

Poor and middle class children's experiences of school in
Dhaka, Bangladesh

The Urban Divide

Stuart Cameron

Office of Research Working Paper

WP-2012-08 | November 2012

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Cameron, S. (2012), 'The Urban Divide: Poor and middle class children's experiences of school in Dhaka, Bangladesh', *Working Paper 2012-08*, UNICEF Office of Research, Florence.

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November 2012

ISSN: 1014-7837

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THE URBAN DIVIDE: POOR AND MIDDLE CLASS CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL IN DHAKA, BANGLADESH

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Abstract. Children living in urban slums in Dhaka, Bangladesh, often have poor access to school and attend different types of school than students from middle class households. This paper asks whether their experiences in school also disadvantage them further in terms of their learning outcomes and the likelihood of dropping out. It is based on interviews with 36 students aged 11-16 from both slum and middle-class backgrounds, in 2012. Most of the participants were in private schools, and learning was overwhelmingly geared towards assessment and the memorisation of set content. Though teachers were sometimes hard-working in preparing their students for examinations, ultimate responsibility fell to the students. Ranking and labelling of students kept their examination performance salient at all times. Teacher-student relationships varied from the supportive to the abusive. Beating and humiliating punishment were common in all types of school, despite a recent legal ban on the former. Lessons were sometimes dry, irrelevant to students' lives, and with little scope for active student engagement. A new emphasis on 'creative learning' in curricula and teacher training had, at the time of the study, yet to filter into the classroom. Students were subject to the risk of violence both outside and inside the school, whatever their background. However, it was much easier for middle class students to change school when they ran into problems, or to employ private tutors if they needed more help with their lessons. Their way of talking about school reflected a strong sense of inevitability that they would at least complete secondary education, whereas students from slums were limited to one or two local options and even there, their places in the classroom were precarious. The paper discusses how these experiences in school are likely to heighten the risk of dropping out for slum students, analyses the results in terms of de-facto privatization and school accountability, and recommends better regulation of private tuition, and teaching styles that are less obsessed with examination results.

Keywords: education, secondary schools, urban poverty, Bangladesh, informal settlements

Acknowledgements: This paper was written as part of a research fellowship at UNICEF's Office of Research at Innocenti during March-November 2012. I am extremely grateful to Hafsa Rahman who worked as research assistant for this project, contributing her ideas and knowledge of the Bangladesh education system and society, interpreting and managing the interviews, and helping me to understand what we were finding. I am also very grateful to the UNICEF Bangladesh office, and especially Nabendra Dahal, Shamima Siddiky, Shamima Pervin, and Nuzhat Khalil Haque, for their advice and practical help in meeting children who had been through the UNICEF-supported Basic Education for Hard to Reach Children programme and in hosting one of the focus group discussions. I am also grateful to Karen Moore, Mahruf Shohel, Benjamin Zeitlyn, and Christy Sommers for useful advice before I left for Bangladesh, Altaf Hossain and Mohammad Abul Kalum for valuable discussion once I had got there, Alexa Schmidt for help with contacts, and Chris de Neubourg and other colleagues at Innocenti for all their support and discussion. The views expressed, and any mistakes, are my own.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Dhaka, Bangladesh, large numbers of children live in households whose incomes are below the poverty line, many living in slums. Previous research (Cameron, 2010; 2011) has shown how these children face multiple barriers in accessing schools and have radically different prospects in education depending on their family's economic status, location and migration. That research suggested that, although inability to pay the expenses surrounding school and private tuition was the main reported reason for dropping out, there were also issues within the school that may have helped precipitate drop-out in some cases, including unfair treatment, corporal punishment, slow progress in learning, and risks of violence and loss of reputation.

Much of the research on education in developing countries portrays the school as a black box, looking at inclusion or exclusion without considering what happens inside. At most, economists have used production functions to analyse how inputs (money, teachers, students) translate into outputs (completers, examination scores) (e.g. Jimenez & Cox, 1989). Approaches that attempt to situate schools socially and explore issues of socialisation in the classroom have not much been applied in developing countries. Classroom observation (e.g. Hossain et al., 2003) is one way of understanding what happens inside schools. But teaching practices are often examined through simplified categories such as time students spend listening to the teacher, and few studies in developing countries have talked to children themselves as a way of understanding what happens in schools. Children's participation and citizenship is increasingly an area of attention among development agencies and non-government organisations (e.g. O'Kane, 2003), but the body of developing country research emphasising children's voices remains small.

Do education systems offer a route out of poverty, or merely reproduce social inequalities by placing additional barriers in the way of already disadvantaged students? This research is part of a larger project for the UNICEF Office of Research at Innocenti, looking at how poor urban households in several countries are excluded from schooling. But the present paper focuses on how such children can be disadvantaged in terms of what happens *within* the school. How do inequalities in power and status in society play out in urban classrooms to disrupt or reproduce inherited disadvantage? How do students describe their educational experiences, relations with teachers and other students, and hopes and expectations within the school system? The research is based on interviews with 36 students aged 11-16 from both low-income and middle class areas of Dhaka.

In the rest of this paper I start (section 2) by discussing some of the international literature on how inequalities in society can play themselves out in school and how this depends on the nature of teaching, pedagogy and assessment. I derive a set of categories for examining disadvantage in schools. Section 3 describes the methods and methodology used for the research project. Section 4 gives some context, drawing on both previous research and findings from the current study. Box 1 discusses a UNICEF-supported programme, Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children, which provides schooling for children from poor urban areas, and the findings from interviews with six students who had been through the programme.

Sections 5, 6 and 7 are the main results chapters. Section 5 describes how learning in the schools used by participants in this study was dominated by high-stakes assessment governing access to higher levels of the school system, which in turn often necessitated private tuition in addition to

regular school classes. Section 6 explores the nature of student-student and student-teacher relationships, and the risks that were connected to school attendance for many students. Section 7 examines students' overall attitudes and behavioural responses to a school environment that was often less than ideal. Section 8 concludes and offers some policy implications.

2. CONCEPTUALIZING DISADVANTAGE IN SCHOOLS

What happens within schools is important for children from poor urban households for two sets of reasons. First, there are intrinsic reasons. If children are bored or unhappy in school, this is important in itself. If they experience physical punishment, bullying, or other violations of rights or problems that seriously affect their wellbeing, then these experiences need to be addressed by policy-makers regardless of what other effects they are having.

But if children are experiencing such problems it also matters for a second set of reasons, to do with the instrumental effects on their educational outcomes. They are more likely to drop out or attend irregularly, and may even be deterred from enrolling in the first place. If (for example) lessons are irrelevant to students' current and future lives, based on rote learning and shallow understanding, and with short hours of active study, then children are not likely to learn very much. In either case, the instrumental value of education is sharply reduced. Education's potential for improving livelihoods and reducing poverty in the next generation¹ is lost because a child's school career is curtailed and few productivity-enhancing skills are acquired. Where such problems in school are associated with poverty, then a cyclical relationship may be established where the poorest households are least able to acquire the education that might help improve their incomes in the next generation.

The idea that processes within school can reproduce inequalities across generations has a long history in the sociological literature. As a review by Weis et al. (2009) explains, there are a number of different accounts of which processes constitute the reproductive mechanism. Bowles and Gintis (1976) argued that there was a "correspondence" relationship between the structural relations of production and those in school, so that school develops the types of discipline, demeanour, self-presentation, and so on, that would be required in the separate work places of different social classes. This meant dispersing "discrete bits of knowledge and discipline for those bound for blue-collar occupations," while middle class students received more synthetic, analytic knowledge (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, cited in Collins, 2009, p. 35). Bourdieu's version (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) posits differences in material resources as the ultimate causes of persistent inequality, though they are mediated through households' investments in cultural and social capital influencing children's school achievement. Bernstein (1975) argued that working class students in the UK were put at a disadvantage by their non-mastery of the middle class language patterns employed in schools.

¹ Benefits to education in the form of higher salaries are well documented in the literature based on human capital and rates of return (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2002; Foster and Rosenzweig, 1996). Asadullah (2006) estimates the rates of return to primary and secondary school in Bangladesh at around 6% per year. In the broader literature, it has been recognised that education can help households improve their livelihoods in a wide range of ways beyond just wage increases, for example in family businesses, domestic work, family planning, reducing child mortality, raising children, and educating the next generation of children (Eskola and Gasperini, 2010; Burchi and De Muro, 2009; ILO, 2009).

Such accounts are often charged with some form of structural determinism: of overstating the influence of social processes on people's life outcomes and understating the possibility for individual or group action to bring about change. In response, a number of authors have drawn attention to acts of negotiation, contestation and resistance in the school. Carnoy and Levin (1985) argue that in democratic states, "[e]ducational institutions are not just producers of dominant class conceptions of what and how much schooling should be provided; public schools also reflect social demands" (Carnoy and Levin, 1985, quoted in Weiss et al., 2009, p. 919); conflict and contestation around schools help to shape the school system and the State itself. Apple (1982) argues that schools need to be seen not simply as the sites of reproduction but also of "conflicts, contradictions, meditations, and in particular, resistances" (Apple, 1982, quoted in Weiss et al., 2009, p. 918). Willis (1977) brings resistance to the centre, with his study of working class "lads" in an English town who frequently "disrupt classroom procedure with humor and aggression" (as described by Collins, 2009, p. 36). But Willis also steers the discussion back to reproduction, arguing that the lads in his study ironically help to produce their own continued marginality through their acts of resistance, unwittingly colluding in a system of domination and social reproduction.

There are few developing country studies on resistance and social reproduction in schools. Ray's (1988) study of two girls' schools in Calcutta (as it was then known), India is one example. Ray identifies a range of behaviours from conformity – acceptance and full belief in the goals and methods of the school – through 'strategic compliance', withdrawal and quiet resistance – where students outwardly comply but secretly resist the teacher's full control over them – to a few cases of open rebellion. The poorer students very rarely engaged in open resistance because they knew they could be made to leave school at any time and feared the alternatives of working as a maid or doing household chores at home. However they often 'withdrew,' for instance by staring blankly and remaining silent when the teacher asked them questions. Their strategic compliance did not always extend to doing the learning work expected of them by the school:

The fact that they do not often complete their homework and are more often than not ill-prepared for class contradicts the supposed values of the educational system. They do not experience joy in learning, but a profound sense of helplessness and incapacity to act. (Ray, 1988, p. 393)

More recent sociological work has focused more on how student's identities can put them at a disadvantage in education. Identity here is perhaps most usefully thought of in terms of the set of stories, told by others and oneself, about who or what one is (see Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Individuals can work on, and negotiate, their own identities, but they are also susceptible to the narratives told by others, that apply labels to them. Identity thus seems to provide a conceptual place where structure and agency can meet, as can be seen in Raffo's (2011) description of the formation of identity in poor urban contexts in the UK:

My argument is that particular combinations of scarcity and spatial processes linked to particular places have significant impacts on young people's educational identities – identities that ... mediate the conversion of educational resources, such as schooling, into educational attainments or achievements. (Raffo, 2011, p. 2)

Lee and Anderson (2009), reviewing studies of how the identities of cultural and linguistic minorities can affect academic performance, note the common finding that minority groups often have to conform to the dominant group or assimilate themselves in order to succeed academically. Assimilation can come at the cost of their earlier identities and group memberships. In any case they may be faced with “hegemonic forms of ascription” (Lee & Anderson, 2009, p. 195, citing Bailey, 2000) – forms of identity imposed on them by others that they are not able to overturn with their own identity work – that stop them from assimilating. They may alternatively take up “oppositional identities,” refusing to comply with dominant notions of a good student, although this does not necessarily mean they will not succeed academically; they may be able to find other ways of being a good student than the dominant one.

In parallel with the sociological work with identity, psychological studies have examined how students’ views of themselves affect their learning. Schunk (1985) refers to students’ “self-efficacy” or perceptions of how capable they are of learning. When doing tasks in the classroom, students may assess their efficacy by using cues made cognitively salient by educational practices. In turn students’ sense of self-efficacy affects motivation.

A psychological experiment in Uttar Pradesh, India (Hoff & Pandey, 2004) sheds light on the way that students’ self-perceptions, and their ideas about others’ perceptions – in sociological terms, their identity – can impact on their educational performance. High school students were asked to solve a maze and rewarded with money depending on their performance. The ability of high-caste and low-caste students in this task was the same, but when their caste was announced beforehand, a large gap emerged with lower-caste students performing worse. The authors interpret their findings as the result of lower-caste students expecting to be discriminated against in the assessment of performance, and so putting less effort into the task: “Mistrust undermines motivation” (p. 1).

There is a large literature on the effectiveness of different strategies for teaching and managing a classroom, though it is overwhelmingly from developed countries and does not always take much account of the social setting or differential effects on different socio-economic groups. There is, for example, evidence that achievement of literacy “is positively related to students’ interest in their learning, the extent to which their learning strategies help them to develop understanding through linking to existing knowledge instead of just memorising, and the extent to which they feel in control of their learning” (Harlen & Deaken Crick, 2002, p. 8, citing OECD/PISA, 2001). Mager and Nowak’s (2012) systematic review on forms of student participation in lessons finds moderate evidence of positive effects of greater participation on life skills, self-esteem, and social status, democratic skills and citizenship, student-adult relationships and school ethos.

Much of the effectiveness research focuses on classroom management techniques. Plax et al. (1986) note that demanding student submission to teacher authority, in order to maintain discipline in the classroom, can work against learning outcomes by worsening students’ attitudes towards the learning process. Classroom management techniques have been developed that aim to replace these with strategies such as giving motivational messages and positive questioning techniques. On the effectiveness of different methods of discipline, Lewis et al. (2008) note that the application of punishment which increases in severity when resisted or ignored, “appears to be of limited usefulness in promoting responsible student behaviour” (p. 716). Aggressive teacher

behaviours such as group punishment, humiliation, and yelling in anger, appear to be counter-productive, leading to higher levels of student misbehaviour as well as negative student attitudes towards learning (ibid.). The survey of student reactions to discipline in Australia, Israel and China reported by Lewis et al. (2008) finds that other strategies, such as recognition of responsible behaviour and discussion of the behaviour, were more accepted by students.

Although these classroom management and teacher effectiveness studies put issues of power and control at the centre, the notion of power they employ is often oddly decontextualized. In most cases there is little attempt to place the school in the broader context of power inequalities in society, or to understand the culturally derived meanings that are attached in each context to, for example, a textbook or a type of pedagogy (as advocated by Fuller and Clarke, 1994). Do different teaching styles or classroom management techniques impact differently on, say, rich versus poor students? Some of the sociological works cited above suggest that this would be the case, since middle class students are thought to be more thoroughly inculcated into the behavioural expectations and types of language that dominate in school settings, and more accustomed to structured activity.

Assessment can have huge effects on the type and quality of learning that goes on in school, with effects that may be different for learners from different backgrounds. Studies on English primary schools have noted how tests can come to define the “school day, the curriculum, the teacher’s responsibilities, the pupil’s worth, the ideal parent, and what counts as ability” (Hall et al., 2004, p. 801), and also to shape students’ identities as learners by applying labels to them based on their test scores (Reay and William, 1999).

Modes of assessment can be divided roughly into formative assessment – which usually takes place during the learning process and aims to provide feedback to teachers and learners that can improve learning – and summative assessment – which usually takes place at the end of the learning process and assesses learning relative to a fixed standard and may be more concerned with awarding certificates or the distribution of further education opportunities. A review of formative assessment (Black and William, 1998, cited in Harlen & Deaken Crick, 2002) finds that it raises standards. But when high-stakes summative testing is used, “teachers adopt a teaching style which emphasises transmission teaching of knowledge, thereby favouring those students who prefer to learn in this way and disadvantaging and lowering the self-esteem of those who prefer more active and creative learning experiences” (Harlen and Deaken Crick, 2002, p. 4). Lower-achieving students are disadvantaged by this type of assessment; being labelled as failures lowers their self-esteem and their self-assessment of their ability to learn, and consequently is detrimental to their future effort and success. The authors note some evidence, however, that if they have a high level of support they may be able to overcome this process.

Most of the above-mentioned studies are from rich countries, especially the USA and the UK. In Bangladesh and many other low-income settings, the barriers to learning in school may be more overt and less subtle. In particular, teachers have been found often to be absent, and even when they are in school, to spend relatively little time actually teaching (Tietjen et al., 2004; Abadzi, 2007). An important question is whether this affects some children more than others. A study in Morocco found that there was less time spent in interactive learning in schools in poor urban areas, although this does not establish whether there are differences by socioeconomic status

within schools (Abadzi, 2007). Parents in one survey in Bangladesh felt that teachers had a bias in favour of children of the well-off, and in some cases teachers reportedly told their children that they should leave school because they did not have the “brain” to study (Ahmed et al., 2007). Children seen as less likely to succeed may get less attention from the teacher or be more likely to be sent on errands or given tasks to complete by themselves.

As I will discuss, Bangladesh has a multitude of different types of school, including fully government-operated, registered non-government, fully private, and those run by non-government organisations, and is also characterised by common use of private tuition. Private tuition and segregation by wealth into different types of school are two of the ways in which a household’s resources can constrain or accelerate a child’s learning. Non-financial resources, including parents’ ability to help and having social connections that the household can draw on to mobilise more resources, are also important for school enrolment and drop-out (Cameron, forthcoming). Households not only have to meet the direct costs of education, but also have to use their resources to manage the relationship with the school, especially when things go wrong, and to support the child’s learning.

This study focuses on ‘disadvantage,’ by which I will refer to effects of the school environment and of interactions with teachers and other students in school that impede a child’s learning, are damaging to his or her dignity, physical well-being or mental well-being, or that impose additional costs on the household. Well-being is a difficult concept to define, but I follow Crivello et al. (2009) in using a minimal definition of it as simply whether a child is ‘doing well’ or not, and accepting that this may be translated across cultures and languages in different (but not wholly alien) ways. By costs to the household, I mean not only financial costs, but also costs in terms of other resources, such as requiring them to do additional work (a labour cost) or to ask for the help of others (a cost in terms of drawing on the household’s social resources that may bring with it more or less explicit expectations of reciprocity).

The above discussion has highlighted a number of concerns about how students from disadvantaged backgrounds are also disadvantaged in their learning within the school. For the purposes of data analysis in the present study, I organise these concerns into a typology of domains in which there may be barriers to learning. In each case, I consider how these differentially affect students from different kinds of background. Such differences may arise both from students being in different types of school, and from being differently treated within the same school. The aim is to categorise participant’s responses under these headings, but also to see how these domains relate to each other, and reinforce or offset each other, in determining the support or disadvantage that poor and middle class students experience.

1. School environment. Is the school comfortable and safe? Are students able to travel to and from the school in safety? Are physical facilities and materials such as blackboards and textbooks available, and in sufficient number?

2. Teacher presence. This includes whether a teacher is actually present or not, whether the teacher is teaching, and also whether the teacher pays unequal attention to different groups in the class.

3. Teaching methods. Are teachers focused on understanding or on memorisation for assessment? Is the teacher able to maintain learners' interests? Is the teacher responsive to learners' needs and their pace of learning?

4. Classroom management. What control do teachers and students have, for instance over where students sit and how they can move around? How do teachers exert control? Do they use punishments or promise rewards as ways of influencing student behaviour?

5. Teacher-student relationships. Can students ask questions when they don't understand something? Do they find teachers friendly, strict, angry?

6. Student-student relationships. How do students form friendships and groups within the class? Are relationships among them mainly competitive, or cooperative? Does stigma or exclusion affect some students' relationships with other students?

7. Student emotional reactions to interaction in the class. How are the above interactions characterised by students, in terms of their emotional reactions? Do they see interactions in the classroom as pleasurable, fun, or as creating fear or shame?

8. Curriculum. Is the material covered in the curriculum interesting to students? Is it relevant to their current and future lives? Is the curriculum properly covered in classes?

9. Assessment. Is assessment high-stakes and primarily summative (based on judging students for external reasons), or is it an on-going and formative process (aimed at improving learning)? What role does it play in transitions between schools, or between different stages of school?

10. Student motivation. This includes whether the student is interested and engaged, enjoys the type of learning that is on offer. Though motivation is a characteristic or behaviour of individual students, past research suggests it can depend heavily on the other types of barrier discussed here, including whether the curriculum is interesting, whether extrinsic or intrinsic motivation are prioritised in class, the type of assessment used, and labels applied by teachers.

11. Homework and private tuition. How important is it for students do homework? Do they have the support and facilities they need to do homework? Is private tuition needed to help with work outside the school?

In the sections below that describe the results, these categories are covered in roughly the following way:

- Section 4 ("Context") – school environment (category 1) as well as other information on the social, economic and school context.
- Section 5 ("Learning, testing and tuition") – teacher presence (2), teaching methods (3), curriculum (8), assessment (9), and homework and private tuition (11).
- Section 6 ("Relationships and risks") – classroom management (4), teacher-student relationships (5), student-student relationships (6), and the school environment (1).
- Section 7 ("Attitudes and outcomes") – particularly student emotional reactions (7) and student motivation (10).

3. METHODOLOGY, METHODS AND PARTICIPANTS

At the centre of the research is a set of interviews with 36 students, aged 11-16 and living in Dhaka, Bangladesh, conducted in April-June 2012. In addition, three group discussions were carried out with a total of 24 students also aged 11-16, most of whom had also been interviewed individually.

The aim of the study is to make warranted assertions (see Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) about the participants to map some of the forms of disadvantage, marginalisation and exclusion within Dhaka's schools experienced by children from different backgrounds. I do not aim for total "generalizability" of my results to other historical and social contexts. I do anticipate that the broadly characterised processes affecting the students in this study are likely to affect others from similar backgrounds, although I am not able to quantify the frequency with which each type of process occurs. The emphasis in this study is not on generalizability or representativeness. Instead, the aim is to identify and understand processes of disadvantage, marginalisation, or exclusion within Dhaka's schools.

Rather than fixating on subjectivity or objectivity, the approach aims for an "intersubjective" approach by which the researcher "has to work back and forth between various frames of reference" and "achieve a sufficient degree of mutual understanding not only with the people who participate in our research but also the colleagues who read and review the products of our research" (Morgan, 2007, pp. 71-2). I assume that although individuals may interpret the world quite differently, yet these interpretations are of a kind where joint understandings can emerge, and indeed routinely do emerge as part of social life. I assume in particular that children are competent to explain and theorise about their own social worlds (France, 2004, p. 176), and that it is possible to learn about their experiences and their understanding of education and the society they live in, from their subjective reports (Greene and Hill, 2005). The sociology of childhood now recognises children as agents in social relations, shaping their own environments, and not just passive targets of parental care and social interventions (James and Prout, 1990; Mayall, 2002). Children are not necessarily less reliable, or more suggestible, informants than adults (Greene and Hill, 2005). However, this requires methods suited to their "level of understanding, knowledge, interests, and particular location within the social world." (Greene and Hill, 2005, p. 8). The use of a child's well-being "lens", in particular, can help focus on "what children feel about what they can do and be" (Jones and Sumner, 2008, p. 4).

The focus on 11-16 year-old children was largely for pragmatic reasons. There are likely to be many children still in school at this age, including some still in primary school, but findings from other research have suggested that many qualitative methods are easier to use with children of this age than with younger children (Johnston, 2008; Crivello et al., 2009).

3.1. Selection of participants

The plan was to interview at least 16 students who lived in two slum areas and 16 from other areas but studying in Bengali-medium schools. I will refer to these groups as A (from the first slum area), B (from the second slum area) and C (those not from slum areas).

The interviews were conducted by me with a Bangladeshi colleague. First of all, we selected two slum areas in Dhaka. The area of group A was a convenient and interesting location near to one of the wealthier parts of the city, where a number of clusters of slum housing were mingled in close proximity to blocks of flats inhabited by lower-middle class and upper-middle class people.

In response to interest from the UNICEF Bangladesh office, I included some children who had graduated from the UNICEF-supported programme, Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children (henceforth HTR; see Box 1). Group B was a mixture of these students and others who lived in the same neighbourhood. The neighbourhood was situated in a markedly less wealthy and less developed part of Dhaka, and consisted of a number of government-built and private quarters. Slum houses in each case were built either entirely of tin, or else of concrete walls with a tin roof. Six of the respondents had been through the HTR programme: Apu, Rashid, Hassan, Sohana, Mona, and Taslima.

The recruitment of group C, from non-slum areas, was generally more difficult. Middle class parents were often reluctant to let their children talk to strangers, even in their presence. In the end most of these participants were recruited through personal contacts. They were from various parts of Dhaka.

We also aimed for a rough balance of boys and girls in the study; the final sample had 19 girls and 16 boys. We recruited slightly more than the planned sample, to ensure a good range of ages and gender balance within each group and because we did not like to turn down anyone who was enthusiastic to take part.

The participants are listed in Appendix 2.

3.2. Ethics

The purpose of the study was explained carefully, in Bengali, in terms that would be understood by participants and their parents or guardians. We explained that we would be recording but that neither they nor their schools or areas would be named in the report, and that the hope was that the study would help government, non-government organisations (NGOs) and agencies to improve education in Bangladesh. We also explained that either the parent/guardian or the participant him/herself could stop the interview at any time, for any reason, and there would be no negative consequences. Having explained the study, we first asked the child if he/she was willing to take part, then asked at least one parent/guardian for consent. The giving of information and seeking of consent were done verbally, in light of the illiteracy of many of the parents and guardians. Most parents were willing for their children to take part, though they sometimes asked for more information about the study or what questions we would ask. We told participants and their parents that we would give them copies of the final report if they wanted it; three took us up on this offer.

All participants' names were changed for this report.

3.3. Interviews

Interviews were conducted by the author working together with Hafsa Rahman, a Bangladeshi education researcher, who translated between Bengali and English as well as asking questions. The

duration was typically around 1½ hours, but varied from 30 minutes to over 2 hours. We recorded the interviews and I also took detailed notes in English. Whereas the notes captured the main information, selected parts of the recordings were later translated to provide verbatim quotations, in order to better convey the children's voices.

From the point of view of obtaining information, we would have preferred parents not to be present during interviews, so that children would feel able to speak freely. However, this was not always possible, because parents were often interested in the study so wanted to watch; because they did not trust strangers to be alone with their children; and because, in slum environments, all the participating families lived in one-room houses and there was no quiet space where we could reasonably take children to interview them.

3.4. Focus groups

Focus group discussions were conducted with the same participants, in most cases after interviewing them individually, but in some cases before. Activities in focus groups included: participants interviewing each other about education, and reporting back on what they found; drawing pictures depicting good and bad things that happened in school; enacting a debate on the proposal, "Teachers should be friends with their students"; participants discussing what they would see as an ideal school. For each of these activities further discussion was encouraged when topics of interest for the research were raised.

Two focus group sessions were conducted in slum environments (for groups A and B), and one, for the children who were not from slums (group C), was conducted in UNICEF offices.

3.5. School visits

Although it was not central to the study, we also visited two schools run by NGOs and two low-cost private schools in slum areas, and talked to staff about the teaching methods, curriculum, and student backgrounds.

3.6. Analysis

The results were analysed thematically using a coding system based on the eleven domains in which barriers to learning or differences between slum and middle class students were anticipated (these are listed in section 2 above). The aim was not simply to gather evidence under each domain, however, but to consider how the types of barrier would relate to other types of barrier, to the school context, and to the student's background. Categories and codes were devised and placed in a hierarchy through an iterative process: the initial literature review influenced the interview design; our interpretation of interview responses led to ad hoc adjustments in questioning within and between interviews; in the process the set of categories was altered to try and capture how what was said related to the overarching research questions of this study. After the interviews had been finished, more thorough reading of the results led to further revision of the categories.

In the following sections, the analysis is presented under three broad themes: learning and testing; relationships and risk; and attitudes and outcomes. First, though, I present some of the context, using results from both the present and previous studies.

4. CONTEXT

The following sections give some context, drawing on both the present study and previous work, about the nature of children's lives in Dhaka, for both children in slums and middle class children; and on the different education options open to the different groups of children.

4.1. The urban divide: children's lives in poor and middle class households

Depending on the poverty line and data set used, between one third and one half of Dhaka's residents can be characterised as poor. Inequality is higher in Dhaka than elsewhere in Bangladesh; per capita expenditure amongst the richest quintile is estimated to be more than six times that of the poorest quintile (Baker, 2007). More than one-third of the city's population are thought to live in slums, where typical incomes were around 3000-4000 taka per month in 2005. The slum population is thought to have doubled between 1996 and 2005 and the number of slum communities increased by 70% (CUS et al., 2006).

Slums in Bangladesh are built on both government and private land, and as elsewhere are characterised by low-quality housing, overcrowding, poverty, poor environmental conditions, and limited access to services. Bangladesh has one of the highest population densities in the world, at 2600 persons per square mile, but the density in slums is almost 200 times higher (UN-HABITAT, 2008). Houses are usually made of flimsy materials, do not have access to piped water or their own toilets, and are vulnerable to fire and monsoon rains. Many slums are built in low-lying areas and have insufficient drainage, and so are often flooded (CUS et al., 2006; Baker, 2007).

There are serious constraints to delivering services such as education in slums, including a lack of policy providing specifically for the urban poor; frequent evictions of slum residents by government or landowners; and the role of criminal gang leaders in controlling what people can do in the slums (Rashid & Hossain, 2005). The government is generally unwilling to take account of households residing in an area illegally; but the insecurity of land tenure in slums and constant possibility of eviction also creates problems for NGOs, who stand to lose their investment if they set up permanent structures such as schools. Teachers employed locally may also have to move in the event of an eviction.

Violence, often linked to political conflicts, is recognised as an issue in slums in Bangladesh. Kabeer and Mahmud (2009) describe how fighting and even gunfire in one Dhaka slum led some parents to keep their children inside or take them to work. Rashid (2004) talks of a culture of "gang wars and violence" in slums in which young men are particularly likely to get involved, and police persecution; the violence has a particular effect on girls and young women, and was an important incentive for early marriage. In other contexts it has been shown how exposure to violence impairs children's cognitive and socio-emotional processes with long-term consequences for learning (Chaux, 2009), and violence in society can also affect learning directly when it spills over into schools (e.g. Chaux et al., 2009, in Colombia; Baker-Henningham et al., 2009, in urban Jamaica). Thus the prevalence of violence in slums is likely to have effects on children's learning within schools. As I will describe below, however, there was also evidence of violence in and around the school and home affecting the learning of middle class students.

My earlier research (Cameron, 2010, 2011) in four slums profiles the limited resources available to households which were likely to have impacts on children's learning. Most adults worked as rickshaw drivers, street sweepers, day labourers, or garment workers, and average incomes were around \$2 per day per person (at purchasing power parity). Adult literacy was low: under 50% of men, and under 40% of women, said they could read and write. Only two-thirds of children were in good health and 26% said children had been sick in the past 30 days. Children from relatively wealthy slum households were in better health, and taller for their age, than children from the poorest households. Around 40% of the households had migrated within the past 10 years and tended to have fewer friends and relatives nearby than longer-settled households.

The respondents in the present study who lived in slums came from similar households, although it is important to keep in mind the variation within a slum area. Sharif, for instance, lived in a larger house than others in his area; it was a simple building made of concrete and tin but had two rooms rather than one. His father ran a small shop. His relatively unproblematic path through education, reaching grade 7 at the 'correct' age, has to be seen in this context; the household was able to spend money as needed on school fees and private tuition. At the other extreme, Sohana's father was absent (having remarried and started a new family) and her mother had to stay at home to look after her young children. Sohana and her mother were totally dependent on relatives to support them financially. Sohana had studied for around four years in an NGO school, been accepted at grade 3 in a private school, dropped out when her parents could not afford the fees, and been readmitted at the same grade. The same age as Sharif (13), she was still in grade 3.

The extent of child work in slums in Bangladesh is somewhat unclear and probably depends on age group and location. In Afsar's (2004) surveys during the 1990s, one third of children in slums were working. Baker (2007) reports that "in the poorest households [of Dhaka] with child workers, earnings from the children are significant, representing about one third of total household income" (p. xiv). But MICS data from 2009 found that only 6.5% of children aged 6-14 in slums were working and not attending school (UNICEF, 2010). While in past studies boys have usually been found working outside the home more commonly than girls, in the MICS data roughly equal proportions of boys and girls were working.

In the present study a few of the children had been working, particularly those who had been in the HTR programme (see Box 1 below), which targets working children. Most reportedly worked at tea stalls or as domestic workers. Some children set up their own small businesses, such as Rashid, who sometimes missed his work (and the money it brought him) selling stickers to other children from a stall, but was unable to return to it now that he was fully engaged in study at grade 6. Mona sewed decorations onto dresses during her school holidays. Taslima had done similar work when she was in the HTR school. Some students, particularly girls, had to spend time helping their mothers with domestic chores. Work and higher study were not necessarily incompatible; for instance Mukti, a grade 10 student, was able because of her education to offer private tuition to young children. But for some reported cases there was a direct relationship between their work and absence from school:

Teachers beat Samir because he misses classes. Samir intentionally works in a tea stall of his own choice. His father asks him not to work in the tea stall and to go to school but he doesn't listen to him. If Samir sees any teacher on the road he pretends not to see them. –
Mona

This study does not focus on children or young people who have dropped out of school to work, but there were evidently many. For example, Mona's sister dropped out of school at grade 8 because her father was ill and they needed her to earn money; she went to work in a garment factory. Our respondents who were still in school could see their lives diverging from their peers who had left to work, and sometimes consciously avoided them:

I sometimes see my old classmates on the road. I don't know where they live. Most of them work. Some of them maybe joined school. They live that way in a slum. – Mona

The lives of middle class children in the study were very different. To some extent the Dhaka middle class can be characterised as part of a global middle class. Like the English parents discussed in Ball's (2003) work, the participants' parents worked intensively to find information and choose schools as part of strategies for securing their children's futures and avoiding risk. The participants' hectic lives are reminiscent of developed-country studies such as Lareau (2000), which documents how a group of middle class children in the United States spent time in activities organised by adults and stressing public performance and skill development, while working class children's lives revolved much more around informal play, visiting kin and 'hanging out'. Middle class children are thus prepared for the types of performance expected from them in school, a preparation that can be seen as active investment by parents in their children's social or cultural capital. The respondents in the present study differ from those followed by Lareau, however, in that their hectic timetables were heavily dominated by the combination of school, home study for examinations and tests, and private tuition; there was little sign of other types of structured activity.

Children in the two settings (slum and non-slum) were connected in different ways to the global economy and foreign cultures. Households living in slums would have felt the impact of the global economy through food prices and the internationally-trading garments industry. Children experience other cultures mainly through television. Not all slum households have televisions but children could usually watch television at neighbours' houses if they did not have their own. Younger children from both settings watched *Doraemon*, a Japanese animation series dubbed into Hindi (about a boy who seeks help with his troubles at school from a robotic cat) almost universally, even though they could not always understand. But middle class children can probably think of themselves as global citizens more easily. They enjoyed a mixture of Western and Indian television programmes, were in some cases allowed to use the internet and online social networks and, in a few cases, had travelled abroad.

The children also had different long-term prospects to look forward to. Respondents in earlier research have talked about how job markets are far from open in Dhaka; bribes and connections, as well as qualifications, are needed in order to compete, and the job market is severely segregated by gender (Cameron, 2011; Sweetser, 1999; Rashid 2004). Students who continue their education beyond grade 10 will have to compete for admission and pay for college and university. Knowing about these obstacles to higher education and good jobs is likely to have shaped parents' and children's choices and attitudes earlier on in the education system. Sadia, a student in grade 10 in area B, intended to work in a bank, reflecting her choice of the business studies stream in grade 9 and 10. Studying science, her family affirmed, would have been a problem for them later on, as it would have been more difficult to gain admission to colleges to study science, and also

more expensive. Middle class students often had clearer ideas of a route through college and university and into a career.

Nevertheless there were some common elements in the lives of middle class and slum children. They watched similar television programmes. Most boys loved cricket, and in the group A neighbourhood there was a cricket ground where lower-middle class boys played together with those from the slum area. For teenage girls from either setting, playing outside was not really an option; they could chat in the playground during school breaks but no longer played after the age of 12 or 13. Whereas sports were available as an accepted way for adolescent boys to meet friends and spend time outside of their homes, there was no equivalent for girls.

4.2. School 'choice' and forced transitions

School enrolments in Bangladesh grew rapidly in the 1990s before stagnating in the 2000s. There appear to be far too few government school classrooms in Dhaka to cater to the number of students, and location near a government school was important for enrolment in one in my previous slum study (Cameron, forthcoming). NGOs, and to a lesser extent private schools, met some of the excess demand where government schools were not available nearby. There is a severe bottleneck at the point of transition between primary and secondary education, as government and private schools charge fees at secondary level, and NGO schools mostly only offer primary grades. Many students drop out around this time.

This context is important because it needs to be kept in mind that the adolescents from slums interviewed here are, on the whole, not from the poorest or most vulnerable groups. The focus of this study on 11-16 year olds who are *still in school* excludes many of the most disadvantaged. Most of the participants in the present study were in secondary school, but some in the slum groups were still in primary grades, despite being above the official age.

As well as being less likely to be in school, children from slum settings have a different range of choices. As I noted in the previous study, children from wealthier families, those with better social connections and more highly-educated parents are generally more likely to be in private schools rather than government or NGO schools (Cameron, 2011). In the present study, children in group A were mostly in government primary schools, NGO schools, or in relatively cheap private secondary schools. In group B there were no government schools nearby or NGOs with secondary grades, so the students were all in low-cost private schools, and had mostly been to NGO schools for their primary grades. In group C students were in a mixture of government and private secondary schools, generally paying much higher fees than the two groups living in slum areas. Parents from all three groups expressed their unwillingness to send their children long distances to school. There are both safety and (for girls, especially) reputational issues connected to sending a child a long distance, and a time problem caused by severe traffic jams. For parents living in the two slum areas, affordability was clearly a constraint. Sohana's parents tried to bargain with the school over the 250 taka per month fees which they had great difficulty paying. Shabanna changed to the school at which her mother worked, mainly because she could benefit from discounted fees for the children of staff.

These different schools offered very different physical environments for children to learn in. In area A, there was an NGO school taking up two stories of a block of flats, with a small covered

courtyard where children could in theory play, but which when I went there was full of students revising for forthcoming tests. Private secondary schools in the area reportedly had smaller premises and fewer facilities. In area B, the private secondary schools I visited were, similarly, small buildings consisting only of classrooms and a head-master's office; there were no playgrounds, a few broken windows and no generators. Students in such schools complained about the lack of playgrounds as one of the main things they disliked about their schools. Both private and NGO-run schools were sometimes found occupying one or two floors of an apartment block, with little space for play or anything other than sitting in class, and occasionally problems with the people living in neighbouring flats.

That school was in a rented building. Everything was okay but women of the neighbouring area used to yell at us a lot. – Apu

By contrast, some of the middle class students in 'good' schools enjoyed large amounts of space within their school compounds. Across the groups of students, there were complaints about the heat and lack of adequate back-up generators to rely on during power cuts. (Power cuts occur several times a day during the hot season in Dhaka, leaving classrooms extremely hot and dark if they do not have a back-up generator.) Some schools had science laboratories and computers, although these facilities were generally reserved for the upper grades and younger students had often never even seen them. The lower-cost private schools sometimes shared the facilities of other nearby schools. One NGO school managed its resources by having a single computer centre serving several of its schools. A few students complained about inadequate toilet facilities.

How was your experience in the [government school]?

It was a combined class. They merged all four sections together. ... I like it but not much... It was overcrowded (*onek ganjam*)... We had to sit 4 students to one small bench. The toilets were extremely dirty. – Sajid

The teachers say we have a lab but they haven't showed us yet. I haven't seen it. – Rahib

The school had a big playground beside the school. It was a public playground. Our new school doesn't have a playground.

Then why did they move the school?

There was a water logging problem when it rained. We used to get wet in the rain inside the classroom. The roof was made out of tin. Now it's in an apartment building. – Rashid

Class sizes ranged a great deal among the respondents, from 6 (grade 6 in a small low-cost private school) to 89 (grade 9 in the science stream of a prestigious private school) at the extremes. The small private schools used in area B typically had classes of 20-30 students. In some cases they evidently had difficulty finding enough students to make up a class, because of drop-out and students transferring to other schools. NGO schools also had small classes of 30 or fewer. Some respondents described government primary school class sizes of around 50. But the really huge classes, of 65 or more, were in larger and relatively prestigious private schools. According to the students' accounts, these schools actually depended on a high rate of absenteeism, as otherwise there would not be enough space for all of the students, and it would also become very hard for the teacher to manage the class.

How many students do you have in your class?

Eighty.

How many of them are present on an average day?

It varies. If there is a class test then there are more. Usually it is less.

How many usually?

Forty to fifty.

Is there a problem if everyone comes?

Yes. We were in a smaller class room. Now we are in a big classroom. Even then if all of us are present it becomes a problem for us. We have few benches. – Zafreen

It is also important to understand differences in children's education prior to secondary school. Many of them may reach the end of primary grades with quite limited ability to read and write. It has been suggested that the rapid growth in primary enrolments was associated with a decline in quality in Bangladeshi schools. Chowdhury et al. (2003) report that the proportion of children nationally aged 11-12 achieving basic learning competency was generally low (30% nationally), and lower for girls than boys, especially in urban areas. Chowdhury et al. attribute the drop in urban achievement to increases in slum populations and failure of educational facilities to keep pace with population growth. Primary teachers given simple tests in Bangla and mathematics have themselves achieved surprisingly low scores (FMRP, 2006). Another factor underlying quality trends may be the widespread use of double-shifting, whereby primary grades 1 and 2 are taught in the morning and 3, 4, and 5 in the afternoon. Similar systems are used at secondary level; all of the schools of participants in the present study had two shifts.

Some of the participants living in slums had been first to primary grades in NGO schools, and then had sat but failed the primary school completion exam. As a result they were sent back to earlier grades of primary school – there were four cases of going back to grade 3 having previously completed grade 5. Afsana, for instance, explained that she had failed in the mathematics part of the admissions test, having only learned times tables up to 10 when multiplications up to 20 were required in the test. Sohana was enrolled in grade 3 of a low-cost private school (as already noted, there were no government schools in the area), which had not required her to sit any admissions test, on the advice of an NGO worker who said her English was not good enough to enter a higher grade. Others had to switch schools in examination years (grades 5, 8, and 10) because non-recognised private schools were not usually able to enter their students for public examinations.

Although for different reasons, some of the middle class students had also been through several different schools. At the extreme, Rahib had been in six different schools between grades 1 and 9 (including a repeat of grade 9), for a number of different reasons. As we will see, Ratna and Shipon's parents planned to change their schools because they no longer saw it as safe. Silma had to change school because she was ill and missed her primary completion exam. Nadia planned to go to a different college for grades 9 and 10 as the college attached to her school did not get good results. I will explain below that the schools attended by middle class students were, according to their accounts, far from ideal in many respects. In some cases their families seemed to seek schools with a good reputation, and perhaps with students from similar backgrounds, rather than good quality, per se.

It's not really a good school but all the students are very good and competitive. All of them are from a civilised (*shobho*) family background. – Zahirul

Common to all these cases, though, is that when a problem arose in a child's education, parents were able to solve it by changing school. In most of the areas where these participants lived, there

were enough schools to change if needed, and like middle class participants in developed country studies (e.g. Ball, 2003) parents had the financial means, social contacts and information to shop strategically in the market for education.

As well as having greater difficulty choosing a school and gaining admittance to it, slum households are likely to be at a disadvantage in terms of managing the relationship with the school afterwards. Institutions of public accountability generally are weak for the urban poor in Bangladesh (World Bank, 2001; Baker, 2007). Large differences between the school and the household in terms of class, power, and education, would likely put parents at a disadvantage in this process. One study in rural and urban areas (SIDA Bangladesh, 2010) finds that many parents felt uncomfortable and embarrassed about interacting with the school because of their own lack of education and felt that teachers knew what was right. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2005) report findings from focus groups and interviews with parents, teachers, students and other stakeholders:

There is an absence of common criteria and understanding regarding quality of education and how a school's performance should be judged. The concept of accountability ... appeared to be lacking. Absence of models or knowledge about effective schools, and high quality teaching-learning practices also may have led to the acceptance and tolerance of the familiar (Ahmed et al., 2005, pp. 33-4).

According to teachers in the same survey, it was common for first generation learners to lose interest in school, and these children were likely to be verbally and physically abused for lagging behind and "not behaving properly". Parents also felt that teachers had a bias in favour of children of the well-off, and told their children in some cases that they should leave school because they did not have the "brain" to study (Ahmed et al., 2007, p. 38). Similarly in my previous study I found that some families reported discriminatory treatment of children from slums both by teachers and in the form of bullying by other students (Cameron, 2011). This is not to say, however, that managing the relationship with the school is always easy for middle class parents. Rahib's elder sister explained what happened when she visited one of the schools that Rahib had attended:

The teacher said "There are other students who are doing well. What's wrong with your brother?" He was screaming. He was being very loud and rude. There are some drug addicted students. The teachers knew about them. But they used to pretend not to know anything about it. – Rahib's sister

BOX 1. BASIC EDUCATION FOR HARD TO REACH URBAN WORKING CHILDREN

The UNICEF-supported Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children (henceforth HTR) programme ran from 1997 to 2012 and provided informal education to working children living in urban slums (UNICEF, n.d.-a; UNICEF, n.d.-b). It used a shortened (two and a half hours) school day so that children could continue to work, and targeted children aged 10 to 14 who were not attending any other school and who worked at least seven hours per week. The education included basic literacy and numeracy, life skills, health care, and issues relevant to their situation such as their rights and hazardous work. The courses ran for 40 months – 5 cycles of 8 months each. It enrolled 346,000 children in total across six cities during its first phase, 1997-2004, and during its second phase it opened around 6000 learning centres and was enrolling 166,000 children at a time (UNICEF, n.d.-a). The running of the centres was sub-contracted to NGOs selected by a committee that included staff of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. In Dhaka there were 6765 centres as part of the first phase, catering for around 200,000 learners (Rahman et al., 2010).

Studies of the programme note some weaknesses as well as successes. Cameron (2002) examines the first phase of the programme, finding that areas where working children lived were not always clearly identified, and a lack of clarity over NGOs' qualifications and responsibilities. A third of the NGOs had been established after 1990, and half had only recently begun working in the field of education. Some had been established specifically for the programme. The programme worked best where the partner NGOs were experienced and already possessed strong ties with the communities they would serve. Although the teaching was intended to be participatory and to build on children's existing knowledge, the low educational levels and lack of training and experience of teachers meant that formal methods were used more often. It was clear that many of the children turning up at the learning centres were not working, though they were still from deprived backgrounds. Barkat et al. (2010) report a lack of effective links between HTR and the formal education system, or of provision for families who move house (voluntarily or involuntarily), which frequently resulted in children dropping out.

Although only six students (Hassan, Apu, Mona, Rashid and Taslima) from HTR schools were included in the present study, their responses are revealing. They appreciated the way that the HTR school fitted into their schedules, allowing them to work part of the day. Apu had worked in a tea shop, Rashid sold stickers, and Taslima pasted decorations onto clothes. As in Cameron's (2002) study, however, they did not all seem to have been working since the first grade of HTR school, raising the question of why the school – which explicitly targeted working children – recruited them. They joined the HTR school because there was no government school nearby, and at least in Rashid's case, because they had only just moved to the area from their home village, and didn't know anyone in the area.

The participants described the teachers in the HTR school as friendly and warm, and said that they did not scold students very much. Apu thought that the HTR teachers were better, noting that the teachers in his current private school were themselves still students, notwithstanding the fact that a single teacher taught all lessons in the HTR school. But worryingly, they stated that the HTR teacher sometimes beat the students. They said that this happened in "extreme" cases of misbehaviour, such as students screaming in class (which risked raising complaints amongst the neighbours with whom the programme shared a building), and happened less than in their current private schools.

What were the prospects for children who completed HTR? The students we interviewed had all since joined low-cost private schools, mostly with both primary and secondary grades. Their transitions between schools were far from straightforward. Students were unable to sit the primary

completion examination in the HTR school and so had entered private schools to do so, which sometimes meant repeating grade 5. Hassan had joined another NGO school but left after some time because it was too far away, and eventually entered a private school at grade 4; when we interviewed him he was repeating grade 5. His had thus not made any actual progress for several years. Sohana's progression through the grades was also taking a long time; she had been sent back to grade 3 upon entering the private school, because she was perceived as having low ability. She had been held back further because she was suspended when her parents were unable to pay school fees.

Our participants, who were at least able to continue their studies, seem to have been in the minority. Most of their former classmates were reportedly working. This was despite efforts by HTR to follow up with its graduates. Apu said the school had helped him to find a place in secondary school, and Hassan and Apu had both been offered vocational training in machine sewing after finishing HTR primary education. Hassan went to a course for a few days and was paid 50 taka per day for it. Apu did not go because, having entered grade 6, he was too busy with his schoolwork. While vocational training might have been useful for children who dropped out of school, the participants of this study saw it as irrelevant and a distraction from the path of formal schooling that they had chosen. Training in skills such as sewing was available from the small informal businesses that operate as sub-contractors in the garments industry, and it was not clear whether the HTR training offered anything different or better.

While strong conclusions should not be drawn from six interviews, this research does raise several questions that need to be addressed in a fuller evaluation of the HTR programme. The participants were clearly appreciative of the programme, which catered to the needs of households that were extremely poor and vulnerable because they had recently migrated, and who were entirely neglected by the government school system. The evidence of physical punishment in HTR schools, however, is shocking given that this was both illegal and a denial of children's rights (UNICEF, 2009). Any evaluation would have to investigate carefully how widespread this was, using appropriately sensitive research methods.

Although programmes such as HTR usually operate with very limited resources, they need at least to be aware that many children will aspire to education beyond the primary level, and may also not be very interested in vocational training options, especially when more relevant training may be available elsewhere. As with other NGO schools attended by participants in this study, there was a sense of students being cut loose after reaching a certain low level, with little by way of recognised certification or routes into the formal education system.

5. LEARNING, TESTING AND TUITION

As seen above, changes of school were not always freely chosen by the parents but forced by problems with the school or examinations. In this section, I argue that examination plays such a central role in the education of the participants in this study that other educational objectives fall by the wayside. Lessons are based around presenting material to be memorised and understanding is limited to that required to answer examination questions. The knowledge on offer is formal, dry, and schools do not place any value on students' existing knowledge. As has been suggested in developed country studies, high-stakes testing defines many aspects of students' school lives, and teachers emphasise transmission of knowledge in a way that favours some students over others (Reay & William, 1999; Harlen & Deaken Crick, 2002).

Although the emphasis on assessment applies to all three groups of students, middle class students enter the examination hall better prepared because their parents and schools are able to invest more resources, and invest more effectively, in such preparation. This happens most obviously through paying for private tuition. Moreover, schools place nearly all of the responsibility on students for completing the syllabus and learning the curriculum contents, meaning that examination outcomes depend heavily on private tuition and the ability to complete work at home.

Learning within regular school hours was sometimes limited by students spending relatively short hours in school. Most schools operated double shifts, for instance with early grades coming in the morning and upper grades in the afternoon. Even so, the length of the school day reported by students varied between 3 and 5 hours. These figures are similar to national averages of around 500 hours annually in grade 1 and 2, rising to 700 hours in grades 3 to 5, found by Rahman et al. (2010, citing the Directorate of Primary Education). Some private schools were operating two shifts in morning and early afternoon and then offering coaching sessions in the late afternoon or evening.

In most cases, students reported that teachers arrived on time and gave their full attention to the lesson. This was not always the case, though. Mamun complained that teachers were usually 10 to 15 minutes late for lessons lasting 30 minutes, because of administrative tasks or because they are held up in the common room. Several other participants complained of teachers not coming regularly on time to class, of coming and going to complete other tasks or attend to other classes, and of coming but then sleeping during the lesson. Ratna explained that, in her school, if teachers did not arrive within five minutes of the start of class, the class captain could go and speak to the principal, and the teacher would get into trouble. However, she admitted that this had never actually happened.

Our class duration is for 40 minutes. Teachers are usually late. Sometimes teachers do not come at all. At that time students talk among themselves. If another teacher comes, they stop for a while then start again once that teacher has gone. – Nadia

The English teacher gives lot of things to write as students cannot finish them in class. He sleeps in class when students are busy with class work. No student has the courage (*sahosh*) to ask questions to him if he doesn't understand anything. – Zahirul

I don't like the social studies teacher.
Why?

She doesn't give us time. She comes and goes out. She doesn't take our class properly. She comes at 12. She is the class teacher of grade six. She goes to that class when they make noise. – Shipon

Short hours of teacher time on task appeared to affect middle class and slum students more or less equally. Although teachers were on time (and awake) at her school, Ratna complained of teachers who enter, set work, then 'sit idly' rather than lecturing or answering questions. Several students were annoyed by teachers who did very little in class other than set work at the beginning. Khadiza's least favourite teacher was one who took a very passive approach to teaching, writing the class work on the board and refusing to offer further explanation. Mahmuda related how in her Bangla class the teacher simply reads, not giving them any class work or homework. Sajid explained that after examinations, teachers and students were relaxed and so simply 'sat idly' in the class:

A proxy teacher came to take Bangla class. The regular teacher didn't come. He taught us arts and craft. ... our proxy teacher said we would have regular classes from Saturday.

Does this happen often?

No. We have just finished our exams. So, teachers are absent.

What did you do in your maths class?

The teacher was there but he didn't teach anything ... He was checking the multiple choice questions answer sheet ... We sat idly. We were calm and quiet. – Sajid

Some of the participants also mentioned problems with student absenteeism. Some students apparently bunked classes because they were unprepared for lessons, did not have the correct uniform, or were late and so decided to avoid the class altogether. As seen above, there were one or two cases of children skipping school to work. In other cases they had gone to their home towns, or simply did not want to go to all of their lessons, preferring to play cricket or 'roam around' (*ghure berano*).

Are there students who are often absent?

... Those students who are absent sit on the back benches. The teacher catches them when he asks them any questions as they cannot answer it. Then teacher beats them. – Sajid

There are two types of students [who don't understand things in class], those who don't have good concepts and don't understand things properly. And the other type who are not attentive and regular. ... Usually only 30 to 33 students come out of 40. Others do not come to school. They are neglectful (*fakibaj*). They roam around outside. They tell their parents they are going to school. Sometimes the teachers see a group of girls outside wearing school uniform and talk to their parents. Some have changed after this happened but others do not change. Sometimes teachers see them, but don't give them TC [transfer certificate]. – Silma

There are 80 students in the class. Usually 40 to 50 students are present. If there is a class test then there are more present. – Zafreen

If students miss their class then the teacher asks the reason. But if they are late they don't come to school. They stay at home. There are two or three students who come one day then don't come for two or three days.

Is there anyone who misses class often?

Yes there is a one boy who doesn't come. He is very irregular. He plays cricket throughout the day.

Is he your friend?

No I am not friends with him. We do not talk to him. If we talk to him he invites us to go to playground. – Rashid

Irregular attendance on a day-to-day basis happened both among children from slums and those from middle class areas, the latter sometimes taking advantage of the sheer size of their schools and, seemingly, a disinterest on the part of teachers and headmaster, to skip classes. Among the slum students, some had also left school for extended periods of several months, to spend time in their families' villages or because their families had financial problems.

As already noted, several of the schools had class sizes of 70 or more, making it impossible for teachers to give individual attention to students within a 30 to 40 minute lesson. Even in smaller classes, there was little evidence of formative assessment. Teachers were apparently unwilling or unable to check homework and offer feedback. There *were* frequent class tests, but the essential function of these was to test their memorisation of some part of the material that they would need in final exams. Sometimes marks from class tests counted towards a student's final mark for the year, meaning that the pressure to perform was more or less constant.

Teachers do not check the homework copybook properly. They just put a tick. They do not read it. Once I wrote my friend's date of birth instead of an answer in homework copybook to test her whether she reads it or not. Madam didn't check it. She ticked on the answers. – Zafreen

The teacher marks the answers; but we find the questions and answers from the guidebook. Sir asked me to buy a guidebook called *Nolok*.

... Does the teacher mark answers from the book himself, or do you find them out yourself?
We find out from the guidebook.

Do you have guide books for all subjects?

Yes – Arshadul

While the potential role of assessment in helping students assess and improve their own understanding was neglected, the role of assessment in judging, labelling and sorting students was paramount. Students were assigned 'roll numbers' based on their aggregate performance in the previous year's annual exams, which then influenced seating, treatment by teachers, division of the grade into sections (in schools where grades were large enough to be split), and selection of 'class captains' (see below). Test results were in this way kept salient at all times.

If I don't understand I can ask questions, but I usually don't do this. Our teachers tell us to ask questions if we don't understand. When everyone in class says they understand, if I say I didn't understand it makes me feel embarrassed. Roll number 1 and 2 ask questions in class. They ask question even though they know the answers. They do it to test the teacher. They pretend that they did not understand and the teacher also thinks if roll 1 doesn't do well in exam it will be problematic. – Mahruf

Classes were geared towards school tests and, ultimately, public examinations, and teachers were expected to be open about which questions would arise in tests, so that students could learn the answers. Sajid and Biplob both said that, in the period leading up to exams, their homework and classes become dedicated to learning questions and answers, and giving advice, for the exams. Teachers at Biplob's NGO school worked extra hard in this period, and the school stayed open on Fridays (normally a holiday). After exams, some schools either closed or opened but with fewer

teachers or less teaching activity; teachers were marking exam scripts or else simply decided to give the students a break.

Notwithstanding the hard work that some teachers put into preparing students for tests, in general it was seen as the student's own responsibility to prepare for each class by learning the previous lesson, complete the syllabus, and pass tests. This led some students to feel stressed, and some to skip classes where they had not prepared sufficiently. It also meant that students could not depend on teachers to help them, and so their outcomes in examinations would be heavily influenced by the amount of support they could draw on at home and from private tutors.

If the students do not finish their syllabus then teachers tell them, the exam is coming. You have to study at home to complete the syllabus. You have to do well in the exam. ... If they don't do well then they call the guardians and tell them your son couldn't finish the syllabus.
– Sharif

In our school we have to work hard. We have to study ourselves. Our teachers do not play any role. If we follow our teacher's guidance we cannot do well. We have to make our own effort to do well in exams. We can get very little help from our teachers. Most of the schools are like that. – Nadia

The content of lessons often sounded dry and formal, with little enjoyment or depth of understanding. Participants could often not tell us anything about a poem or story they had covered in class, or tell us what the use of learning logarithms is after having studied them for a week in mathematics. The learning offered in schools was clearly detached from students' lives, was sometimes not useful, and placed no value on knowledge gained outside the school. Reading fiction was apparently seen by teachers as a frivolous waste of time; students were enjoined to spend their time studying their textbooks instead. Students' fractured understanding of English and Hindi, picked up from television, songs, and the internet, was not acknowledged in school lessons, which focused on English grammar with little attempt at listening or conversation practice. Bangla lessons were similarly formal and based on rote learning. Taslima said that teachers did encourage them to write creatively, but she did not feel qualified to write essays on subjects such as 'the rainy season' for her Bangla class; writing about her personal experiences would apparently not have sufficed. Sharif talked about how he was forced to make up parts of an essay when he was unable to memorise the one in the textbook.

I had a syllabus for every subject for the holiday; many students couldn't memorise the subjects before the holiday. The teachers gave them application letters and essays to write... I can write essays on "our school," or "duties for parents", but I cannot write on "the rainy season". Teachers give us more marks if we make it up.

Why can't you write an essay on the rainy season?

Because I don't have any idea about the rainy season. – Taslima

The teachers asked the students to write an essay on seasons of Bangladesh. He explained how to write it, like introduction, description, flowers that bloom in different seasons. I memorised half of it, it was too long so I couldn't memorise the whole thing. Then I made up the rest. I wrote an introduction and conclusion from the book and made up the rest. The part I made up was good. – Sharif

In these respects I found little difference between middle class and slum participants. Unlike work in developed countries in the tradition of Bowles and Gintis (1976), students followed a uniform

curriculum and it would be difficult to argue that they were imparted with types of knowledge geared towards their future social class positions or jobs. Neither was there overwhelming evidence for differences in the abilities of students to produce the kinds of language and knowledge that are valued in schools (as in Bernstein, 1975). Students from all three groups often seemed mystified about what they were studying in school and unable to tell us much about it. On the other hand students from all three groups were also able on occasion to use academic styles of language to explain things to us, as for instance when Rashid (group B) explained to us in rather scientific terms that it was difficult for him to study at home because his home had a tin roof, and metals such as tin conduct heat easily. The children of parents who had recently migrated to Dhaka and who previously worked in rural agriculture – such as many children living in slums – may actually have a relative benefit in the Bangladeshi curriculum, with its focus on rural life. Most male students studied agricultural science, even though few of them have any prospect of having to manage a farm; but at least for students whose families have maintained a close link with the village, they would have had some ability to relate this subject to reality. (Whether the content was of any practical use for farming, is a separate question I did not explore in this study.)

Middle class students were, however, clearly better prepared for their lessons than the students living in slums, especially through the use of private tuition and coaching. Previous studies have found that private tuition has “become a norm” in Bangladesh (Ahmed et al, 2005); in my previous study in four slums in Dhaka (Cameron, 2010) over half the children who were studying in the primary grades (1 to 5) had been in private tuition in the past week. Similarly in the present study, there were only five participants who did not have any form of additional tuition – two from group C, who could get by without tuition because they were not currently in grades with major examinations and could rely on support from family members if they needed it; and three from groups A and B, including Sohana, whose family could not afford private tuition.

Private tuition was often recommended by teachers and in some cases was nearly compulsory. Shabanna reported that coaching was ‘compulsory’ in her school; students either had coaching within the school or with an external private tutor. The difference, she said, was that in coaching they merely repeated the same lessons taught within the school, whereas a private tutor would set new work. Coaching can in such cases be seen as an additional school fee, discretionary only for those who can afford more expensive tuition instead. Other participants from slum households said that private tuition was needed because they could not easily work by themselves at home, because of heat and power cuts, or because they ‘feel like playing’ when they go home. In private tuition there were also greater opportunities to ask questions than was possible in the classroom, resonating with the view expressed by parents in Nath’s (2008) study, who said that “[i]f a school functions well, private tutoring is unnecessary, but the schools do not function well” and that students were not able to ask teachers questions, but were able to do this in private tuition (p. 19).

Tuition was focused on learning for examinations, and in some cases there was the explicit expectation that in private tuition teachers would reveal the questions that would be asked during examinations (and the answers). Teachers had similarly told several students to buy guidebooks, which presented the answers to their test questions in a form ready for memorisation. In other cases the expectation of private tuition was more that teachers would use the time to give clear explanations of a kind lacking in their school lessons:

I changed my private tutor because whatever he taught me never came in the exam. He was from [name of a private school]. Now I have a tutor from my own school. – Arshadul

The physics teacher makes tough questions in class. He explains lessons clearly and properly in coaching class, not in school. There are some teachers who give more marks to those students who go for their private tuition class. They also tell exam questions to them ... my higher maths teacher is like that. He doesn't explain things properly in class. He also teaches students in batches [private coaching]. I do not go to his coaching. I will not even join. He explains things in his own way. He wants us to write the answer in the exam script in his way. If we study from the book, for instance geometry, he doesn't give us marks. – Nadia

In the last Bangla class as it was before the first term exam the teacher marked all the questions for the upcoming exam. In coaching class I learned the answers. Madam [the teacher in private coaching] marked the answer from the textbook. – Hassan

Of the rest, whereas children in groups A and B usually had one private tutor, those in group C often had two or three, or a combination of one-on-one private tuition with group coaching. Amina, for instance, had three sources of private tuition. She spent two hours every day with a private tutor at home, who was also her maths and science teacher at school. She attended a coaching centre within the school, set up specifically to help students prepare for the JSC. This was normally for one hour on alternate days, but during the vacation was for four hours. It served 50 students. According to her mother, parents had asked the school to set up this coaching centre. On the days when she was not going to the school's coaching centre, she went to a second coaching centre outside the school, each session lasting 3½ hours, and with groups of 8 students. This private tuition was evidently important to Amina and her parents, yet Amina played down the significance of it, admitting that some students seemed to manage well without it.

Would it be difficult if you didn't have a private tutor?

Yes. The school may not follow the same topic, for instance I am doing algebra in coaching whereas my maths teacher is doing arithmetic. Therefore, I cannot ask questions in class. If I ask then the teacher say I will explain it later when I do this chapter in class....

Are there some students with no private tutors?

Yes there are students

Do they do okay?

Yes.

How?

They can't do too badly or too well in exams. – Amina

In this and a few other cases, the combination of private tuition and school clearly dominated middle class students' lives:

I don't have time for anything other than studies. My coaching starts at 10am. Then I have to attend school. I come back at 5pm. When I come back from school I have to study at home. I have two private tutors back to back. – Shipon

There is a close relationship between the role and form of assessment, teaching methods and styles, and the need for private tuition. Examinations in Bangladesh are high-stakes; children's life outcomes depend heavily on them. So it is not surprising that teachers emphasise preparation for examinations, nor that parents are willing to invest as much resources as they can afford for private tuition. Since examinations tend to test memorisation and regurgitation of written material, this is the type of preparation that classes and private tutors spend most of their time on.

Recent changes to the national curriculum have tried to shift away from this pattern by introducing 'creative learning'. Few students mentioned this, but those who did were ambivalent about it. Khadiza complained that, since moving to the new creative system, she had to memorise the whole chapter, whereas before they only had to learn specific answers from the text. Zahirul's mother said that teachers do not yet know how to work within the new system.

Teachers told us to send them to coaching. The teachers also panicked us. We were scared as it was a new system. Eventually I realised it was nothing to worry about. – Zahirul's mother

Questions in the exam are thinking based as well as memorisation based. Bangla is the subject with most thinking. The test has multiple choice questions for 40 marks based on memorisation. The essay type part is 60 marks. For example in Bangla there will be 4-5 lines from a Bangla poem. There are 4 parts of a question. The first question is an objective question. The second part is explanatory and in the third part students have to find out difference and similarities or apply the concepts. In the fourth part we have to provide our opinions. ... I think it's a much better system and it has given me the chance to think more. It works much better than the previous system. I didn't have this system in grade five or before grade five. I have got it in grade six. – Zafreen

In the low-cost private schools used by group B students, there was not even a pretence of having shifted towards creative learning.

Most NGOs working in education in Bangladesh have long emphasised the creative and child-centred nature of their curricula and teaching methods. Students who had been through NGO schools said they had enjoyed aspects such as greater use of story books, group learning activities, and caring teachers. But on the other hand one NGO school serving group A was also appreciated, especially because of its emphasis on examinations; its teachers worked particularly hard in the run-up to examinations, and students were proud that they and their classmates were among the highest-scoring in public examination centres. Thus even NGO schools are not immune from the pressure to focus on examinations, and nor do students and their parents oppose this focus, because they realise how important examination performance is to a child's future.

6. RELATIONSHIPS AND RISKS

The above discussion has brought out how lessons are often dry and boring for students, with little room for creativity or original thought, and with an overwhelming focus on examination.

Unfortunately boring lessons were not the only deterrent to school attendance. In this section I explore the risks of violence that students undergo both outside and inside the school, and the ways in which relationships between teachers and students, and among students, can be problematic for some groups of students – particularly those who struggle with academic work – but in ways that vary across different types of school.

Violence is frequently a problem in slums in Bangladesh (Rashid, 2004; Kabeer & Mahmud, 2009; see section 4.2 above). A surprising finding in the present study, however, was the extent to which the risk of violence on the way to, and outside the school, affected students from all kinds of background. The school attended by Ratna and Shipon (a sister and brother) although in a wealthy part of the city, was also close to the offices of a political party, where a bomb had recently been found and defused by the police during school hours. This illustrates rather grossly the way that a violent political context can work its way into children's lives in school. (This was also apparent when *horthals* – violent political strikes – closed down the city, including schools, and caused examinations to be delayed.) Their mother anticipated moving them to a different school out of fear for their safety. Rahib had also moved school after becoming caught up in gang violence:

There was a quarter [housing complex] besides the school. There used to be problems between youth from the quarter and grade nine students from the school. Some of the problems were related to women. I don't know about the other problems. They used to bring knives. When guardians complained about it the teachers denied it. They used to say they didn't know about it. I think they knew about it but they just pretended. – Rahib

For girls there were particular risks of sexual harassment and loss of reputation; girls' own behaviour was often blamed for incurring these risks, and consequently teachers and parents involved themselves closely in governing their behaviour:

I am not scared to go to coaching myself. Guys make comments but they will not eat me. But my mother worries. – Zafreen

Tanzina, a girl who is our class captain, came to this area to buy her tiffin [lunch]. A boy student of our school who took his SSC [secondary school certificate] this year saw she was having her tiffin in a narrow lane. He complained to the head teacher that she was talking to a guy.

(Her father interrupts: Why do you have to talk about that?)

She was beaten by the head teacher. The head teacher beat her with a big stick on her hand. – Fahima

As noted in the previous section, students were labelled through assessment and these labels kept salient through their repeated use in the classroom. These labels clearly dominated students' learner identities (in sociological terms) and their self-efficacy (in psychological terms).

Socialisation with students labelled as 'failed' because they were repeating a grade was seen as risky, as if their failure could be contagious. Teachers mostly encouraged good and bad students to sit separately, particularly through seating plans based on roll numbers. In one case (Shipon) teachers did the reverse, trying to make students of different abilities sit together so that the

'strong' students could help the 'weak', but this seemed to backfire because of the stigma attached to the latter. Other students worried that their own marks would be dragged down and moved seats as soon as they could.

...Do you talk to them (failed students)?

No, because they always ask for help. They always ask me to do this and that. They are older than me.

Why don't you talk to them?

I don't talk to them because they are older. They failed. My big brother also asked me not to interact with them. There are 15 [failed students, in a class of around 50] –Afsana

There is a separate zone for mischievous (*paji*) girls. They all sit together. Teachers ask them not to socialise with these girls but to help them in their studies.

... when you say they have a separate zone, who decides that they have to sit there?

They have chosen their own seats. No one else sits on their benches. ... The teacher asks us to change our seat if we sit beside them. We could get a bad influence. – Silma

For slum students there was the added risk of being influenced by students in the neighbourhood who were not serious about studying, or who had dropped out and were working, and whose behaviour was seen as bad:

—Do you have friends outside of school?

No... yes, I have friends outside school but I am not intimate with them. They do not go to study. They are not good. They experiment with drugs. – Kabir

I don't socialise with my neighbours and nor do my children. I don't allow them to socialise with neighbourhood kids. They don't study. They are not serious about their school. If they do they can get spoilt. – Rashid's mother.

If children live in a good environment, they become good human beings. – Rashid's father.

Indeed for girls, merely mixing with boys in the same building posed a risk to their reputations. Where schools were mixed, therefore, great care was taken to provide some separation between boys and girls, by putting them on separate sides of the classroom or in separate shifts. For the low-fee private schools serving children in the slums, small classrooms sometimes made it difficult to maintain this separation.

As well as these risks outside the school, students were subjected to violence from teachers within the school. Teachers in almost every school reportedly beat students using a bamboo stick or ruler, or slapped them. This type of punishment was given variously for talking in class, otherwise misbehaving, for not having done homework, and in some cases for failing to understand a lesson that has already been explained to them more than once. All types of school, including NGO-run schools, were implicated. Other forms of punishment included telling students to stand up, stand on the bench, hold their ears, or leave the classroom.

Sumon is naughty and annoying, and that's why the [name of NGO school] teacher used to beat him. The private teacher doesn't beat us but beats Sumon. He makes mischief (*shoytani*). – Sabiha

[A nearby NGO] school is very strict; they beat students; every day I see at least one of the students cry. — Taslima

Teachers beat them [students] on the backside. I was beaten in science class. I couldn't answer one question. I didn't understand but I didn't ask it to the teacher. I was scared of asking. I didn't cry. If I cry others students make me feel embarrassed. Those students who get beaten every day, they do *shoytani*. They don't study in coaching classes. They don't study at home. They play cricket. They want to copy each other's answer in exams. – Ripon

Do teachers beat you?

Yes. ... When we don't do our studies or scream... They use bamboo sticks.

Why?

I couldn't do my lesson.

Why?

The answers were long. I can't memorise them. – Arshadul

These findings are not surprising given previous research in which 91% of children reported physical punishment in schools in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2009). Corporal punishment in schools had recently been made illegal in Bangladesh, and this change was beginning to be reflected in a few of the schools, which devised alternative punishments to replace it. These usually involved either humiliating the student in some way, or making him or her miss lessons.

Teachers' means of managing classrooms included appointing some students as 'class captains', charged with overseeing the behaviour of the others when the teacher was not present, and with tasks such as handing out exercise books. Class captains were appointed variously based on their roll number, performance in a particular class, the teacher's discretion, and by a class vote. The class captain system created a direct meritocratic link between academic performance and power in the classroom, casting the worse-performing students as responsible for their own powerlessness. Being class captain conferred a closer relationship with the teacher, and was seen as an honour, but it was also seen as divisive and creating conflict between students.

Class captains write down names even if we don't talk.

Why?

They intentionally do it.

Do you like them?

I like one of them. If those class captains get punished I like it.

Did you vote for those girls [in the elections for class captain?]

Yes I thought they would be nicer.

Why do you think they write down your names?

They want us to get punishment from the teachers. – Madeena

In Kabir's school, the head teacher had gone a step further in his surveillance efforts, installing a closed circuit television (CCTV) camera at the front of the classroom, allowing him to monitor the class from his office. His feelings about this parallel those of the participant in the UK study by Archer et al. (2011), who felt that CCTV made his school feel "like a prison" (p. 27).

There was a CC [closed circuit] camera in our class. Our classmates were very naughty. They used to fight, roam around, bunk... I feel bad about it. I was very worried all the day. If I make any mistakes the head teacher would see it. Now every class has the camera. The head teacher has installed it. – Kabir

On the other hand, some students wished there was 'more' discipline in their schools, recognising that, especially in large classes, the inability of teachers to manage the class resulted in less time

spent learning. Madeena said that if she could change one thing about her school, she would prefer more discipline in the class. But it became clear that this was basically a complaint about teachers being absent or not teaching properly:

I would like to get back discipline in school.

Why don't you have discipline in school?

We do but I want more discipline. The teachers should take care of their students more.

What kind of discipline?

Sometimes teachers do not take classes seriously or properly.

Why?

Sometimes they do not come to school, maybe they have an important task. At that time we miss our classes.

What happens if the teachers don't appear?

Proxy teachers come. If proxy teachers do not appear we talk or scream. – Madeena

As already seen, there was some degree of stigmatisation of students who failed exams or behaved badly; other students tried to avoid socialising with them. In general, relationships among students varied from cooperation and friendship to conflict and competition. Changing school, which some students had done a lot, meant having to build new relationships each time, although participants said they managed this without too much difficulty within a few days or weeks. Students who had been subjected to humiliating punishment could not always rely on the solidarity of their friends or classmates, who sometimes enjoyed the spectacle:

Students are ashamed of physical punishment. It is insulting. I have to stand up in front of my classmates. They are sitting and I am standing. Some of them laugh. – Nadia

What do feel when teachers beat you?

I feel bad... When they beat my friends I also feel bad.

When they beat someone you don't like?

I feel good.

Is there anyone you don't like?

Yes, Tarik. Because he doesn't study, he makes mischief (*shoytani*).

Why do you like when teachers beat him?

Because he is extremely naughty (*onek beshi fazil*). – Arshadul

A few responses indicated that there were some students in the class who on a repeated or even daily basis, were beaten or otherwise punished by the teacher for perceived wrong behaviour. Such students were usually also ostracised by other students, and their behaviour was associated with failure, grade repetition, and the risk of expulsion.

Although most participants could give negative examples of the relationship between teachers and students, most also had positive things to say about their own experiences, which included teachers being friendly, caring, occasionally fun, and patient in helping them to understand.

For instance the way I talk to my class friends, some of the teachers used to talk that way. If we couldn't understand they came close and put their hands on our shoulders and asked us to study. They made us understand by saying "why can't you do it. You have to do it." – Shobub

As students advanced through grades they generally developed better – more equal and friendlier – relationships with teachers. In some cases going to private tuition with a teacher was a way to increase this sense of familiarity.

7. ATTITUDES AND OUTCOMES

Given some of the problems in school that I have highlighted, what were students' overall attitudes towards their schools and towards learning? Perhaps surprisingly, for the most part they were quite positive. Nevertheless there were some who voiced disaffection with, and even outright dislike of, their schools. Some were scared of their teachers because the teachers beat students; others were more scared of the humiliation of being given other 'physical punishment' such as holding one's ears. As the UNICEF (2009) report on physical punishment noted, most students accept physical punishment, even if they also say they would prefer less severe forms of discipline. Students' wellbeing, as they depicted it in their own accounts, seemed more sensitive to humiliation, loss of dignity, a sense of injustice, stress or boredom, than to physical discomfort or pain.

Some students were nervous about forthcoming tests, but most seemed confident. Most got more confident in school and more at ease with teachers as they progressed through the grades. Their school lives appear to have improved with age in other ways too; for instance teachers were said to beat older students less. Some of the students from all three areas said they enjoyed school, found school work interesting, and were enthusiastic about going to school. Even those who complained found some subjects interesting.

The teachers wanted to give them long holidays because they wanted to go back to their hometown. But we protested because we didn't want to miss our classes. – Mona

I don't like any subjects but compared to others I like chemistry. I read about air or space in the newspaper. I find them interesting. – Nadia

Some, however, reported high levels of stress around exams, boredom, and dislike of their teachers. Students, especially from the slum groups, often struggled with their lessons and there was little they could do to improve the situation.

The worst thing about my school is having seven long periods of often boring lectures every day. There is no gap in between them. – Mahruf

If I finish the syllabus before the test and revise it then there is not much stress. Sometimes I don't finish the syllabus. – Sharif

They put a lot of pressure on the students [at the NGO school neighbouring her house]. Teachers give them lots of tasks at home. They have a lot of studying to do; if they can't do it teachers beat them. – Taslima

I don't like maths because I don't understand it. I have to try and answer questions without understanding. – Fahima

Students from slum areas were mostly reluctant to criticise their teachers and rarely admitted to being bored at school. Instead their accounts focused on stress and their struggle to complete the work that was required of them. Students from middle class backgrounds more often talked about finding school boring and disliking teachers. It should be remembered, however, that many students from slum areas in this age group have already dropped out of school. The ones who

remain, including the participants in the present study, are likely to be those who are more committed and enthusiastic about school.

It is useful to consider how the types of behaviour characterised by Ray (1988) as negotiation, withdrawal, quiet resistance, and open resistance, are manifested among these students' accounts. Negotiation – students negotiating with teachers to influence the course of the class – was apparently rare and not always successful, but seemed more common among middle class students and those in higher grades.

What do students do if they find the class boring?

They can change things by asking the teacher. Sometimes they can ask if they feel extremely bored, then they ask the teacher, but not always. We say “we don't want to study it today. We are sleepy”. Then the teacher says, “okay read the rest of the chapter at home and if you find any problem then ask me next class”. We cannot always ask for this because if we do then the teachers will say “you won't like anything” – Amina

Students talk to each other or they try to study. We cannot change the lesson. – Hassan

A more common response to a class that was boring or that the student was unable to follow, is withdrawal – not paying attention to the class, staring blankly, daydreaming – and quiet resistance – breaking rules but in a covert way. Such students sought to escape the notice of the teacher, and in later grades, found ways to leave the classroom altogether.

There are some students who do not learn their lessons every day; they sit on the back bench and chat. If they do it, if the teachers see, the teachers say “don't do it. If you do you won't understand the lesson.” – Shabanna

I prefer the middle rows because I can talk there. The teacher has eagle eyes on the last bench. And the first bench is risky, the teacher asks questions to first bench students. I talk. Sometimes I sit quietly. I sometimes think of other things but it depends on my mood. If I am in a good mood then I think what I will do when I come back home. If I am in a bad mood then I think how I can teach a lesson to the teacher. If there were a new teacher or I could use a remote control I could pause or mute her. – Zafreen

If the lesson is boring I go to the washroom or the library where I can chat with my friends. I tell the teacher “I need to borrow this book” and then I go to the library and chat with my friends. I come back with a book so that my teacher cannot understand [that she was chatting with friends]. I go to the library with my friends. This was not possible in earlier grades. I sat head down. If teachers asked then I used to tell them “I have a headache”. – Silma

There were a few cases of more open rebellion. In Mahruf's school, a boy's school run by a branch of the military, students who had been there some time were increasingly unfazed by beatings and, as they grew older, willing to stand up to, and even humiliate, their teachers.

There is one teacher whom the students sometimes humiliate, students neglect him a lot. His name is Fokir ['Beggar'], so students put one taka or two taka coins on his desk. He gets angry and beats us. – Mahruf

Nadia explains how some students openly disobey the teacher, in most cases backing down once threatened with physical punishment, which still retains the power to instil fear in them. But the

teachers were evidently also scared of where these confrontations might eventually lead, and this left some space for occasional open disobedience.

Sometimes there are students who don't want to stand up [when the teacher enters] and ask the teachers [not to make them stand up]. Most of the students stand up. I have found very few students who refused to stand up. I have seen one student who refused, who insulted the teachers. She said "it's not my fault, it was your fault". The teachers get scared if students refuse to stand up. So they do not force them. – Nadia

In schools attended by children from slums, there were many cases in students' accounts of other students (and themselves) being 'naughty,' quarrelling, joking with teachers inappropriately, and being absent from school, to work in tea stalls or play cricket. In Kabir's school, I described earlier how a CCTV camera had been installed in one of the classrooms. Here he recalls the episode where his friend sabotaged the camera. The consequences were severe; he was beaten in front of his parents, and did not come to school for several weeks afterwards.

One day a student pulled off the [CCTV] connection.

How did they find out the culprit?

He went in front of the camera so Sir caught the person.

How did you feel about it?

I felt bad about it. One of my classmates was beaten. He damaged the camera so, the principal Sir, he was beaten by him.

Why did you feel bad? Did you feel bad for your friend or for the camera?

I felt bad about it because one of the students from my class was beaten. – Kabir

Outright rebellion of this kind is extremely risky for students from poor households. They can easily be given 'transfer certificates' – a bureaucratic euphemism for expulsion – but whereas middle class families can usually find another school, poor households do not have this option. Withdrawal and covert forms of resistance may have been natural responses to lessons that they could not follow and in which they had no control. But even these behaviours put students at risk of failing examinations, and consequently dropping out or being lastingly labelled as failures. Students from poor households had few support mechanisms if they were doing badly, and unlike middle class students, could not take it for granted that they would pass their SSCs one way or another. As Sohana's grandmother explained, "We want her to study up to matric [SSC] if she has it in her fate. If she cannot do it then we will not send her to school".

8. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This paper examined what 11-16 year olds living in slum and middle class areas in Dhaka had to say about their experiences in school. It aimed to identify processes within the school that would support or undermine the possibility of education being a route out of poverty, by placing students from slums on an equal footing or at a disadvantage relative to their peers from better-off families.

In some ways there was a surprising degree of uniformity. Although they were going to quite different types of school, the participants mostly studied a common curriculum (except for those in NGO schools). Learning was overwhelmingly geared towards assessment in all of the schools. In practice this usually meant memorisation of set content for tests. As a result lessons were sometimes boring, irrelevant to students' lives, and with little scope for active student engagement. A new emphasis on 'creative learning' in curricula and teacher training had, at the time of the study, yet to filter into the classroom. Relationships between teachers and students varied from the supportive to the abusive, with beating and humiliating punishment commonplace in all types of school, despite a recent legal ban on the former. Students were subject to the risk of violence both outside and inside the school, no matter whether they came from a slum or a middle class household. Among parents in both types of area there was little sense of being able to discuss a child's education with teachers, or to hold schools or teachers to account.

There were at least three types of process at work that stopped these uniform aspects of education from translating into uniform outcomes. First, although teachers were sometimes hard-working in preparing their students for public examinations, ultimate responsibility to complete the syllabus and learn everything fell to the students. The support that students could rely on at home, and in particular their parents' ability to pay for private tuition and coaching, were centrally important to their learning and examination results.

Second, middle class families had the resources to change schools strategically, as well as paying for private tuition or coaching, and often used these options in response to academic or non-academic problems their children were facing. They could pay for transport if necessary to access schools over a wider area. For middle class students there was a sense of inevitability, that whatever the obstacles they would stay in school until at least completing their secondary school certificates. For students from slums this was far from certain. While school accountability was low in both contexts, at least middle class families had this ultimate option of changing school. Families living in slums certainly also strategized about their children's education, but over a much more limited range of options, determined by affordability and proximity.

Third, after both in-school and public examinations, students' performance was kept salient at all times through roll numbers, seating arrangements, and class captains. Students who initially struggled were enduringly labelled as failures and in some cases excluded or stigmatized by teachers or other students, reducing their scope for improvement. This is likely to have been particularly detrimental for first generation learners and those whose families were not able to support them with private tuition and other help outside school.

To put these results in context, it should first be emphasized that for the participants of this study, as in survey results from other studies (Cameron, 2011; World Bank, 2006), the type of school students attend varies strongly by household type. There was not very much overlap in the type of

school students were going to. Those from slums were enrolled over-age in government primary schools, or were in NGO schools, or in small, low-fee private schools. The middle class participants were in larger private or government secondary schools. Furthermore, this study only captures a portion of the educational disparity in Dhaka because it did not include students in elite English medium schools.²

To what extent do these processes apply more widely, reproducing inequalities in urban Bangladesh? Taking the results of this study in combination with earlier studies gives some indication. The shifting of responsibility for learning from schools onto the students themselves and their families appears to be a widespread phenomenon, judging by the common use of private tuition found in previous studies (Nath, 2008; Ahmed et al., 2005). Earlier survey research has shown how the educational options open to a household depend on the range of resources – money, influence and education – it has, and how households in slums possess these in very short measure (e.g. Cameron, forthcoming; World Bank, 2001; Baker, 2007). Ahmed et al. (2007) has described how first generation learners often lose interest in school, lag behind, and are labelled by teachers as incapable of learning.

While the findings of this study suggest that violence inside and outside the school is a problem for students from both kinds of background, past research has shown how the situation is probably worse for students from slums. The widespread use of physical punishment described here is in line with survey research in which 91% of children reported physical punishment in schools in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2009). But that survey finds it was *most* common among students from poorer households. Previous studies have also documented extreme levels of violence affecting children's lives outside school in some slums (Kabeer & Mahmud, 2009; Rashid & Hossain, 2005).

Similar types of experience can lead to different outcomes, depending on the family's expectations and the resources it can use to overcome problems. When faced with problems at school, slum students often had the choice of either enduring them or dropping out. There is evidence from earlier studies that difficulty in lessons and dislike of schools can precipitate drop out. SIDA Bangladesh (2010) finds that it was fairly common for children, especially older boys, to leave school because they didn't like it or were failing. Similarly Ahmed et al. (2007) find that punishment and beatings were sometimes given as reasons for leaving school. Where children decide to leave school or play truant, parents living in slums are in many cases unable either to monitor their attendance or to force them to go. Kabeer and Mahmud's (2009) respondents had particular difficulty controlling the behaviour of older sons, and one respondent did not realise his son had stopped attending until his admission was cancelled, because both parents were working all day. The heavy assessment orientation, boredom, physical punishment, and occasionally fraught relationships between teachers and students, could both worsen learning outcomes for students who stay in school and increase the risk that they will drop out before even taking their final examinations.

Turning to policy implications, it may be asked what the implications of this study are for debates around the use of low-fee private schools in developing countries. It is important, firstly, to

² Technically, Bangladesh has both 'English version' and 'English medium' secondary schools; the former use the standard curriculum but taught in English while the latter use a different curriculum. Not all such schools are of high quality or dominated by elite groups, and some schools claiming to be English medium in fact do most of their teaching in Bengali.

emphasise the extent of privatisation that has already taken place, by default, in Dhaka. The lack of government school places, and the fact that few NGO schools offer secondary grades, has left little choice for those in slum areas other than low-cost private schools. These schools were not of high quality in terms of teacher training or facilities, and were misleadingly advertised in the many wall-painted promotions that could be seen around low-income areas.

Perhaps more surprising is that middle class parents were paying substantial fees for schools (mostly also private) that were not always of a good quality. Whereas the schools serving students from slums were relatively small, the more prestigious ones serving middle class families often had huge class sizes. Parents seemed to be paying for a reputation, and for keeping their children in a safely middle class environment, more than for better quality of teaching or learning. But in any case, schools took little responsibility for students' results, which ultimately depended on parents' investment in private tuition. The results of this study highlight the huge disparities that can arise when most of the responsibility for learning is shifted onto families in this way, and when there is a ready supply of private educational services allowing wealthier families to distinguish themselves from poorer ones.

Such unequal outcomes result specifically from the combination of a strongly segmented education system and large initial inequalities in income and wealth. The education system can in this way reproduce and widen inequality across generations. However, this also means that policies that reduce income inequality could reduce segregation in the education system. Progressive taxation and social spending, and industrial policy that helps to raise the wages of workers in the garments industry, for instance, would allow more of the poorest households to access better schooling. The situation of marginalized urban groups such as people who live in slums needs to be better recognized in policy and poverty reduction planning.

School education was dominated by the public examinations at grade 5, 8 and 10 that govern access to the next stage of education and also qualifications needed for employment. Curricula were apparently moving towards more 'creative' approaches, although there is always a danger that any such shift will be merely superficial; schools might manage to maintain the same approach but have students learn different types of material. Arguably what is needed is a greater focus on the process of learning and understanding, rather than on memorising certain information that will be of limited use afterwards. Greater use of continuous assessment, changes to examination questions, and teacher training that focuses on genuine learning rather than purely passing examinations, are the relevant policies here. Labelling students according to their assessment outcomes, and particularly making students repeat a grade, stigmatises them, and it has been shown how students' self-perceptions and their ideas about others' perceptions can negatively affect their motivation and learning (Hoff & Pandey, 2004; Schunk, 1985). At the same time, schools and teachers need to acknowledge that examination success continues to be important for students' life outcomes, and take on joint responsibility for their students' learning, for instance by offering more support to struggling students.

The role of NGOs in providing education in slum areas is currently an unresolved policy question. NGOs appear to be struggling to know how best to serve the needs of poor urban students. The NGO schools used by participants in this study were often valued for their provision of genuinely free primary education, but took little responsibility for the longer term outcomes of their

students. One had shut down suddenly, leaving students to transfer to a lower grade at a government primary school, dropping two grades in the process and making it unlikely that they would progress far into secondary education. One was offering vocational training that was not really wanted, at least by the participants in this study. They could get several types of training directly from employers, and otherwise placed more value on school qualifications that could lead to higher status jobs.

The exception was one NGO that was offering grades up to 8 and supporting those who wanted to continue beyond grade 8. This NGO struck a balance between child-centred learning and examination performance. NGOs with constrained resources face a difficult trade off between helping more learners, and helping fewer learners to reach a higher level. But it is legitimate to question the value of offering only primary education in a context such as Dhaka, where secondary level qualifications are often seen as the bare minimum for finding a good job.

A disturbing finding from this study was the near-universality of beating and other humiliating punishments in schools, including in schools belonging to NGOs that emphasise child rights and child protection. The recent law against beating students needs to be enforced. But teachers also need to be given ways to manage students without using beating or other humiliating punishments that cause resentment. Punishments that are “cruel and degrading,” even if not physically painful, are still incompatible with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2009).

Research from other countries has suggested that demanding student submission to teacher authority can work against learning outcomes by worsening students’ attitudes towards the learning process (Plax et al., 1986), and that aggressive teacher behaviours such as group punishment, humiliation and yelling in anger, appear to be counter-productive, leading to higher levels of student misbehaviour (Lewis et al., 2008). The effects of different classroom behaviours are, however, likely to be culturally specific, and evidence on this is needed in the Bangladesh context. The results from the present study suggest, at least, that these techniques often sparked resentment among students and did not always succeed in controlling the classroom.

A recently introduced policy on private tuition (Daily Star, 2012) has banned teachers from giving tuition to students of their own institutions; allows them to give extra classes, but for a fee far below that paid by many of the middle class students; and continues to allow them to provide home tuition to students of other institutions. This may be difficult to enforce in practice, given that private tuition is arranged informally. If enforced, it may help to remove the ethically dubious practice where teachers encourage or coerce their own students into paying them for private tuition. It would not necessarily reduce the overall incidence of private tuition, as students could still go to independent tutors or to teachers employed at other schools.

This paper has aimed to demonstrate the importance of taking students’ perspectives into account and looking beyond the question of whether students are going to school or not, to examine the processes within schools that can disadvantage students from poor backgrounds. It raises a number of questions for future research. Firstly, do the findings also apply in smaller cities and towns in Bangladesh, or in other countries? The Dhaka context is quite specific in terms of the level of inequality and urban poverty and the number and types of schools. Secondly, is it possible to identify systematically the relationship between these processes of exclusion or discrimination in the classroom and outcomes in terms of learning or test performance? As noted above, classroom

management studies have largely been conducted in developed countries and there is little research on what methods of classroom management would be appropriate for the Bangladeshi context. This depends partly on clear social agreement about what the point of schooling is – for instance, is the main aim to learn useful knowledge and skills, or rather to learn disciplined and obedient behaviour?

Returning to the overarching question, is education likely to provide a route out of poverty for poor urban households? It is clear from this and previous studies that there is high demand for education among families living in slums. Parents and children have high aspirations and despite being severely constrained in their resources, are willing to devote a large share to education. Whether this results in a reduction in poverty in the next generation depends on continued growth in Dhaka's industry keeping pace with the growth of the city's population. In any case the poverty-reducing effect is likely to be less than might be the case if students were provided with free education of a reasonable quality, reducing the dependence on parents' contributions. In line with a global trend of "more relatively-poor people in a less absolutely-poor world" (Chen & Ravallion, 2012), high demand for education may contribute to lowering absolute poverty, but given the large and growing potential for differentiation in an education system that leans heavily on private provision and is strongly segmented by wealth and location, there is little sign that it would do anything to reduce inequality.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

For each child plan 3 meetings: an initial meeting to ask consent and arrange an interview; a second main interview, preferably in pairs with another child; and a follow-up interview if time permits. In addition, at least some of the same children will participate in group discussions.

1. Gathering background information

Ask the child or his or her caregiver for some basic information including:

- age and gender
- age, gender and relation of the other members of their household
- what are the occupations of working members of their household
- the education status of other members of the household
- what school they go to (kind, name, location)
- what grade they are in
- their school history (how old when started, whether repeated grades, whether moved school, transition to secondary, whether they have private tuition).

2. Open questioning

Start the interviews with very open questioning, allowing children themselves to set the direction of interview. The task here will be to pick up on things they say that are relevant to the research questions, rather than guiding the interview so that it focuses only on those things.

For instance, 'Tell me about your life in school.' 'Tell me about the other children and teachers in your school.'

The data collection will need to pick up on anything the child says that is relevant to relationships among teachers and pupils in the school, and particularly issues of:

- Power
- Violence in school
- Fairness in school
- Social status and awareness of difference
- Identity
- Instrumental value of schooling.

It may be possible to gather all of the information needed just through these types of conversation. If the interview seems to be drifting and not getting to the types of information that are of interest, it may be useful to use the more specific line of questioning described below.

3. Describe your day

Ask the child to describe his or her day, from when he or she wakes up until when he or she goes to bed. At each point probe the parts that have to do with school, including the journey to school, time in lessons, breaks, the journey home, any private tuition or after-school classes. In particular, probe aspects of the relationships with pupils and teachers, including the issues for focus listed above.

The following questions can guide the discussion:

- Please tell me about your day at school, from the beginning, today.
- What time did you arrive? How long does it take you to get there? Do you have breakfast before going? Do you go with friends, or alone?
- Can you tell me about one of your friends in school? Choose one. What is his/her name? What is he/she like?
- So what is the first thing at school? Do you enjoy it? What is the teacher like? How do you sit in class? What did you do during that class today? Did you ask any questions? Did the teacher ask you any questions? (Repeat for subsequent activities.)
- How much homework do you have? How long does it take you? Do you have a private tutor? What happens if you don't finish your homework?
- Do you like school overall? Is it fun? Is it sometimes boring? What do you like best? Are your teachers nice?

APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANTS

Participants from the first slum area are labelled as group A, from the second slum area as group B, and those who were not from slums as group C.

	Pseudonym	Sex	Group	Age	Grade	Current school type
1		female	C	11	5	private primary
2	Maksuda	female	A	12	5	private primary
3	Roksana	female	A	12	6	NGO
4	Sumon	male	A	12	3	government primary
5	Mamun	male	C	12	6	private high school
6	Sabiha	female	A	12	3	government primary
7		male	C	14	8	private high school
8	Mahruf	male	C	14	9	military private school
9	Afsana	female	A	12	3	government primary
10		male	C	12	6	private secondary
11	Fahima	female	A	13	6	private school & college
12	Zahirul	male	C	13	6	government primary & high school
13	Ripon	male	C	11	4	private
14	Sharif	male	A	13	7	registered non-government
15	Sajid	male	A	13	7	private high school
16	Biplob	male	A	13	7	NGO
17	Rahib	male	C	16	9	private
18	Silma	female	C	16	10	private
19	Amina	female	C	13	8	private
20	Nadia	female	C	14	9	private

21	Zafreen	female	C	14	9	private
22	Hassan	male	B	12	5	private
23	Apu	male	B	13	6	private
24	Rashid	male	B	13	6	private
25	Sohana	female	B	13	3	private
26	Mona	female	B	14	6	private
27	Shabanna	female	B	13	6	private
28	Taslima	female	B	13	6	private
29	Arshadul	male	B	15	9	private
30	Sadia	female	B	15	10	private
31	Kabir	male	B	15	10	private
32	Madeena	female	C	14	9	private
33	Ratna	female	C	13	8	private
34	Shipon	male	C	11	5	private school & college
35	Khadiza	female	C	11	6	private
36	Mahmuda	female	C	13	7	government girls' high school

APPENDIX 3: CATEGORIES FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Contextual themes

A. context

- a. **slum**
- b. **work** (adult work)
- c. **child work**
- d. **child's time** (different demands on child's time, including work, homework, other activities)
- e. **global** (child describes international connections or participation in global culture or markets)
- f. **media** (use of books, TV, internet, computer games)
- g. **poverty**
- h. **village** (rural-urban migration, connections or references to a rural area from which a child's family migrated)
- i. **political** (political and social context, including political links, gangs, army, strikes, and gender divisions)

B. SC (school choice)

- a. **fees**
- b. **HTR** (the UNICEF-supported Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children programme)

Barriers within the school

1. school environment
 - a. **journey**
 - b. **safety**
 - c. **books**
 - d. **facilities** (building, labs, computers, materials, playground, sports facilities)
 - e. **culture** (school culture including uniforms, emphasis on sport)

2. time in learning
 - a. **teacher time** (whether teacher is absent, whether teacher is present but not teaching)
 - b. **teacher attention** (teacher pays attention differently to different students)
 - c. **school time** (school hours and shifts)
 - d. **absence** (student absence, skipping classes)
3. **TMS** (teaching methods/style)
 - a. **understand** (teaching focuses on making students understand concepts; teacher is responsive to student difficulties or unresponsive; the pace of learning is suitable for the learners or not)
 - b. **mem** (focus on making students memorise answers)
 - c. **AOTM** (assessment-oriented teaching methods)
 - d. **active** (whether students are engaged in an active, participatory or passive way; whether there is conversation in English classes)
 - e. **ind/group work** (work is set for individuals, pairs or groups)
4. affect (student's feelings about interactions in the classroom)
 - a. **shame** (shame, humiliation, feeling insulted)
 - b. **fear**
 - c. **fun**
 - d. **stress** (student feels stressed or under pressure)
 - e. **struggle** (student sees school as difficult)
5. **CM** (classroom management) and discipline
 - a. **control** (types of control teacher or school exert over students)
 - b. **class monitors** (class captains, monitors or prefects)
 - c. **beat** (teachers beat, or not)
 - d. **phys** (teachers give physical punishment, or not)
 - e. **reward** (teachers use rewards to manage the classroom)
 - f. **movement** (students are able or unable to move around freely)
 - g. **tc** (use of suspension, expulsion or transfer certificate)
 - h. **scold** (teacher scolds students)
 - i. **class size**
 - j. **division** (number of sections, how students are divided up into sections or streams)
6. SSR (student-student interactions)
 - a. **BGS** (separation between boys and girls; whether they sit in the same class or separately; whether they are allowed to talk to each other; whether they like to talk to students of the opposite sex)
 - b. **exclusion** (not wanting to talk to certain students, some students excluded from groups or from full participation, stigma attached to being a certain type of person)
 - c. **friends** (friendship and group membership in the school)
 - d. **co** (cooperation and competition between students in the school)
 - e. **conflict** (violence, bullying, quarrelling, arguing between students in the school)
 - f. **blame** (student talks about blame, guilt or innocence assigned to another student)
 - g. **mix** (where, and what type of backgrounds, teachers come from)
7. **TSR** (teacher-student interactions, in terms of the teacher's behaviour)
 - a. **consult** (teacher consults the students or allows some form of participation in voting in decision-making)
 - b. **friendly** (teacher is friendly, caring, or funny)
 - c. **strict** (teacher or school is strict)
 - d. **angry** (teacher is an angry person or behaves angrily sometimes)
 - e. **questions** (you can ask the teacher questions if you don't understand something; the teacher tries to answer questions)
 - f. **patient** (teacher is patient)
 - g. **account** (attempts or possibility of student or his/her parents or the headmaster holding the teacher to account for behaviour or performance)
 - h. **fair** (teacher is seen as impartial in giving attention to different students and marking)
8. curriculum
 - a. **relevance** (relevant to student's life, interests and future work)
 - b. **home economics**

- c. **agriculture** (agricultural science subject)
 - d. **coverage** (curriculum is adequately covered in class)
 - e. **training** (work training offered or provided)
9. as (assessment)
- a. **high stakes** (assessment that is important for the student; preparation for it; effects of success or failure; feelings with regard to it)
 - b. **formative** (ongoing formative assessment as a part of the learning process, such as checking homework and giving feedback)
 - c. **rank** (student rank or roll number in class based on examination results)
 - d. **transition** (assessment affecting entry into school, movement between schools or grades, and expulsion or drop-out from school)
 - e. **repeat** (repetition or failure of a grade)
10. student motivation and behaviour
- a. **engagement** (student is engaged or disengaged from the school)
 - b. **enjoy** (student enjoys or dislikes learning)
 - c. **interest** (student finds lessons interesting or boring)
 - d. **withdrawal** (student does not pay attention to lessons)
 - e. **resistance** (student rebels against the teacher or school, or resists control, including through hidden forms of resistance)
 - f. **negotiation** (students negotiate with teacher to try to influence what happens in class, or cannot do this)
 - g. **naughty** (student misbehaves or is described as naughty (dusto, faizlami, soytani) – similar to resistance)
 - h. **success** (student achieves academic success, or is seen as struggling or failing)
11. homework, tuition and coaching
- a. **homework**
 - b. **private** (private tuition or private coaching)
 - c. **guidebook** (student uses or is asked to use a study guidebook)

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