the enthusiasm among children and parents to attend school regularly and on time. The teachers interviewed often recommended that the parents should be made "more aware" of the importance of schooling, but a more effective approach would be to link the curriculum more directly to the community and the family context of the children so that parents see the relevance of education to their daily lives.

While what happens at schools may discourage student attendance, the schools do little to attempt to deal with high student absenteeism, tardiness and early departure. In fact, there appears to be little incentive to deal with these problems, as the fewer numbers of students result in lightening the teachers' workload. Although official policy calls for teachers to make home visits to students with attendance problems, in practice this appears to rarely happen. Also teachers can identify no clear plan of action or provision of assistance for the visits, except to exhort parents to send their children to school regularly.

Schools have not instituted any viable remediation practices for those students who miss school. Most schools seem to have coaching classes for the few grade five students selected to take the scholarship exams, but coaching is not offered to the non-competitive grade five students or those in the other grades. The coaching perhaps should be done for all students in the fifth grade as most will take the school-leaving exam. In addition, coaching classes for students who are falling behind in any class might be mandated in order to keep children from getting so far behind that they can never catch up. The suitability of the textbooks and teaching materials needs to be re-studied with the idea, over the longer haul, of producing teaching materials that have remedial material built in for the many students who miss sessions in the standardized time table.

An improvement in student evaluation might be the use of a portfolio system for student tracking. Rather than simple records in a record book, such portfolios track all student activities in the school, including participation in activities, quality of homework, conferences with parents, quality of classroom participation, remedial work assigned and quality when done, and so on. This way, the teacher must get to know the whole student rather than just seeing him or her as one in a class of perhaps sixty children.

School supervision also does little to ensure student attendance. Inspection visits by the AUPEOs, when they occur, generally consist of an hour or so with the head-master examining the school records. The education officer then makes some suggestions to the head-master (which are recorded in a record book) and then leaves. More extensive discussions with parents, observation of classes, interaction with the full SMC and PTA memberships, and even some visits to student homes, could make the inspection more fruitful. In addition, there seems to be little follow-up by the education officer of recommendations on previous visits. If there are some penalties when the head-master and teachers do not follow up on recommendations, follow-up visits by the education officer might assure that that more of the recommendations are adhered.

SMCs and PTAs do not intervene for the most part in issues of student attendance. In some of the schools visited, the members were ill-informed of the regulations governing school time and operations. Most expressed helplessness in dealing with teacher attendance issues. Neither the SMCs nor the PTAs recognized their role of reviewing with the head-master and the teachers, school and students on ideas discussing and recommending action to improve the situation. In some cases, the SMC had marshaled some community help for school repairs or supplies, and the SMC chair usually had a role in choosing stipend students. Techniques such as the IDEAL map, above, perhaps

will work only if the SMCs and PTAs are revitalized to become true participants in school management, with information that helps them understand what is going on in the school, what should go on, and what action should take place to make sure that in fact it does happen. This will be further explored in the section on cross-cutting issues, below.

Some Suggestions Prompted by the Data on Student Use of Time

- School snack programs—with minimal time and teacher burdens—should be extended to schools where poverty is a problem, and attendance criteria should be established for participation.
- Programs to address other demand-side issues—such as de-worming and school health programs, "floating" vacations, and flexible hours—should be developed.
- Schools should all open and operate on the official schedule or on a fixed schedule that suits the local environment and that all stakeholders understand.
- Teachers and head-masters must follow regulations and visit parents of students who are regularly absent or late to counsel them. There should be serious consequences if the Upazila education officer and his assistants find that such visits and counseling is not happening.
- Possible re-thinking the curriculum, teaching materials and methods to:
    - relate curriculum more to local environment so that students and parents value schooling;
    - provide more creative homework suggestions;
    - provide remedial and self-help materials and other innovations to help teachers, students and parents cope with children who get behind in their achievement;
    - provide innovative teacher manuals to help in managing a dynamic school and classroom; and
    - start a portfolio evaluation system of students so as to have a record of each child's total school life and not just attendance and exam results.
    -
- Provide coaching and remediation classes to all students.
- Better ways are needed of making the local school and its teachers accountable to the community; this implies greater decentralization of school management and a revitalization of the roles of the Upazila education offices, the SMCs and the PTAs.
- These structures must be more information- and decision-oriented, helping teachers and the community understand what is happening in the school, what should happen and the possible ways of getting there.

E. Cross-cutting Issues

Four cross-cutting issues continuously arose as schools and communities were visited during the study. First was the issue of school governance; second was the question of school supervision and management; third was poverty; and fourth was corruption. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine these areas in detail and to make final recommendations in each area. General suggestions for further study and action, however, can be found in the box on Study Findings and in Chapter V.

Study Findings:

- The centralized bureaucratic infrastructure is well developed and there are appropriate rules and regulations involving school record keeping by the head-master and inspection by the Upazila education officers.
- Detailed records are kept by all schools visited; few did any follow-up to improve performance following suggestions of the brief visits of Upazila education officers.
- School SMCs and PTAs generally had little role in helping improve school management, though both groups occasionally helped in school maintenance and acquisition of equipment and materials.
- SMCs and PTAs generally have little participation on the part of the parents and the community and they meet relatively seldom.
- The supervision and inspection system is well developed but must be incorporated into a larger revitalization of school-based management so that the education officers have community backing and understanding of what makes of good schools.
- Poverty affects student attendance and punctuality. Many students miss school due to illness or the need to work, which are rooted in poverty. Many poor parents do not have the funds for books and tutors; those parents that do undoubtedly give their children additional chances. Many parents are charged for services by the teachers and head-masters that they can ill afford.
- Corruption issues affect many aspects of the primary education system. Corruption and unethical practices by educational authorities, head-teachers and teachers reduce contact and instructional time, and undermine parental confidence in the school. The Minister of Education is fully aware of corruption problems and his efforts must extend down to the school level.

1. *School Governance: The SMC, PTA, and the Community*

The centralized bureaucratic infrastructure in the education sector appears to be well developed, with procedures, guidelines, and rules and regulations that are designed to ensure that schools open, teachers attend, and students receive the contact time prescribed in the national schedule. The findings from this study indicate that system, however, is not fully effective on several fronts.

First, the national regulations have decreed that each school should have a School Management Committee (SMC) and a Parent Teacher Association (PTA), apparently with the idea that these groups will interact with the head-master and teachers in assuring that the individual schools are well managed and that the children are getting the most out of their schooling. These two groups, however, are highly selective with limited membership (11 in the SMC and 27 in the PTA, selected in various ways in each community). They meet irregularly, with the SMC supposedly meeting monthly and the PTA once every three months or so.

Several studies have found that SMC membership is highly political and limited to the local elite. The primary school stipend program, effective in rural areas where stipends are offered to 40 percent of the poorest students, has exacerbated this tendency, in part because the SMC selects the students who will get the stipends. In some schools, this process is somewhat transparent, while in others, parents complain that they do not

understand how the stipend students are selected. In rural areas, the head-teacher and SMC chairperson seemed to be the key persons in selecting stipend recipients. Many parents felt that they had been left out and more affluent families than theirs had received stipends.

The School Management Committee in most schools visited took interest in the school facility, the school land, and other resource issues. Some said that they intervened when the textbooks did not arrive on time. As most schools seem not to have budgets for maintenance, cleaning, and watchman service at night, the SMC may discuss these matters and may offer some financial help for these things. In some schools (especially in urban areas), the SMC also discusses school attendance and issues surrounding the use of school uniforms (school uniforms are not required in urban areas but the SMC may decide if the students should use them). The PTAs seem to have little or no role in all of these matters.

SMCs in most schools seemed to meet, at least technically once a month, although occasionally the SMC chair would indicate that he watched over the school daily. On the whole, however, few of the eleven members rarely showed up at meetings and it did not appear that most parents understood the function of the SMC.

The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) in most schools met infrequently, often as seldom as once every three or six months. In group meetings with parents, few parents had any idea about the selection process of PTA members and the function of the PTA. In one case, the PTA chair said that the group met once every three months and that they planned picnics, festivals, discussed any accidents at the school and tried to do something about items stolen from the school. He also indicated that the PTA urged the AUPEO to provide more teachers to the school. This was the only active PTA encountered.

In most focus group discussions with the parents, many expressed frustration in having little input in school decisions and not being consulted by those on the SMC and the PTA. There appears to be little attempt by the SMCs and PTAs to disseminate school information to parents and the community–-information on how the school is operating, absences and tardiness of students and teachers, comparison of school results with other schools, and other management information. Essentially, the way the SMCs and PTAs have been established does not encourage broad participation of parents and the community in the operation of the school and in decisions as to how teachers and head-masters spend their time. While government policy in Bangladesh appears to support the devolution of some authority to the local level (as evidenced by the establishment of the SMCs and PTAs), these groups have not involved parents or the community in decisions.

A comprehensive understanding of the management process in schools and the way SMCs and PTAs function is a precursor to increasing broad, local involvement. Although this study found that there have been some attempts at developing management information that would help in improving school operations (the IDEAL project, for instance), there is little evidence of meaningful attempts to train parents and community leaders to accept new responsibilities in cooperation with the head-masters and teachers.

Such increased involvement would mean a restructuring of the way SMCs and PTAs operate, selection of their participants, their dissemination of information to the community and the parents, the frequency of their meetings, and a broader definition of their responsibilities and accountability.

2. *School and Personnel Supervision and Management*

The Upazila Primary Education Officer (UPEO) and the Assistant Primary Education Officers (APEOs) in the upazilas had made at least one visit to the schools visited, but the more isolated the school, the less frequent the visits. In addition, the system of inspection and supervision is weak, with little follow-up action or enforcement. Those head-teachers and teachers who wish to ignore UPEO recommendations and government regulations may do so with impunity.

In one isolated school, the APEO had visited over four months earlier, spent an hour going over the school records, and had left a list of standard actions—such as home visits and updating the student map—that needed to be done to improve the school. Clearly, the officer had not had time to visit with parents, students, the SMC or the PTA. Moreover, his written report noted that attendance the day he visited was only 63 percent of those enrolled and that this should be improved to 85 percent. (Given the dysfunction of the school, it is surprising that this attendance rate was found, but often advance notice is given for AUPEO visits.) The head-master had done nothing to improve attendance, and the day the team visited the attendance was even worse. The IDEAL student catchment map had not been updated, and the head-master clearly had no intention of doing so. The APEO had indicated that the head-teacher and the teachers should meet with parents regularly to discuss attendance and related issues. The head-master had not met with parents and clearly had no plans to do so. The records of this head-master also were clearly false. Before the head-master arrived, parents and children said the school had been closed the previous day because of teacher absence. All teachers were marked "present" in the school record book.

At the other end of the spectrum, one urban school visited near the upazila headquarters seemed to be one of the more exemplary schools in the eight-school study. Teachers appeared to be on time, students' attendance was average (56 percent), and the school appeared to be well managed. The head-master pointed out that he—and his teachers—had to be on their toes because of the proximity of the upazila headquarters and that the school was on the regular route of the UPEO. (Nonetheless, this school had a high level of teacher leave-takings and use of contingency days—all requested by the head-teacher and duly authorized by the UPEO.)

In all schools, extensive record keeping, obviously mandated by regulations and checked upon during visits by the education officers, was in evidence. Bureaucratic form has been well established, though it appears sometimes to be lacking in substance. In many cases, incorrect, misleading, or dishonest records were uncovered.

In rural schools, the number of stipend students authorized depends on total enrollment and those who get stipends must attend regularly. There appeared to be occasional surprise visits of education officers to check on enrollment and stipend attendance. In one case, a rather abrupt cut in the number of stipends allowable had been made on the basis of a surprise visit that discovered low over-all attendance at the school that day, contravening the established rules and procedures governing the stipend program. (Schools that have been found to maintain less than 60 percent attendance on two different occasions will not be allowed to participate in the program, while individual students who do not maintain 85 percent attendance each month will be docked stipend money.) Apparently, stipends for the school were cut "wholesale" regardless of individual student attendance, although the school itself was not disqualified. This highlights what appeared to be the apparent lack of subtlety, misinterpretation, and the rather heavy-handed use of bureaucratic rules without careful consideration of the impact on families whose stipend children were, in fact, in school with regular attendance.

Numerous studies have made very credible suggestions about how to improve the school inspection and supervision system, but the entrenched system has exhibited very little change. If, however, as discussed in the previous section, the SMCs and PTAs are re-tooled to become vital, informed and empowered elements in local school management, this could impact the quality of the bureaucracy at the upazila level.

3. *Poverty Issues*

Poverty has been consistently identified as one of the most pervasive factors in non-enrollment, low persistence and attainment, and poor performance of children in primary school. Bangladesh ranks as one of the poorest countries in the world, with a GDP per capita of $350. The poor account for about 50 percent of Bangladesh's total population, and 37 percent are counted among the "hard-core" poor, who live in the direst circumstances.[71]

This study deliberately examined schools that serve disadvantaged children in poverty-stricken areas. Poverty among students was found to have a significant impact on their attendance, and—by extension—the number of contact and instructional hours they enjoy.

Because very poor families may not be able to afford the school fees and/or the other direct (e.g. textbooks) and indirect (e.g. clothes) costs that may be required for school admission, the government has recently instituted the Primary Education Stipend Program (PESP) to help defray both the direct and opportunity costs of schooling and increase enrollments. The PESP also is intended to increase students' participation in primary school by setting attendance requirements for both the student and the school. This study found that there was a higher attendance rate in schools participating in the stipend program, and reportedly among students who are stipend recipients. Ironically, possibly since punctuality was not a criterion for recipients, there was no positive

[71] Bangladesh Human Development Report 2000, BIDS.

association between the stipend schools and reduced student tardiness or early departure. Further, the impact of the PESP may be limited because the number of extremely poor students exceeds the number of stipend slots available. Parents in several rural communities said that 80 percent of children are very poor, but only 40 percent get stipends. Its effectiveness may also be limited by corruption in its management and administration. (See below for further discussion.)

Very poor families also face difficulty in feeding their children, and providing meals that are in accord with the school schedule. Poor families—especially in urban areas—related the difficulties faced in providing a breakfast to their children to ensure timely arrival at school, and teachers frequently said hunger prompted children to leave school early. The schools that were found to benefit from a school snack program, an "intervention" that was often suggested by parents and teachers as a means of increasing attendance and attention, exhibited notably lower levels of student absenteeism, tardiness and early departure (despite reports of ruses some students used to obtain the snack and depart).

Students from poor families are also likely to face problems, resulting in absences, which are rooted in poverty. The students interviewed for this study cited illness as a major cause of absenteeism. The poor are more prone to disease and malnutrition than the non-poor. Poor health and nutritional status among young and school-aged children can result in illness and/or physical and cognitive impairment or delays, contributing to absenteeism and poor learning outcomes.[72]

Poor households are more likely to need children's labor for income-producing or cost-saving activities, and be more able to sacrifice the child's time for schooling, resulting in frequent absenteeism and/or early withdrawal from school. This study found that significant percentages of students reported that they missed school because of domestic tasks or farm work; some rural children even reported that they worked for an employer. Others said that they undertook small tasks to earn money before or after school, particularly in urban areas, or helped run their family's business. Not only do these tasks infringe on school time and limit contact hours, but they also take time from children's after-school hours and may impede their ability to complete homework assignments, a major compensatory measure for time-on-task.

Students in all schools have to pay for certain things and the poorer students often have problems with these fees. For example, in one school, it was reported that each student must pay ten Taka for three textbooks (presumably for the teacher's transportation costs to collect the books) and three Taka for pencils. Since textbooks are the major instructional tool employed by the schools visited for both in-class work and out-of

[72] See Partnership for Child Development, "What's New in the Health and Nutrition of the School-Aged Child and in School Health and Nutrition Programmes," paper prepared for the April 2000 ACC/SCN meeting, and Lesley Drake et al. "School-Age Children: Their Nutrition and Health," SCN News, Number 25, December 2002.

school homework, students without books reported that they often do not attend school until they have them or that they are unable to do their homework.

Government policy, to the contrary, indicated that most schools charge exam fees, presumably to pay for printing of exams, paper and pencils for the students to use during the exam. In grades one and two, there are generally three exams a year and students pay five Taka per exam. In grades three through five, there are also three exams and teachers usually charge around eight Taka per exam. Some schools indicated that poor students who can not pay are not charged, but in some parent interviews, there were some comments that some parents took their children out of school because they had difficulty paying the exam and other fees.

Parents in both urban and rural areas often pay tutors to help their children after school in order to increase the amount of instructional time on the primary curriculum. In addition, teachers doing the in-school coaching at grade five for students sitting for the scholarship exam seem to charge fees. Most parents in the study's sample who engaged tutors seemed to use college students in the area that would help their children for a small fee. Clearly, the children of parents who could afford such tutors had an advantage over children of parents who could not afford such help. Several parents expressed frustration that they were too poor to pay for tutors and that, as a consequence, their children were not getting the instruction they needed to master basic skills and advance along the educational ladder.

4. *Corruption*

Transparency International has noted that the education system in Bangladesh is particularly prone to corruption, and this is especially rampant at the upazila level.[73] Recent statements by the Minister of Education (see text box) suggest that the Ministry is concerned with corruption in the education system. This corruption ranges from ghost schools and teachers that receive payments even though they exist only on paper to fees that teachers charge students for services that should be free (see above discussion).

During the study, cases were uncovered in which parents paid school personnel and educational authorities to get their child included on the list of the 40 percent of students selected for stipends, were charged a fee for releasing or picking up the stipend money, and were charged fees for the distribution of "free" textbooks and school supplies. In one school, parents indicated that they paid ten percent of the stipend to the head-teacher for help in getting the money from the bank. The head-teacher would take all the stipend identity cards from the parents and take them to the location of the temporary bank set up to pay the stipends, and collect the stipends to bring back to the parents. This, of course, is contrary to the stipend program rules that indicate that each parent must personally

[73] *Corruption in Primary Education in Bangladesh: Scenarios in Eight Upazilas of Greater Mymensingh*, Transparency International Bangladesh, 2001.

come to collect the money. Other parents indicated that they paid the head-teacher or the SMC chairman 200 Taka for assistance in getting a stipend.

The effects of corruption and unethical practices by head-teachers and teachers on time on task in the schools are multiple. When school staff closes the school for illegitimate reasons, the contact hours are reduced. When head-teachers or teachers arrive late or leave early, the contact hours are reduced. When head-teachers falsify teacher attendance records, they eliminate the basis for disciplinary action and contact hours will continue to be low. When stipend money is illegally appropriated by school authorities, then the credibility of the program and its performance criteria—including attendance requirements—are undermined. If such corruption did not exist, it would likely increase parents' confidence in the school and perhaps encourage higher student retention and on-time attendance.

As noted in earlier sections, stipend and snack programs encourage attendance at schools, though the degree to which students benefit from such attendance is not clear. Attracting children to school with such incentives will be successful in raising education levels significantly in the long run only if (i) the stipend amount remains sufficient to offset the costs of schooling, and (ii) the schools the students attend are managed to assure that students learn what they are supposed to learn over time.

Increased accountability of the schools and teachers to the local community could reduce corruption at the local level. This will be true, of course, only if the parents and the community are better informed as to what is going on in the schools and if the SMCs and PTAs are delegated real authority to make appropriate management decisions, in cooperation with teachers and education officers. However, corruption appears to extend far beyond the education sector and efforts are needed at all levels of government to control it.

V. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Contact time and instructional time are important variables in student learning. Contact hours and instructional hours determine the interaction between students and teachers (as well as among students) for essential learning activities to take place—imparting information, explaining concepts, providing examples, exchanging ideas, and asking questions. Students in Bangladesh's government primary schools receive very little contact time and even less time for instruction, both in comparison with international norms and with Government of Bangladesh standards. While many elements comprise the teaching-learning process, the minimal amounts of contact and instructional time go far in explaining the low achievement levels of Bangladesh's government primary school students. They are also a significant factor in the poor and irregular attendance of many primary school students. And they explain why nearly half of the students surveyed turn to private tutors for instruction. In short, the findings of this study—consistent with those of previous studies—show that Bangladesh's government primary schools are simply not providing the amount of education that is being financed by the government. The leakage and waste of resources, especially in such a poor country, are deplorable.

Table V.A.1: Estimated Optimal and Actual Contact and Instructional Hours Provided in Double-shift Schools in 2003

	Optimal in 2003	Best Case	Percent of Optimal	Worst Case	Percent of Optimal
School Days 2003	238	186	78	101	42
Grades One and Two					
Annual Contact Hours	654	419	64	227	35
Annual Instructional Hours*	595	301	51	104	17
Grades Three through Five					
Annual Contact Hours	932	729	78	253	27
Annual Instructional Hours*	773	435	56	99	13

*Scheduled class-time in best and worst cases adjusted for time-on-task levels

Table V.A.1 summarizes this study's estimates of contact and instructional hours for best and worst case scenarios, based on the profiles of the eight schools visited, and compares them with the optimal number of school days and hours estimated for 2003. While each school is different and no single school may fit all the parameters used in these estimates, the table does demonstrate a range for contact and instructional hours. Even under the best circumstances in the schools serving disadvantaged students, the school days and contact and instructional hours fall far short of the optimal number estimated for 2003. Schools may provide between 42 percent and 78 percent of the total scheduled days of operation. The number of contact hours as a proportion of scheduled contact hours for students in double-shift schools range between 27 percent (worst case for grades three through five) and 78 percent (best case for grades three through five). Students at best are getting about half of the instructional time programmed, and at worst less than one-fifth.

Moreover, these figures do not fully capture the impact of increased class sizes or degraded teaching practices caused by teacher absenteeism, tardiness or early departure.

And these figures only hold true for the students that attend school regularly, and—even for these students—should possibly be adjusted downward by 15 percent to reflect the average of one day per student per week (based on student response about the days missed in the previous week). Even the time programmed for double-shift schools is less than the annual hours required by the national curriculum (713 hours for grades one and two and 1031 for grades three through five).

There are many factors that explain the low levels of contact and instructional time in Bangladesh's government primary schools. S*tructural factors*—established by the education system—can be remedied in part by changing policies, rules, and regulations governing the school calendar, schedule, curriculum and teaching staff, and re-allocating resources accordingly. Among these structural variables are:

- Excessive number of holidays
- Staggered or double-shift schools
- Insufficient hours in the school day
- Too short class periods
- Too many subjects treated in separate classes
- Insufficient numbers of teachers and/or inefficient deployment
- Excessive leave time for teachers
- Teacher training and official duties (including non-school related) scheduled during school hours
- Two months at the beginning and end of school year devoted to non-teaching activities
- Methods of dealing with days lost to natural disasters and use of teaching resources
- Vacation schedules
- Inflexible school hours

Contact and instructional time are further eroded by *operational* considerations and practices, the way the educational authorities and the school—its staff and its students—interpret and treat the procedures, rules and regulations, and manipulate resources to minimize workload and deal with poor teacher and student attendance. Among these operational variables are:

- Irregular school hours
- Late openings and early closing of the school
- Unscheduled school closings and unofficial school holidays
- Cancelled classes
- Reluctance to teach without new textbooks
- Lack of lesson plans

Head-teachers and teachers are the major mediating force and pacing element for contact and instructional time. Their attitudes and behaviors are primary determinants in the

amount of contact and instructional time provided to students. High teacher absenteeism (about 13 percent on the day of the visit) and tardiness (25 percent for teachers and 50 percent for head-teachers) have powerful and deleterious effects on the number of days a school operates, the hours of operation, and the amount and effective use of instructional time.

This study found that almost universally teachers were united in their attempts to limit their working hours and lighten their teaching burden, often driven by an acute sense of relative deprivation in terms of remuneration and determination that teaching duties should not interfere with their private lives. Some of the strategies teachers used are officially sanctioned by the education system, such as taking as many of the 20 casual leave days as possible, using contingency days to declare school holidays, and pursuing training opportunities at the expense of the school and its students. In many other instances, however, the lack of professionalism, initiative and motivation of some teaching personnel erodes contact and instructional time. Teachers would "steal" time away from instruction by reducing the number of classes taught, combining sections or grades into one large class, performing administrative tasks during school hours programmed for instruction, and not preparing for lessons. Many would shirk required duties meant to deal with student attendance issues, by not making home visits, updating school maps or providing meaningful remedial assistance. Many would take advantage of opportunities to avoid teaching responsibilities by dismissing classes early due to "insufficient" numbers of students, refusing to hold class if student textbooks had not arrived, or stretching the number of absent days taken for a natural disaster.

Finally, in some instances, the study uncovered corrupt or unethical behavior by some head-teachers and teachers. Deceptive practices included falsifying teacher (and student) attendance records, opening the school late or closing it early for personal convenience, taking unauthorized absences, and not following or enforcing the official procedures to deal with irregular teacher attendance. Corrupt practices—affecting student attendance—included selection of inappropriate candidates for the stipend program; requiring "kick-backs" from parents for stipend disbursement or textbook distribution; and requiring payment for coaching classes held during the school day, on paid teaching time, and in school facilities.

Inappropriate teacher practices behavior goes largely unregulated by the educational supervisory system, and may even be tacitly or covertly supported by it. No teachers interviewed reported that they had ever been penalized for poor attendance and no head-teachers said that they had ever had to formally take action against a teacher. Local education authorities indicated that efforts to discipline school staff would be professionally infeasible or difficult, given that the teachers' union and politicians (including MPs) could be rallied to teachers' support. Not only is the supervisory system

fragile—with too few APEOs for the number of school visits required for good management—but there is some indication that some supervisors may be engaged in similar unprofessional, unethical or illegal practices, and therefore have little incentive to genuinely inspect, flag problems, or bring disciplinary measures against school staff.

Students also contribute to the minimal contact and instructional hours, reducing the small number offered at school further by limiting the number of hours they decide to spend at school. However, while student absenteeism and tardiness are high, they generally are not responsible for setting the school calendar (days of operation) or determining the hours of operation, despite some teachers' claims.

Students tend to be the hapless recipients of what the school offers by way of contact and instructional hours, and of course, in terms of instructional quality. However, this does not mean that they are passive. What happens at the school will in many respects influence whether and how students "vote with their feet." Programs to deal with the demand-side constraint of poverty have certainly contributed to improvements in student attendance seen over the past decade. The direct and opportunity costs of primary schooling have been somewhat mitigated by food and stipend programs, as well as by the ostensible elimination (or at least reduction) of school fees, book fees, and exams fees. Both the school snack program and new PESP (stipend) program in effect in some of the schools visited for this study show a positive association with improved attendance.

Unfortunately, the dismal supply-side aspects of some schools may discourage student attendance. Uncomfortable surroundings, unpleasant teachers, and uninteresting or incoherent instruction undoubtedly keep some children from attending school regularly and definitely depress learning achievement. In general, attention to students—whether in the classroom or after hours—seems to be the last concern in most schools visited. Visits to student homes were avoided, no remediation strategies were in place, and other priorities were allowed to take precedence over student-teacher contact time and infringe on instructional time. In fact, due to inadequate facilities, resources and numbers of teachers, the well-being of the school and its teaching staff is likely to be maximized if student attendance remains low and irregular (and official enrollment numbers high).

REFERENCES

Action Aid, *Education for Life*: A *Report Card on Basic Education in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Action Aid Newsletter, April 2002.

Action Aid. *School Budget Analysis, Selected Works of Local Level Budget Analysis*, One Year after the World Education Conference. Dhaka: Action Aid, April 2001.

Asian Development Bank, Project Performance Audit Report on the Primary Education Sector Project (Loan 1026-BAN) in Bangladesh, November 2000.

Alam, M., *Basic Educational Achievement in Rural Bangladesh: Level, Pattern and Socio-economic Determinants*, Research Report no.153, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, 1997.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. *Report of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2000*. Dhaka: March 2003.

Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) *Statistical Profile on Education in Bangladesh*, November 2002.

Bangladesh Economic Journal 2001. Dhaka: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Economic Journal 2002. Dhaka: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Economic Journal 2003. Dhaka: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS). *Fighting Human Poverty; Bangladesh Human Development Report 2000*. Dhaka: BIDS, January 2001.

CAMPE. *Education Watch 2001—Renewed Hope Daunting Challenges: State of Primary Education in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2002.

CAMPE. *Education Watch 2000—A Question of Quality*, Volumes 1 through 3. 2000; Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2001.

CAMPE. *Education Watch 1999—Hope Not Complacency*. Dhaka: The University Press limited, 1999.

Center for Policy Dialogue, *Growth or Stagnation?* (1996) in The World Bank. *Education Sector Review*, Volumes 1 and 2. Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2000.

Civil Society Task Force. *Developing a Policy Agenda for Bangladesh*. Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2003.

Dalin, Per and others. *How Schools Improve, An International Report*. London: Cassell, 1994.

Directorate of Primary Education. *Primary Education Statistics in Bangladesh - 2001*. Dhaka: Primary and Mass Education Division, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, May 2002.

Drake, Lesley et al. "*School-Age Children: Their Nutrition and Health*," SCN News, Number 25, December 2002.

Firoz, Muhammad. *Bangladesh Service Rules*, 11th Edition; Part 1 Part 2. Dhaka: Roiddur Prokashoni, March, 2003.

Government of Bangladesh, PEDP II Project Preparation Team. *Second Primary Education Development Program (PEDP II) 2003-2008 Final Plan*, Dhaka: October 2002.

Government of Bangladesh Primary School Performance Monitoring Project (PSPMP). *Primary Education in Bangladesh: Findings of the PSPMP 2000* , Dhaka: December 2001.

Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Education, *National Education Policy 2000* (English version), Dhaka: 2000.

GroundWork, Inc. *Bangladesh Education Sector Review, Report No. 1: Overview of the Basic Education Sector; Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity.* Washington, D.C.: Creative Associates, June 2002

GroundWork, Inc. *Bangladesh Education Sector Review, Report No. 2: The Status of Gender Equity; Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS)* Activity. Washington, D.C.: Creative Associates, May 2002.

GroundWork, Inc. *Bangladesh Education Sector Review, Report No. 3: NGOs as Deliverers of Basic Education; Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity.* Washington, D.C.: Creative Associates, June 2002

GroundWork, Inc. *Bangladesh Education Sector Review, Report No. 4: Teachers and Teacher Training (Formal and Non-Formal); Basic Education Policy Support (BEPS) Activity.* Washington, D.C.: Creative Associates, June, 2002.

GroundWork, Inc. *Bangladesh Education Sector Review, Report No. 5: Working with Government Agencies in Education; Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity.* Washington, D.C.: Creative Associates, June 2002.

Hossain, M.H. "Decentralization of Educational Management and Planning of Primary Education in Bangladesh" in Jalaluddin A.K. and Chowdhury A.M.R. (editors), Getting Started: Universalizing Quality Primary Education in Bangladesh. Dhaka, UPL, 1997.

Human Development in South Asia 2002; Agriculture and Rural Development. Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2003.

Karim, AHM, 1992, *School-Based Primary Education in Bangladesh: Review*, UNICEF (mimeograph) cited in The World Bank. *Education Sector Review*, Volumes 1 and 2. Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2000.

Partnership for Child Development, *"What's New in the Health and Nutrition of the School-Aged Child and in School Health and Nutrition Programmes,"* paper prepared for the ACC/SCN meeting, April 2000

Rahman, Atiur, Ghulam Sattar, Md Arifur Rahman. *Poverty Profile: Bangladesh; A Report Based on Secondary Information.* Dhaka: Unnayan Shamannay, September 2003.

Rahman, Rushidan Islan *Performance of Bangladesh Economy: Selected issues*. Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, August 2003.

Tietjen, Karen. *Bangladesh Primary Education Stipend Program: A Descriptive Analysis* Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, August 2003.

Transparency International Bangladesh, *Corruption in Primary Education in Bangladesh: Scenarios in Eight Upazilas of Greater Mymensingh*, Dhaka: 2001.

The World Bank and Asian Development Bank. *Poverty in Bangladesh: Building on Progress*. Document of the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. Dhaka: Color Line Printers, March 2003.

The World Bank, *Bangladesh: Improving Governance for Reducing Poverty*, Dhaka: November 2002.

The World Bank. *Education Sector Review*, Volumes 1 and 2. Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2000.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

Technical Note

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND APPROACH TO TEACHER AND STUDENT TIME USE

Purpose

The purpose of this technical note is to respond to USAID/Bangladesh's request for an amplified response to addressing Task # 4 of the Scope of Work for the *Time to Learn* Study, which states that the consultant team will be responsible for "*proposing a cost-effective but rigorous approach to handling the problem of actually having to follow children and teachers around, and do that with a large enough group to have meaningful results."*

Summary Response

The approach and methods used to collect data on teacher and student time use have been described in Chapter III of the *Time to Learn* study report. Survey interviews provided basic information on time use during and outside of school hours; observations of teachers and students were conducted during school hours; and focus group interviews with teachers, parents and community members were used to triangulate the survey data. An approach to physically "following children and teachers around" before and after school hours was not proposed because:

- It is not an appropriate or useful methodology for obtaining the type of data needed to achieve the purposes, answer the research questions, and cover the topics posed in the Scope of Work for the study.[74]
- Analysis of the requirements for conducting observations of teacher and student use of time outside of school showed that it could neither be feasibly conducted to obtain required information nor effectively applied to a sufficient number of subjects to be meaningful or assure minimal representativeness in a low-cost or cost-effective way,

[74] Proposing a generic method for observing teachers and student outside of school, without reference to a specific data need or research question, is not a recommended research practice. See Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation Methods* (1980); Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* (Fifth Edition) (1989); and Norman Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods* (Third Edition) (1989).

in comparison with other data collection methods for the purposes of the study, *even without consideration of a limited time frame and resource envelope.*

- Ex-post analysis of the time use data collected on the robust sample of 144 students interviewed shows little variation outside of the school time schedule, suggesting that participant observation outside of school would add little to the data obtained about out-of-school time use (insofar as it pertains to the study's data requirements.)

However, observation methods *were* employed to follow or track teacher and student time use in-school. These are described in the Chapter III (Approach and Methodology) and Chapter IV.B, and the observation instruments used have been included in the research report's attachments.

The following sections explicate the points above, provide a more comprehensive explanation of why teachers and students were not followed outside of school hours and then are summarized in Chapter III. Additional recommendations are then made for triangulating survey and interview data about teacher and student time-use data.

Task Analysis

Task # 4 was assigned within the context of the *Time to Learn* study that aimed at estimating the amount of—and explaining the factors affecting—contact and instructional time that was provided by Bangladesh's government primary schools and was received by their students, in order to inform the development of education strategies by USAID, other donors and the GOB. As described in detail in Chapter III (Approach and Methodology) of the study, several methods were used to obtain data to examine the critical variables in contact and instructional time, including (but not solely) teacher and student time use both in-school and out-of-school. While quantifying and observing how teachers and students used their *in-school* time resulted in the calculation of daily contact and instructional hours and insight into how school resources were manipulated to influence these hours, quantifying and exploring how teachers and students used their *out-of-school* time contributed to understanding the factors that affected teacher and student patterns of attendance, absenteeism and punctuality, as well as the scope and parameters for revising the school calendar and school day.

Task #4—taken without reference to the other tasks that defined the study—appears to be based on the assumption that both teachers and students must be followed or observed in order to obtain an accurate understanding of both teacher and student time use and the reasons for it. While observation is one method of collecting data about time use, there are others that can yield equally valid and accurate data. Moreover, in addition to the type of information required to respond to the research questions, selection of methodologies must be evaluated in light of feasibility, value-added, and available resources. Indeed, the Task #4 statement acknowledges this trade-off by emphasizing cost-effectiveness and rigor.

Based on the data needs and the time and resources available, the researchers utilized a mix of different methods to address the research questions, selecting the methods that

provide the most reliable, accurate and valid data at the least cost. In particular, observation methods were considered feasible and used to collect data about in-school time use by teachers and students. However, observation for out-of-school time use (or following teachers and students around) as a primary means of data collection was determined to be impractical, expensive in comparison with other methods, and not feasible with the time-resource budget available to the researchers.

More importantly, upon reflection in preparing this amplified response to Task # 4, the researchers consider that—even without the constraints of time and budget—following teachers and students around during their out-of-school hours would yield little value-added information to respond to the questions posed by the study, and would require an inordinately high level of resources to obtain data in sufficient quantity to ensure reliability and validity; data that can reasonably be achieved by other methods.

Data obtained by survey and interview methods on teacher and student time use suggests that observation of students in their out-of-school hours was unnecessary: the lack of variation (except between urban and rural areas) in the information they provided about their daily schedules and routine, and the reasons for absenteeism and tardiness demonstrates that certain patterns of and reasons for behavior predominate. Had there been greater variation, observation may have been desirable to document and understand the diverse patterns of behavior. That approximately 144 students provided similar information about time use and schedule, after intensive interviews with different interviewers, provides assurance that accurate and valid data have been obtained and that turning to more costly methods is not justified in this instance.

While observation methods of out-of-school individual teacher or student behaviors may be appropriate for collecting data on other research issues, they can only be evaluated here in light of the research questions and data needs posed by this specific study. Consequently, the researchers have interpreted Task #4 as part of the overall methodological design for the study and propose participant observation methods only where useful and appropriate as detailed below.

Use of Observation Methods and Application in the *Time to Learn* Study

In general, a major advantage of observation (over open-ended interviews, focus groups, or structured survey questionnaires) is that it allows for the identification of actual—rather than reported or self-reported—behaviors. This may be important if the respondents are likely to deliberately misrepresent their behaviors because of sensitivity (as in the case of teachers who may try to exaggerate the time they spend on lesson plan preparation at home) or innocently misreport their behaviors because of ignorance (as in the case of students whose sense of time may hinder they ability to accurately report time use). In some settings, participant observation may also (but not necessarily) provide insight into the reasons for certain behaviors relevant to the particular research questions.

There are also several disadvantages of observation that can limit both the veracity of the data obtained or—more importantly—the ability to reasonably implement the method. They are:

1. Constraints on Sample Size: The capacity of researchers to follow or even observe multiple subjects is limited, unless the behaviors take place in a group setting, such as a meeting or a classroom (even here, it can pose challenges if subjects are not engaged in the same or relatively few activities). Observing individual behavior outside of a group setting means that the subject must be under the scrutiny of the observer on a one-to-one basis. This would be the case in attempting to observe and document the activities and time allocations of individual teachers and students once they have left school. Since one researcher would be needed per subject over a 24 hour period (at a minimum), either large numbers of researchers or extended time would be needed. Since the *Time to Learn* study obtained data on 144 students using five researchers, attempting the same sample size through observation would take roughly one month (five students per day). While time and resource considerations may be the major limiting factor in achieving a representative or robust sample size for most data collection efforts, this is not a binding constraint. However, feasibility is constrained by other factors.

2. Distortions in Subject Behavior: The presence of an observer (especially one having to record the subject's activities on a regular basis) will influence the subject's behavior and likely cause him or her to alter the daily schedule of activities, particularly if he or she feels that there is a "right" way to behave. Distortions are likely to occur in the behaviors of both teachers and students: more time than normal may be spent on lesson plan preparation or homework, parents may lighten household duties, or efforts may be made to be more punctual in school attendance. While the mere act of observation will introduce some distortions in behavior, they can be reduced by the ubiquity of the observer. A researcher who is a community member will occasion less attention, disruption of routines, and behavior modification than an outsider. However, it is unlikely that any observer, charged with recording time use in hourly or less intervals, could do so surreptitiously or would become so ubiquitous that no distortions would occur, even if ample time during which the subjects become habituated to observer presence were available. This is a near-binding constraint. (Other distortions can be introduced by the researcher's own perceptions, but this would not come into play in the case of simply recording subject time use).

3. Access to Subjects: Observation requires access to the subjects. Although in some instances researchers are barred access, generally with the acceptable observer profile, appropriate approach, explanation and introduction from a credible reference, access would not be difficult to obtain simply to record information about time use in most communities in Bangladesh. However, at a certain point privacy considerations may prevent the researcher from actually observing behavior, as children withdraw into the homes of their parents and prepare for bed or teachers deal with various details of home life that they might not be comfortable in sharing. The observer would have to be on an intimate basis with the family, which could only be achieved

in most cases with time. In most instances, data on how teachers and students spend their early morning and later evening hours is likely to be self-reported. Access is a binding constraint.

Application to In-school Settings: In assessing both the advantages and disadvantages of observation methods, the research team decided that observation methods could feasibly be applied to in-school settings. The relatively constrained mobility of the students and teachers during school hours and the group setting of the classroom made observation of numerous subjects possible, thus addressing issues of representativeness and sample size. Access to schools and classrooms was ensured by permission from educational authorities, as well as by the public nature of government schooling. Distortions in subject behavior, however, was an issue, and techniques had to be employed to reduce this.

Two types of "structured" in-school observations and instruments (annexed to the study) were developed. The first (Teacher Observation) tracked on a half-hourly basis what was occurring overall at the school (i.e. school time use) by following each teacher's movements and activities (such as when they arrived/left; when they were in class, in a meeting, at an assembly.). One researcher was assigned this task, which was conducted somewhat covertly in that the researcher made the rounds of the school without talking to the teachers or spending more than a minute to note (out-of-sight of the teacher) what the teacher was doing. The data was used to verify what (i) the head-teacher reported (in an interview) was the daily routine of the school, and (ii) the teacher responses about time use in the structured survey questionnaire.

The second structured "in-school" observation was developed to collect data on how class-time was used by teachers and students. Teacher and student behavior was recorded on a simple form that noted the time and activity of the teacher, in addition to what students were doing (to determine whether they were responding to teacher activities/instructions). Since recording each student's response was not feasible, the researcher noted what most of the students were doing with some notes on other student activities. Distortion of subject behavior in response to observer behavior was a consideration with this observation method. To reduce this, only Bangladeshi research assistants conducted the observations, using a simple (but structured) form to lessen observer bias. Teachers were reassured of anonymity and that there was no performance evaluation purpose to the observations. While most proceeded to conduct their classes as usual,[75] some teachers modified their behavior because of observer presence (noted in Chapter III). One teacher ploy was to teach a previous lesson of which the teacher was familiar. The observer response was to verify with the head-teacher, teacher and students which lesson was the subject of the day, before class began.

Application to Out-of-school Settings: The research team determined that observation methods could not be feasibly used to track the movements and activities of either

[75] That teacher class-time presence and classroom management and instruction techniques were almost uniformly poor indicates that, even if on their best behavior, teachers do not use class time effectively.

teachers or students in sufficient numbers to be the prime method of collecting data about time use during out-of-school hours. In addition to the problems of adequate numbers and sample size, both distortion of subject behavior and 24-hour access to the subjects presented binding constraints.

Data on teacher and student time use was primarily self-reported, collected through the structured survey questionnaires. In the case of students, whose conception of time was somewhat limited, researchers worked with them to estimate the time by using key indicators (such as prayer time, sunrise, sunset, school hours) as reference points. The survey interview data provided a robust number of responses (26 teachers and 144 students) as a basis for initial analysis. The survey data was triangulated in focus group discussions with teachers, parents and community members in order to emphasize its purpose and ascertain routines and patterns of activity.

Even with the option of more resources (time, researchers, budget), observation methods are not the most effective or even feasible way of collecting a sufficient sample size of data on teacher and student time use. The lack of variation in responses and the confirmation of the self-reported time-use patterns indicate that for the purposes of the *Time to Learn* study and the research questions asked, these methods are most cost-effective for collecting information on large number of subjects and should be employed in the future for similar inquiries.

However, should time and resources allow, expanding the research methods (including some forms of observation) to triangulate the basic time-use data will contribute to methodological rigor. Various triangulation options are proposed below.

Triangulation Options for Out-of-school Time Use

Although time and resources did not permit the research team for the *Time to Learn* study to pursue the options described below, these options could serve to triangulate and explore time use patterns of head-teachers, teachers, and students. Triangulation, or the use of multiple methods of data collection and investigators, increases the probability that the data collected is accurate, the questions asked appropriate, other dimensions emerge, and researcher bias overcome. The options are proposed as additive to the methods employed by the study (with the survey questionnaires providing the foundation of the data base), and can be used singly or in combination depending on the resources and types of questions for future examination of time use.

Observations:

Clearly one means of triangulating self-reported data on a large number of teachers and students would be to undertake a traditional anthropological or ethnographic study that targets an individual teacher or student and follows his or her life over the course of a year or several months. Most desirable is for the researcher to live with the teacher's or student's family in order to have access to the generally 'off-limits' private time. A classic example of this approach is Henry Walcott's study The Man in the Principal's

Office in which the researcher follows a school principal in his professional and private life throughout the course of the year. While much of data is collected through participant observation, interviews with the subject, his family, friends and associates is equally important. Generally, though, this extensive type of ethnography is constrained by time and budget limitations, but variations can be pursued.

Option # 1 (limited ethnography): Over the course of a month or even a few weeks, three researchers could be deployed to live in the households of a representative (and willing) head-teacher, teacher and student in an urban and a rural area. The researchers would have to be able to immediately fit into the subjects' household and adapt to the local conditions, so local researchers would have to be employed. The timeframe would have to be long enough so that the researcher can maximize ubiquity, the hosts become comfortable with the researcher's presence, multiple opportunities exist to record time use, and the rhythms of time use are observed. The researcher would record time use by hourly increments and use participant observation methods to identify and describe the factor that influence decisions about time use. Interviews with subjects, their families, and colleagues would enrich and augment observational data. The result would be a comparatively comprehensive ethnography of the week or month in the life of a head-teacher, teacher, and/or student.

Requirements: six subjects, six local researchers, time-use instruments, two to four week timeframe (not including instrument design and training)

Option # 2 (periodic observation): Over the course of the week, the time use of the subjects—head-teacher, teachers and/or students—could be recorded by the researcher(s) on a periodic basis, by locating the subjects at specified times and recording their activity. For example, every evening at 8:00 pm, the researcher could visit the subject's house to determine his/her whereabouts and then observe what the subject is doing. While this is a hit-or-miss approach to develop a complete picture of 24-hour time use, it would serve to check the patterns of activity. Each researcher would be assigned a head-teacher, teacher and student (necessarily located in close proximity to one another), and would proceed to check on their whereabouts and movement several times a day. The subject would be questioned on why he or she is engaged in that activity at that specific time. The result would be a chronology of each subjects' routine, and a report on reasons for time use.

Requirements: one rural village and one urban neighborhood (where head-teacher, teacher, student/s live); two researchers (one per site); time use instruments; one week timeframe (not including instrument design and training). (Note that the number of sites can be increased according to the number of researchers available).

Self-Recorded Data:

Logs, in which the subjects record their activities, are frequently employed in consumer research studies in order to track consumer habits (such as television viewing, eating habits) This data collection approach can also be used to triangulate time use data, but it

is subject to inherent limitations: the subjects may not record their activities or do so accurately, they may misrepresent activities, and they may not have the skills (i.e. literacy) or the equipment (timepiece) to record them. Careful selection of the subjects can reduce or overcome some of these limitations.

Option # 3 (Time Logs): Head-teachers, teachers, students (or their parents) can be asked individually to complete on a daily basis simple time logs in which they record their time use, over a one-week period. Since literacy and ability to tell time are requirements of this approach, younger students and some parents may not qualify as proper subjects. Inexpensive clocks or watches can be provided to the participants, both as a tools and incentive. Disposable cameras provided to older children or parents to record the child's activities can also be used by the subjects to supplement the time log. If parents and students are unable to read or tell time, an older sibling in the household could be charged with filling out the log.

Requirements: numbers of subjects depend on sample stratification; one researcher per village/site to select and train subjects in log use, make periodic visits (daily is preferable) to see that logs are being completed; review/collect logs at the end of the week; one week timeframe; instruments; and additional equipment (timepiece, camera).

Open-ended Interviews:

Option # 4 (Targeted Parent Interviews): Although parents as a group were asked to describe and verify their school children's time use in order to ascertain general patterns, individual parents of the students who were interviewed as part of the survey were not asked to verify the data their child provided. These parents could be visited in their home or asked to visit schools to discuss with the researchers the content of their child's responses to the survey's time-use section in order to verify/refute information and explore the reasons behind the specific time-use patterns. Researchers could also focus on parents of students who provided unusual time-use responses (or exhibit notable pattern of absence and tardiness).

Requirements: two parents of students per school (or ten percent of sample), one to two researchers, one to two hour time frame per interview, copy of student survey, interview protocol.

Option # 5 (Selected Head-teacher and Teacher Interviews): The survey instrument did not ask teachers to provide an hour-by-hour account of their out-of-school time. A form, similar to the one used by students, could be developed and used in teacher interviews, rather than collecting data in group interviews with teachers. Selected teachers could then be interviewed more extensively about their time-use patterns and the reasons behind them.

Requirements: one head-teacher and teacher per school, two researchers, one to two hour time frame per interview, copy of teacher survey response, interview protocol.

References:

Babbie, E. The Practice of Social Research (Fifth Edition), Wadsworth Publishing Company: California, 1989.

Babbie, E. Survey Research Methods (Second Edition), Wadsworth Publishing Company: California, 1990.

Denzin, N. The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods (Third Edition), Prentice Hall: New Jersey, 1989.

Krathwohl, D.R. Social and Behavioral Research: A New Framework for Conceptualizing, Implementing and Evaluating research Studies, Jossey-Bass Publishers: San Francisco, 1987.

Patton, M.Q. Qualitative Evaluation Methods, Sage Publications: Beverly Hills, 1980.

Schwartz, H. and J. Jacobs Qualitative Sociology: A Method to Madness, The Free Press: New York, 1980.

ANNEX 2: Researcher Roster

Name	Specialization	Address, Phone, and E-mail
Seth Spaulding	Educationist	Creative Associates International Inc. 5301 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 700 Washington, D.C. 200152015 Phone: 202 966 5804
Karen Tietjen	Education Economist	Creative Associates International Inc. 5301 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 700 Washington, D.C. 200152015 Phone: 202 966 5804
Md. Arifur Rahman	Socio-Economic Development Research	Unnayan Shamannay 2/E/1-B, Mymenshing Road, Shahbagh, Dhaka 1000 Phone : 880-2-8610332 (Work), Fax :880-2-8622320, 0171007938 (mobile) arif@sdnbd.org,<shamunnay@sdnbd.org>
Farzana Ahmed Happy	Masters in Nutrition & Food Science	374, Elephant Road, Dhaka:1205, Bangladesh 9663977, 7110389 (res)
Farhana Afroze Sume	Masters in Economics	1-B, 103/104, Mirpur, Dhaka:1216 8054640 , 8023436 (res) sumemus@hotmail.com
Md. Rahmatul Azad Rimon	Masters in Economics	8124645 (res), 0172106942 (cell) alazad007@hotmail. com
Ishraful Awlia Chowdhury	Economics, Final Year	E-9 Easel Hut, 345 Dilu Road, Moghbazar, Dhaka:1217 9362713 (res), 0172017843 (cell) Awlia1103@hotmail. com
Partha Sarathee Ghosh	Economics, Final Year, Dhaka University	29 A, Madan Babu Road, Ampatti, Mymensing 0171475422 (cell) sgpartha2003@yahoo.com
Saika Nizam	Masters in Geography	5/8 Block-F Madrasa Road Mohammadpur Dhaka-1207. 9118420 (res) saikanizam@yahoo.com

ANNEX 3

INSTRUMENTS

Study of Students and Teachers Use of Time
in the Government Primary Schools in Bangladesh
October-November 2003
Teacher Interview

School Code_____ Interviewer_____ Date_____

A. General information:

1.	Sex (circle one)	Male Female
2.	Age (at last birthday)	
3.	What is your teacher qualification?	
4.	How many years have you worked as a teacher?	
5.	How many years have you worked at this school ?	
6.	What grade do you teach? (If applicable)	
7.	What subject(s) do you teach? (If applicable)	_____ _____
8.	Are you married? (circle one)	Yes No
9.	What is your spouse's occupation?	
10.	How many children do you have?	
11.	How many of your children are ten years old or younger?	
12.	Do you live in this community (where school is located)	Yes No

B. Leave and Absenteeism:

1. Did you take any "leave" in the last academic year? Yes_____ No_____

2. If so, how many days did you take for different types of leave?

	Type of Leave	**No. of days**
a.	Medical (hospital, sick, quarantine)	
b.	Maternity	
c.	Disability	
d.	Earned leave	
e.	Vacation	
f.	Personal (dept'l, R&R, casual, extra-ordinary)	
g.	Study	
h.	Retirement preparation	
i.	Forced leave	
j.	Leave without pay	
k.	Unauthorized leave	
l.	Public holiday	
m.	Other	
n.	TOTAL	

3. Of the days that you missed, how many did you miss for the following reasons?

	Reason	**# of days**
Illness		
a.	Illness	
b.	If so, female-specific illness or pregnancy	
Domestic Work		
c.	Child care	
d.	Care of sick relatives	
e.	Housework (cooking/cleaning/fetching wood or water, other)	
f.	Other	
Income-generating activities		
g.	Farming	
h.	Family business	
i.	Private tutoring	
j.	Work for employer	
k.	Other	
Transportation		
l.	Lack of transportation to school	
Events		
m.	Funerals, wedding, ceremonies, festivals	
n.	In-service teacher training programs	
o.	Official duties	
p.	Other (specify_____)	
q.	TOTAL	

4. Did you receive payment for all the days you were absent? Yes___ No____

5. For how many days did you not receive payment? _____

6. What are reasons you did not receive payment? (circle all that apply)
   a. Excessive leave
   b. Unauthorized leave
   c. Other_____

7. Thinking of the **past month**, how many days were you absent from school?_____

8. Were you absent for any of the following reasons? (mark all that apply)

	Reason	**# of days**
a.	Illness	
b.	If so, female-specific illness or pregnancy	
c.	Child care	
d.	Care of sick relatives	
e.	Housework (cooking/cleaning/fetching wood or water, other)	
f.	Farming	
g.	Family business	
h.	Private tuition	
i.	Work for employer	
j.	Lack of transportation to school	
k.	Funerals, wedding, ceremonies, festivals	
l.	In-service teacher training programs (specify)	
m.	Official duties (specify)	
n.	Other (specify)	
p.	Total	

9. Have you ever been reprimanded or criticized for being absent? Yes____ No____

10. If so, by whom? (mark all that apply)
    a. Other teacher(s)
    b. Head-teacher
    c. SMC member
    d. AUPEO or UPEO
    e. Parent(s)
    f. Other (specify_____)

(For female teachers only)

11. Have you ever taken pregnancy leave? Yes_____ No_____

12. If so, how often have you taken leave?

Dates:	**Number of days:**

C. Tardiness/Early Departure:

1. At this school, what time are teachers are supposed to be on duty? _____

2. On average, how many days a month do you estimate that you had to arrive at school after the teacher starting time? _____(days)

3. What is the primary reason you are most often late for school? (circle one)
    a. Transportation problems
    b. Distance to school
    c. Sleep late
    d. Domestic chores (including child care)
    e. Income-generating activities (other work obligations)
    f. Work duties do not start until after official opening time
    g. Official duties (specify_____)
    h. Other (specify_____)

4. At this school, what time are teachers officially off duty? _____

5. On average, how many days a month do you estimate that you leave school before the official closing time? _____(days)

6. What is the primary reason that you most often leave school early? (circle one)
    a. Transportation problems
    b. Distance to school
    c. Sleep late
    d. Domestic chores (including child care)
    e. Income-generating activities (other work obligations)
    f. Work duties do not start until after official opening time
    g. Official duties (specify_____)
    h. Other (specify_____)

7. Has your pay been adjusted to reflect late arrival or early departure? Yes___No____

8. Have you ever been reprimanded or criticized for being late or leaving early? Yes__No_

9. If so, by whom? (mark all that apply)
    a. Other teacher(s)
    b. Head-teacher
    c. SMC member
    d. AUPEO or UPEO
    e. Parent(s)
    f. Other (specify_____)

D. Teacher Work Day and Schedule:

1. How do you usually travel to work?
    a. Private vehicle or motorcycle
    b. Private Bicycle
    c. Commercial transport (bus, boat, rickshaw, etc.)
    d. Walk
    e. Mixed
    f. Other (specify_____)

2. How long does it take you to travel from your home to school and back, using your usual means of transport?_____(in minutes)

3. What are your usual work hours for your job as a teacher (**including** travel time)?
Start:_____ Finish:_____

4. What are your duties as a teacher and how much time do you spend in a **typical day** on them? (ask about each activity)

	School-related duties	**Time spent (minutes)**
a.	Teaching students	
b.	Supervise play/recreational activities	
c.	Supervise service activities of students	
d.	Individual work with students	
e.	Grade exams/mark papers	
f.	Prepare lessons	
g.	Administration	
h.	School maintenance	
i.	Meet with individual parents	
j.	Assembly	
k.	Other (specify)	
l.	TOTAL minutes	

5. How many days in a **typical month** are you usually absent from school (not teaching) in order to undertake assigned school-related duties and for what reasons? (ask about each activity, mark all that apply)

	School-related duties	**Number of days**
a.	Administration (e.g. stipends, collect books, etc)	
b.	Training	
c.	Other (specify)	
e.	TOTAL	

6. Does your job as a teacher require that you work in the evenings, after school hours, or on holidays? Yes_____ No_____

7. If yes, what do you and how many hours do you spend per **typical month**? (ask about each activity, mark all that apply)

	After-school teacher tasks	**Time spent (in hours)**
a.	SMC Meeting	
b.	PTA Meeting	
c.	Meet with parents	
d.	Organize a celebration	
e.	Attend community meeting or event	
f.	In-service training or professional development	
g.	Other (specify)	
h.	TOTAL	

8. What other duties—apart from your work as a teacher—are you asked to undertake, by whom, how many days did you spend on them **last year**, and did they take place during the school day? (ask about each activity, mark all that apply)

	Non-school -related duties	**Request made by: (HdTchr,UPEO, etc.)**	**No. of days spent**	**Occurred during school day (Y/N)**
a.	Voter registration			
b.	Elections			
c.	FFE			
d.	Stipend (e.g. PESP)			
e.	Vaccination			
f.	Other (specify)			

9. Did any of the activities named above affect your work or duties as a teacher? Yes_____ No____

10. If yes, explain how. (mark all that apply)
    a. Made me late for school
    b. Made me leave school early
    c. Required that I miss the entire school day
    d. Made me too tired to attend school
    e. Other (specify_____)

11 **Last year**, did you receive any training or professional development (such as in-service workshops, Primary Teacher Training Certificate in Education course, bi-monthly refresher courses? Yes__No__

12. If yes, what were the courses and how many **partial or whole days** of school did you miss **last year**? (mark all that apply)

	Type of training	No. of partial or entire days missed
a.	In-service workshops	
b.	Certificate training	
c.	Refresher training	
d	Other	
	TOTAL	

13. Thinking about the last professional training you received, did you have to miss any school days?
    Yes_____ No_____

14. If yes, how many whole or partial days of school did you miss?_____

E. Teaching Load

1. Thinking of **last year**, were you able to completely (i.e. cover the whole book) cover all the subjects in the curriculum that you are responsible? Yes___ No_____

2. If not, what was is the primary reason you could not? (circle one)
    a. Not enough time
    b. Too many subjects
    c. Not trained in subjects
    d. Late arrival of books or materials
    e. No enough books or material
    f. Natural disasters (e.g. flood)
    g. Slow students
    h. Other (specify_____)

3. What do you do if you can not cover the subjects adequately? (open)
    _____
    _____
    _____

4. What do you suggest could be done to ensure that you cover the curriculum completely? (open)
    _____
    _____
    _____

5. What do you think are the major advantages and disadvantages of double shifts for you and for the students?

Advantages	**Disadvantages**
a.	d.
b.	e.
C	f.

6. Have you received any guidance or instruction on how to deal with double-shift schools and the challenges or disadvantages they present? Yes_____ No_____

7. If so, what were they? (open)
    _____
    _____

8. Have you received any guidance or instruction on how to deal with large class sizes and the challenges or disadvantages they present? Yes_____ No_____

9. If so, what were they? (open)
    _____
    _____

F. Other Income-generating Activities

1. In addition to your salary as a teacher, have you earned money from other activities or jobs?
    Yes_____ No_____

2. If yes, how often do you earn extra money?
   a. At least once a week
   b. At least once a month
   c. At least once a year

3. If yes, how have you earned extra money? (circle all that apply)
   a. Tutoring students
   b. Farming
   c. Self owned business (specify_____)
   d. Work for employer (specify_____)
   e. Other (specify_____)

4. If you tutored students, how many hours did you spend on average per month last year? _____hours

5. How many students did you tutor last year? _____students

6. Did the students you tutored include? (mark all that apply)
   a. Students that you teach in school
   b. Students from the school where you teach (but not your student)
   c. Students from other primary schools
   d. Other (specify_____)

7. In this community, how much does a student typically pay (in cash or kind) for tutoring?

		Amount	Per (month or hour)
a.	Lower Primary Student		
b.	Upper Primary Student		
c.	Other		

G. Teacher-community Interaction

1. Thinking of the community where the school you teach at is located, do you attend any of the following and how often in the past month?

Community Interaction	**No. of times in past month**
SMC Meeting	
PTA Meeting	
Meet with parents	
Attend community ceremony or celebration	
Attend community meeting or event	
Community service	
Other	
TOTAL	

H. Job Satisfaction

1. If you could choose any other profession, would you still choose to be a primary school teacher?

2. If no, why not? (open)

Study of Students and Teachers Use of Time
in the Government Primary Schools in Bangladesh

October-November 2003

Student Interview

School Code_____ Interviewer_____ Date_____

A. General Information

1. Basic Identification of the student/respondent (insert number)

District 1=Nilphamari 2=Jamalpur	**Residence** Urban=1 Rural=2	**School Code** 1,2	**School** Shift=1,2	**Grade** (0-5)	**Sex** M=1 F=2	**Age** in years	**Stipend** Y=1 N=2

2. Name of the Student
3. Father's Name and Occupation:
4. Mother's name and Occupation:
5. Household Socio-economic Status/Wealth Ranking Score (1-100)[76]:
6. Home/Residence Address:

B. Travel Information

1. How do you usually get to school?

   - Private vehicle
   - Bicycle
   - Commercial Transport
   - Walking
   - Mixed (specify)
   - Others (specify)

2. How long does it take you to travel from your home to school (in minutes), using your usual means of transport?

[76]3 students (at least one from opposite sex) will be identified from each grade who are very poor (1-25). The designated researchers will carry out the selection process in assistance with the teachers and students in their respective classroom. The facilitator(s) will brief the teachers and students about the scale of 1-4 rating. 1.Very Poor=(1-25), 2 Poor =26-50,3 Moderate/Middle Class=51-75, Rich/Well Off=76-100 .The facilitator may ask a well- informed teacher to identify directly 3 very poor students (boys &girls) from the respective grade and then ask him/her to give score within 1-25 against the selected students to understand the degree of disadvantage.

C. Absenteeism (ascertain from head-teacher how days the school was in session last week)

Now I would like to ask you some questions about your attendance at school. There are many reasons that children sometimes don't attend school, even though it is open and classes are meeting.

1. In the last week were you absent from school? Yes____ No_____

2. If you were absent, how many days did you miss?_____

3. In the last week, why did you miss school? (circle no more reasons than the number of days absent)

- Was ill
- Was needed to care for sick relatives
- Was needed to do domestic work (e.g. caring for younger children, cooking or cleaning, fetching water or fuel)
- Was needed to tend animals, or work on the family farm or in the family business, or go to market
- Was needed to work for an employer
- Was attending a funeral, wedding, ceremony, festival or event
- Did not have the money required for school expenses (fees, travel, material, and clothes)
- Travel was too difficult (because of conditions, bad weather, lack of transport)
- Did not want to go to school (Specify why not_____)
- Was too hungry to go to school
- Other (Specify_____)

4. What did you do on the days you were absent?
- Rested/stayed in bed to get better (regain health)
- Cared for sick relatives
- Helped parents/family with household, farm or commercial work
- Worked for an employer to earn money
- Played and had fun
- Attended an event
- Other (Specify_____)

5. What generally happened after you are absent? (circle all that apply)
- Don't understand the lesson as well as the others
- Teacher is displeases (Ask how the child knows_____)
- Teacher asks why I was absent
- Someone from the school talks to my parents/guardians
- A notice/letter is sent to my family
- My stipend money is reduced
- Nothing
- Other (Specify_____)

D. Tardiness/Early Departure

Sometimes children are late for school or leave early. I would like to ask you some questions about tardiness.

1. Are you ever late for school? Yes_____ No_____

2. If so, in the last week, how many days were you late for school? _____days

3. What were the reasons you were late for school? (no more than days tardy)

- ❑ Household work/domestic obligations
- ❑ Working outside home/for an employer
- ❑ Caring for sick relatives
- ❑ Caring for siblings
- ❑ Long travel distance/transport problem
- ❑ Sleep late
- ❑ Physical illness
- ❑ Bad weather
- ❑ Other (Specify_____)

4. Do you even leave early from school? Yes_____ No_____

5. If so, last week, how many days did you leave early from school?_____days

6. What were the reasons you left school early?

- ❑ Household work/domestic obligations
- ❑ Working outside home/for an employer
- ❑ Caring for sick relatives
- ❑ Caring for siblings
- ❑ Long travel distance/transport problem
- ❑ Physical illness
- ❑ Bad weather
- ❑ Other (Specify_____)

E. Seasonal Variation

1. Is there any time of the school year that you are often absent from school? Yes___No___

2. If yes, when are you most often absent? (select 3)

- ❑ Monsoon
- ❑ Harvest period
- ❑ Planting period
- ❑ Local/National Election
- ❑ Local Festival
- ❑ Ramadan
- ❑ Beginning of academic year
- ❑ Other (Specify_____)

3. When did you actually start class this year? (circle one)

- January
- February
- March

4. What happens to class hours/routines during the start of the school year (Jan-Feb)?

- No class, only attendance
- Some loose classes
- Full classes
- School completely closed
- Teachers are busy with book collection and distribution
- Other (Specify_____)

F. On Teachers' Attendance

1. To what extent are your teachers late generally?

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Most often

2. What generally happens in your class when the teachers are absent? (up to three)

- Substitute assistant teacher comes
- Head-teacher comes
- No class, only playing/singing/gossiping
- Studying/preparing school work
- Stay idle
- School work: gardening or cleaning
- Other (Specify_____)

3. To what extent are your teachers late generally?
- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Most often

4. What generally happens in your class when the teacher is late?

- Playing/singing/gossiping
- Studying/preparing school work
- Stay idle
- School work: gardening or cleaning
- Other (Specify_____)

5. To what extent do your teachers leave school early?

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Most often

6. To what extent do your teachers leave class early?

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Most often

7. What generally happens in your class when the teacher leaves early?

- Playing/singing/gossiping
- Studying/preparing school work
- Stay idle
- School work: gardening or cleaning
- Other (Specify_____)

G. Student's Free Tine, Tutors, and Homework

1. Have you any free time during school days, off days, absent days? If yes, note free hours for a typical day.

	School day	Off day	Absent day
Hours			
Periods			
How it is spent			

2. Do you have or use a private tutor? If yes, answer the following.

	Class Teacher	School Teacher	GP school teacher of other school	Others: specify
Average number of hours weekly				

3. Why do you need a tutor?
   - To cover school lessons/curriculum
   - To get better results
   - Teachers are not sincere or careful
   - Too many students in class; teachers can't attend every one
   - Long absence due to sickness
   - Don' understand the lesson
   - Other (Specify_____)

4. Do you do homework? Yes_____ No_____

5. If yes, how many hours per week?_____ hours

6. Who has more free time to play or relax—boys or girls?
   - Boys
   - Girls
   - Equal

7. If boys, why to boys have less free time? (Specify_____)

8. If girls, why to girls have less free time? (Specify_____)

9. What do you do when you relax? (Specify_____)

H. Religious Education

1. Do you ever attend Quranic or mosque school before going to primary school? Yes___No___

2. How many day per week do you attend Quranic or mosque school?_____

3. How much time do you spend when you attend Quranic or mosque school?
   - Less than one hour
   - 1-2 hours
   - 2+-3 hours
   - more than 3 hours

4. When do you attend Quranic or mosque school?
   - Morning (before primary school)
   - Afternoon
   - Evening
   - Mixed

5. Does Attending Quranic or mosque school ever make you late for primary school? Yes___No___

6. If attending Quranic or mosque school has ever made you late for primary school, how often was this?
   - Every day
   - Nearly every day
   - A few days
   - Hardly ever
   - Never

7. Does attending Quranic or mosque school ever make you leave school early? Yes__ No___

8. If attending Quranic or mosque school has ever made you leave primary school early, how often was this?
   - Every day
   - Nearly every day
   - A few days
   - Hardly ever
   - Never

I. Student Hunger

1. Are you fasting? Yes___ No_____

2. If not, did you have anything to eat before you came to school today? Yes___ No___

3. What did you eat? (mark all that apply)
   - Tea
   - Bread
   - Other (specify_____)

4. Are you ever too hungry to pay attention in class? Yes____ No_____

5. Do you like coming to school? Yes_____ No_____

6. Why? (Specify_____

7. Documentation of a day (immediate last day of attending school)

Hours Activities	6 am	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	1	2	3	4	5 am
Rising in the morning																								
Quranic class																								
Break Fast																								
Household work																								
To school																								
Class																								
To home																								
Agriculture work																								
Household/ Family domestic work																								
Household/ business																								
Commercial/ Agriculture work/Job outside family																								
Caring for siblings																								
Homework																								
Sleep																								
Recreation																								
Free time/ stay idle																								
Play games																								
Watch TV																								

Study of Students' and Teachers' Use of Time
in the Government Primary Schools in Bangladesh
October-November 2003

Head-master Interview
School Name/ID :
Name of the Respondents:

1. Basic Profile of the School

Items	Total	M	F	Note
Year of Establishment				
No. of Teachers				
No. of Students				
No. of Class Rooms				
Made of				
Toilets				
Tube wells				
Distance from District/UZ HQ				
Electricity				
Record Keeping				
Status of School				
Under any project (ESTEEM,IDEAL, feeding/SFP,Stipend)				
URC/ Model School				
Others				

2. Student Attendance Information

	Prep 1		Grade I		Grade II		Grade III		Grade IV		Grade V	
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
No. of students enrolled												
No. of students present												

3. Of the number of students in grade 5 last year, how many sat for the scholarship exam? _____

4. Of those who sat for the scholarship exam how many succeeded? _____

Interview Questions

1. In general, what are your roles and responsibilities in the school?
2. What is your general impression about the school time (calendar, schedule, shift, and holidays)? To you, what are the certain things that reduce school time significantly?
3. How can the use of time be increased? Recommend.
4. Comment on the pattern of teachers' use of time (absenteeism and tardiness/leave early). Have you ever discussed teachers' absenteeism, tardiness, and early departure?
5. What disciplinary actions have the SMC and you taken for irregularities and indisciplinary activities of teachers? To what extent? Describe the process.
6. What are your opinions about the DPE officials and their capacity to monitor school related issues, particularly time?
7. Can you put forward some overall recommendations for the SMCs role in overcoming problems related to time use?.
8. Do you have any role in planning or monitoring and evaluating the school calendar, schedule (Ramadan), timing and shifting? Do you have a role in planning unscheduled closing of schools; locally determined holidays; and rules, provisions, and authority?
9. Do you have a role in the quality of teaching (art and ability)? Teaching methods, systems and curriculum?
10. Do you have a role in interaction with local people, guardians, and PTA?
11. What measure do you take when students are absent, irregular, or not attentive in class?
12. How are the classes of absent teachers managed?
13. Do you have discretionary power in granting leave to teachers; suspending class; closing school; rescheduling classes, calendar, curriculum and other rules and regulations that may have an impact on time use?
14. To whom are you responsible and how?
15. What are the non-academic duties and responsibilities (e.g. child census, election duty, textbooks, stipend programs) of head and assistant teachers that affect class hours?
16. To what extent do teacher trainings, meetings, contacting DPE offices, attending and celebrating government programs (education week), etc. reduce effective time of school and classes?
17. What are merits and demerits in the context of time use?
18. What are incentive structures, salaries and other benefits?

19. Beyond school, what is the time use pattern beyond school (private tutoring, non-teaching activities, income generating, etc.)?
20. What makes it difficult to manage effective use of school time from the perspectives of teachers, students, parents, infrastructure and logistics, etc.?
21. Put forward some recommendations in overcoming the problems related to time use?
22. What you can do yourself within the given framework (resource, infra, staffing etc.) to improve the situation?
23. What are all the other things that may affect use of time of teachers and students in GP schools?

Other Specific Issues:

- **Textbooks: I**s there any problem of textbooks reaching in delay? If so, what's the magnitude of the delay? What is being attempted or done to get rid of the problem?
- **Teacher's Absence:** To what extent is this problem in your school? Are there any particular actions taken for this problem?
- **Students' Absenteeism:** To what degree is this a problem in your school? To what extent are you aware of the reasons of their absence?
- **Stipends:** To what extent is the stipend system helpful to provide incentives for the children to get attached to their studies? How do you carry out procedures for bringing funds to school? Do you face problems in this regard? Do face any problems in distributing the students?
- **School Information:** Are you satisfied with the infrastructures of your school? What are the problems with the school infrastructure in your view? What are the measures taken against these problems?
- **Teachers' Employment:** Do you face any sort of local influence in employing teachers?
- **Other Duties:** To what extent do teachers having other duties hamper the academic procedures of the school? What are these different duties? Who most commonly assigns these duties to teachers? What are the duties that you are authorized to assign a teacher?
- **Salaries and Other Benefits:** Do you think teachers' salaries are insufficient? If it is insufficient, do you think they should have other income-generating activities outside school? What measures could be taken to resolve this problem?
- **Additional Care for Students:** Do you have any programs to take care of the problems of student who fall behind?

- **Emergency Shutdown of School:** Do you need to keep school closed very often for local festivals or community meeting? If so, are you forced to do so? By whom?
- **In-service Training Activities:** Do in-service training programs have an impact on the time schedules of schools? Do you take any of these trainings?
- **In Case of Your Absence:** Who takes the responsibility when you are not present?

Teacher Activities Form

Teacher Time Use During Day											
	During the day, the teacher is:										
Hour	Class Level	Instructing pupils	Non-teaching interaction	1-to-1 work w/ pupil	Desk work	Supervise Pupil Activities	Attend Professional Meeting	Attend School Assembly or Event	Meet parents	Personal	Other
Hr 1	C 1										
	C 2										
	C 3										
	C 4										
	C 5										
Hr 1.5	C 1										
	C 2										
	C 3										
	C 4										
	C 5										
Hr 2	C 1										
	C 2										
	C 3										
	C 4										
	C 5										
Hr 2.5	C 1										
	C 2										
	C 3										
	C 4										
	C 5										
Hr 3	C 1										
	C 2										
	C 3										
	C 4										
	C 5										
Hr 3.5	C 1										
	C 2										
	C 3										
	C 4										
	C 5										
Hr 4	C 1										
	C 2										
	C 3										
	C 4										
	C 5										
Hr 4.5	C 1										
	C 2										
	C 3										
	C 4										
	C 5										

School Code_____ Shift AM or PM Interviewer_____ Date_____

Class Observation Form

School Code:		
School Type:		
Grade:		
Class:		
Time:	***The teacher is….***	***Most students are…***

School Code_____ Shift AM or PM Interviewer_____ Date_____

Notes to Observer:

- Arrive in class at starting time.
- Ascertain with students on which lesson they will be working.
- Note activities even if teacher has not yet arrived.
- Note teacher arrival time.
- Note and describe each teacher activity and time it begins.
- Note what the *majority* of students are doing according to each teacher activity.
- Remain through the end of class.

Study of Students' and Teachers Use of Time
in Government Primary Schools in Bangladesh
October-November 2003

Interview Guide: Focus Group Discussion with Parents/Guardians

Broad Issues:

1. What is your general impression about the school time (calendar schedule, shifts, and holidays). To you, are there certain things that reduce school time significantly?

2. How can time be increased? What are your recommendations?

3. Comment on the pattern of teachers' use of time (absenteeism, tardiness, leave early).

4. Is there anything that makes its sometimes very difficult to send your children to school? If so, what are the major factors?

5. What can be done to make more or better use of time? What do you recommend?

6. What can you do yourself to improve the situation?

Specific Issues:

- Non-academic duties of the teachers: what do they do?
- Parent role in school management, community participation in decision-making about the school.
- Have you ever discussed or complained about teacher absenteeism, tardiness or early departure?
- Have the teachers ever discussed your child's attendance or performance with you?
- Have you played any role in setting or monitoring the school calendar or schedule?
- What would suggest for any change in the school calendar or schedule?
- Do you think that the monitoring by the education authorities is effective?
- Are you satisfied with the quality of teaching in this school?
- What are the incentives for student attendance?
- Are there ever any unscheduled closings of the school ?
- Do you use a private tutor for your child?
- How much time does your child spend on homework?
- Tell us about how your child spends his/her time out of school? (free time, recreation, household work, income-generating activities)
- What family obligations affect the child's attendance?
- What school requirements affect the child's attendance?

Study of Students' and Teachers Use of Time
In Government Primary Schools in Bangladesh
October-November 2003

Interview Guide: SMC Member

Issues:

1. In general, what are your roles and responsibilities in managing the schools? How does the SMC work?

2. What is your general impression about the school calendar, schedule, holidays? Is there anything specifically that reduce school time?

3. How can the amount of contact time be increased?

4. Comment on the pattern of teachers' use of time (absenteeism, tardiness, early departure). Have you ever discussed these issues in the SMC or elsewhere?

5. What, if any, disciplinary action has the SMC taken for irregularities in teacher attendance?

6. What is the SMC's relation with the local education authorities? Are they effective supervisors of the school?

7. What can the SMC do to overcome some of the problems of time use and contact time?

8. Does the SMC play any role in setting the school calendar or schedule? Is it consulted when the school is going to close?

9. What is your impression about the quality of the school?

10. What other things might effect the use of teacher and student time in and outside of school?

Study of Students' and Teachers Use of Time
In Government Primary Schools in Bangladesh
October-November 2003

Interview Guide: Focus Group Discussion with Teachers

Broad Issues:

1. What are the biggest obstacles to the amount of contact time provided and managing time effectively in school?

2. What can be done to improve the situation?

3. What can you do to improve the situation?

Specific Issues:

- Are there sufficient teachers in your school? How do you deal with teacher shortages?
- What duties take your time? Do you have non-school duties?
- What are the rules governing teacher holidays, absenteeism, leave?
- When do you get extra training? Do you miss school?
- What are advantages and disadvantages of double shifts?
- Where do you live? How long does it take to make the trip to school?
- Who and on what basis decides when the school closes?
- What happens when teachers are absent? How do the teachers who are present deal with it?
- Do you or other teachers in this school do any private tutoring?
- What do you do after school? Do you have another job or business?

ANNEX 4
RESEARCH ASSISTANT IMPRESSIONS

A. SCHOOL TIME

Operational Days and Disaster Days

As per the information collected from DPEO, the government school starts from 9:30 and closed at 4:15. But the experience from the field shows that the urban schools follow this time schedule to some extent, but seldom practiced in the rural schools. The teachers are supposed to be appearing at 9:30 in the class. But in some cases, this was rarely seen to be in practice. And the students also hardly have any sense of time, so they are also often late. Therefore, in an operational day, it may be rarely found that all the students and teachers appearing on time.

In a particular school, Sheikhpara GPS (Code Six), it was reported that the school was effectively closed for three to four months almost every year during flood, as the floodwater encompassed the school.

Make-up Practices

Most of the visited schools have lesson plans to complete the curriculum systematically. But there is a question mark as to whether it is followed properly or not and those may not be restructured as well. But teachers claimed that they face no problem to complete the curriculum on time. But unfortunately, in most cases students of different grades do not have the desired standard to be in respective grades.

B. CLASS TIME

Although the single-shift schools have more learning time compared to the double-shift schools, academic quality does not vary noticeably. Two of the three urban schools visited are single shifted but the other urban school, a double-shift school, was the best in every respect. Be it noted here, all the rural schools visited are double-shift schools.

The teachers also claimed that they face many problems to hold the students for long as the youngsters feel hungry. Therefore most of the teachers suggested that two-shift schools were better for management of students.

C. TEACHER TIME

The results from the questionnaire survey reveal that the teachers' absenteeism rate is very low. The teachers also responded in support of their high sense of responsibilities regarding time. But we do have some information from the community (consisting of some parents and other local people) that teachers are sometimes (in some cases often) remain absent and also arrive late. We have empirically observed it in two of the visited

rural schools where teachers arrived after our arrival at 1000 hrs. It was also reported that some teachers are used to leaving school early sometimes (often in some cases). And in disaster periods (the periods like floods, rainy season) teachers seldom come to school in some cases. There is not any practice of fining/penalizing or even criticizing the teachers for their shortening of duty time. These are familiar incidents in the rural and disadvantaged areas.

The teachers have a common assertion that there is shortage of GPS teachers. The truth of this is empirically clear to us. In some cases a teacher has to run between two classes simultaneously. At School Six, there is only one assistant teacher and the head-teacher remains busy as a PTI Trainer for a significant part of the year. So, the school cannot be run efficiently as per observation. Even where there are two or three assistant teachers, the problem is the same when one teacher is absent.

The female teachers have some domestic obligations, so they have suggested that starting hours be delayed for 30 minutes so that they can perform certain household work in the morning. Single-shift schoolteachers have also suggested that there is a need for an increased number of teachers, as they have to take classes for almost seven hours continuously, which often makes them reluctant in the later hours.

The teachers are not at all satisfied with their salaries. So, they have to do some outside work other than their teaching duties to earn a living sufficient to run their family smoothly.

During a session with some members of the teachers' union of a particular district, the teachers suggested that their salaries should be according to their academic qualification. They have also noted that there is no opportunity of promotion in their service as teachers. Any senior teacher, whose service life is, for example, 20 years, is officially treated the same as a recently recruited teacher.

They have also noted the problems concerning maternity leave. The leave time salaries are paid as much as one to two months after the end of the leave period; a time during which there might be an urgent need to use funds for treatment purposes.

D. STUDENT TIME

Students hardly have any sense of time. They are not even aware of the fact that they are late. Our major observation is that breakfasts are prepared late in their homes and result in the students coming late to school.

Some schools have feeding programs. Many students also come to school for that reason. Unfortunately a significant number of students have a tendency to leave the school immediately after getting the food.

Student attendance rates are found to be less than 50 percent overall. Three schools have higher attendance rates.

According to some teachers, the students' attendance in the rural areas is low because their mothers' health conditions are generally in a poor state. On many occasions, the children have to substitute for their sick parents to do domestic work, including caring for siblings. This phenomenon may not have come to light in the field survey.

Student quality is not up to the mark. In most schools, students of grade five cannot do a simple two-digit addition problem or write a simple phrase or sentence, which all grade five students should be able to do.

D. PARENTS

Abject poverty of parents prevents their children from acquiring education as they are highly unable to provide children with basic needs (clothes, food, and learning aids). They deplored this condition of not fulfilling the demands of their children. Sometimes mothers did not give the children breakfast because of a lack of food, and also caused delays because of lack of time sense. Students also can not hold their attention in school without taking food and parents are also concerned about that. Rural parents insisted that their children come to school to receive stipends, but only 40 percent of them got money and those who did not showed less interest to send their children to school than to do household and outside work. Most of the parents, however, emphasized the need for quality education, not stipend money. Parents also lost their enthusiasm and felt anxious about what their children were learning. They said that their children know nothing even when they are in Class V. They are highly starved for qualified and dedicated teachers.

Most of the parents are not well informed about the stipend program. They think that since they are poor their children are going to get the stipend. Whenever their children are not getting the stipend or are left out of the stipend program, they then think that maybe the SMC or Head-master are engaged in some manipulation.

F. LESSON PLAN

As far as lesson plans are concerned, all three urban schools have got their own lesson plans. Two rural schools also maintained lesson plans. The attendance rate was also high in the case of these four schools so maybe there is a positive correlation between the lesson plan and attendance rate.

G. STUDENTS

Most of the students know what is needed related to the development of their schools. In answering the question about what are the needs for the development of the schools, they replied (mainly the students of class three, four and five), they need bathrooms, beautiful gardens and play fields, tube wells and of course teachers (i.e. they need more teachers). The students are very much aware of the needs.

It was very much expected that the parents of the children would be worried about the quality of the education rather than the stipend, but most of the parents (as observed) were always asking the teachers whether the stipend would be available for their children or not. If the school authorities are unable to provide stipends for their children they are then ready to have them leave one school and get their children admitted into another school for the sake of the stipend.

In the parents FGD, one of the parents made the very interesting comment that since the government is unable to provide necessary teachers for the school, no one can ensure quality education.

.