

INTEGRATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION WITH NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM: BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

The education system of Bangladesh has progressed a long way in last few decades. Lot of initiatives were taken by Bangladesh government to bring positive changes and to ensure better educational outcomes in Bangladesh. In recent years, the government has also given due consideration to develop the Special Education (SE) system of Bangladesh. Special education is a separate system of education for the special need children with disabilities. It is usually organized according to their impairment categories. In Bangladesh, the rights of special children are reserved by the constitution and through different policies. But there is no set organizational guideline concerning special education grading, evaluation and certification system corresponding to the regular mainstream education. Therefore, absence of a corresponding integrated education system for both special and mainstream national education has made the education status of special children more uneasy. Besides, importance of need for an appropriate model for early childhood care and education for both mainstream and special children is also felt. Hence, this research is an endeavor to evaluate the special education to propose a corresponding integrated education structure for both special and mainstream national education. Besides, an appropriate model has also been proposed on early childhood care and education for both mainstream and special children together. The main objective of the research is to know the nature of special education system for differently able persons in Bangladesh. The specific objectives of the present research are: To propose a corresponding integrated

education system for both special and mainstream national education; and To recommend an appropriate procedure for early childhood care and education system for both mainstream and special children.

Integrated Education Scenario in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is committed to give each child a broad and deep foundation for a lifelong journey of learning, providing additional support for those who need it. To bring out the best in every child, Bangladesh education system emphasizes an education for all concepts. There are estimated 16 million people with disabilities in Bangladesh, which is 10% of the country's population (Disability in Bangladesh, 2016; World Bank, 2016). In spite of large number of disable people, there is no integrated education system or structure in Bangladesh. Every special educational institution in Bangladesh has been following its own special education structure. For example, Proyash Institute of Special Education has established five special programmes (called as schools) to provide educational opportunities and facilities to ensure the most appropriate teaching for the specific types, age and ability of the children. The age of the students in the schools are between 6 to 14 years (Khan, 2016).

The special schools are School of Autism, School of Intellectually Challenged, School of Physically Challenged, School of Hearing Impairment and School of Visual Impairments. The main aim of all the schools is to provide opportunities to explore the potential of students and to support them in their education. Proyash focuses on the strengths of students, encourages them to learn, play and interact with their peers irrespective of their disability. The main objectives of the Special Schools are to provide education in Activities of Daily Living (ADL) to bring sustainable improvement in five major parameters of development. Those are motor functioning, socialization, cognitive, language, communication and self-help skill. The educable children are given education following the National Curriculum and Text Book Board (NCTB). The trainable children are also given vocational training.

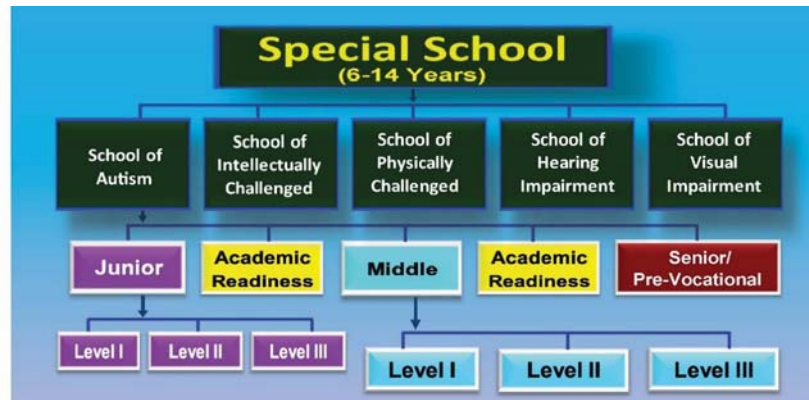
Each special school comprises of nine classes and each class has different curriculum. The nine classes are grouped in three levels: Junior, Middle and Senior level. Junior level follows the curriculum of pre-primary and primary class up to class IV and middle school follows the curriculum of class V to class VII. The senior level or prevocational class is equivalent to class VIII (Khan, 2016). The curriculum of all special schools is prepared following the guideline of NCTB. The Subject of different levels are Academic Education Programme (Language education, social studies, Mathematics, religious education, moral education, science and general education), training in Self Help Skills (daily living activities, health and hygiene, behavioral activities), sports, swimming, co-curricular activities (music, dance, art etc), vocational training etc (Khan, 2016).

An academic year is divided into three semesters and a semester takes about four months (Figure 1). The classes are Junior Class Level I (age between 6 to 7 years), Junior Class Level II (age between 7 to 8 years), Junior Class Level III (age between 8 to 9 years), Junior Academic Readiness (age either between 9 to 10 or 12 to 13), Middle Class Level I (age between 10 to 11 years), Middle Class Level II (age between 11 to 12 years), Middle Class Level III (age between 12 to 13 years) and Senior/Pre-vocational (age between 13 to 14 years). At the age of six, a student is placed at Junior Level-I. Depending on the child's progress in first semester, the successful student is promoted to Junior Level II. In the same way a student may move to Level- III (Khan, 2016).

Based on their performance, a few students may complete all three levels (junior or middle) within a year. Students who are not able to complete one level within one semester are allowed to attend maximum two more semesters to complete a level. Based on the progress of the child in between Junior and Middle class or in between Middle and Senior Class, he/she will be promoted to Academic Readiness Class for a duration of 01 year (age either between 9 to 10 or 12 to 13 years). The child will be prepared for academic class for mainstream education. The special student who could not be mainstreamed will be promoted to Senior Class (for a duration of

01 year) which is otherwise pre-vocational for onward promotion to the Vocational School at the age of 14 years.

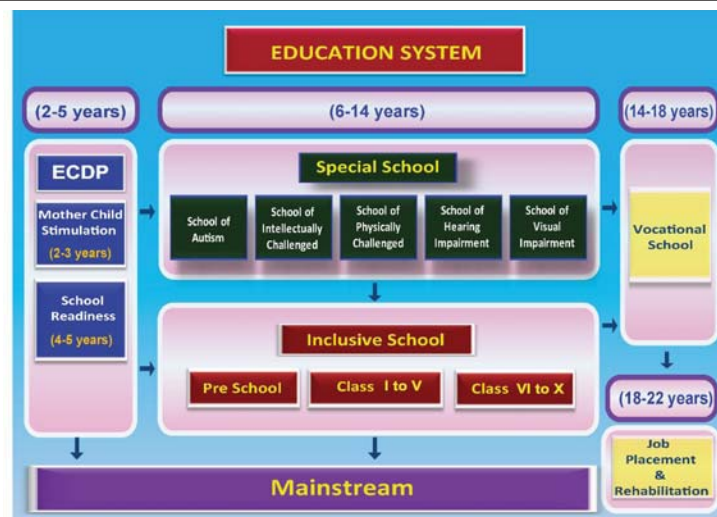
Figure 1: Class System/Structure of Special Education Institution



Source: Khan, 2016

Education system of Special Education Institute is illustrated the diagram below:

Figure 2: Education System of Special Education Institution



Source: Khan, 2016

The special education starts from ECDP at the age of 2-3 years. The students continue to reach the main objective of either mainstream and they are rehabilitated through job placement by the time they reach to 18-22 years (Khan, 2016).

Special Education

Special education (SE) refers to schooling in separate locations, such as special schools, units, or classes, including the structures used in any school that identify students as “special” (such as withdrawal from the classroom for specialist teaching or therapy or high levels of one-to-one adult support). This interpretation reflects the current literature, which associates “special education” with particular ways of thinking about students with disabilities and with educational structures that differentiate students from their peer groups (Deppeler et al, 2010; Evans, J. and Lunt, I., 2002; Marcon, 2002).

Inclusive Education or Integrated Education (IE)

Inclusive education (IE) or integrated education (IE) is based on the programme of ‘education for all’. “It is about building more just society and ensuring right to education of all pupils irrespective of their specific physiognomies or complications” (Ahuja A. and Ibrahim M, 2006; Epstein, 2007). The term individual physiognomies cover a broader area- gender, race, religion, sexual preferences, culture, language, learning style and disability. In an inclusive school a teacher has to take responsibility of a diverse group of students and offer them educational facility addressing their level of intelligence and potential capability. Ahuja & Ibrahim (2006) says that, “inclusion is not only about philosophy but more importantly about the practical changes that must bring about in order to help the children with special needs and all other children in our school system to excel and unfold their potential”. According to UNESCO, 2009, “An IE can only be created if mainstream schools turn to be more inclusive - in other words, if they become better at educating all children in their

communities” (p.8). So, inclusive education is not a concern of a special school rather it is a shift mindset, policy and programmes for all mainstream schools to ensure the basic human right of education for all. Thus, IE can ensure a ‘base for a more just and equal society (UNESCO, 2009).

Method

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied to collect and analyze data. Primary and secondary data were collected from the document analysis, interview and questionnaire. Interviews were taken from the parents, teachers and from a few expert academicians.

Sampling of the Study

Purposive sampling technique was used to select suitable respondents from different educational institutions in Dhaka, because one of the main objectives of this research was to explore the strengths and weakness of the proposed integrated education structure and integrated early childhood model. The objective of purposive sampling is to get feedback from the key respondents of the related field. It helped to understand the strength and weakness of proposed model. As the purpose of the study is to identify the special and integrated education system for differently able persons of Bangladesh, three types of participants- university teachers, special teachers (shadow teachers) and therapists of inclusive schools were chosen to conduct the survey. All the Participants are from different special and mainstream education institutions in Dhaka. The university teachers teach and focus the mainstream learners and have supportive teachers for handling the special learner. The special teachers are those who teach the special children. Most of the participants are quite experienced in their teaching career. Although, other participants have started their journey with inclusive education very recently, they have quite effective understanding of the system. The different age groups of the participants are shown below.

Table 1: Age distribution of survey participants

Age Group	Participants (%)
20-25	8 %
25-30	10 %
30-35	16 %
35-40	14 %
40-45	15 %
45-50	12 %
50-55	11 %
55-60	9 %
Above 60	5 %
Total (%)	100%

Most of the participants have started their journey as a special and inclusive teacher without any training. They have explored the system and learnt from their own experience. But they have attended trainings in the later stages of their teaching career.

Although, special and inclusive teaching in Bangladesh has come to light in recent years but the experience level of the teachers surveyed states that special and inclusive teaching in Bangladeshi context is not a recent trend. The following table shows the experience level of the participants of the study.

Table 2: Teaching and therapy experience of survey participants

Experience Level	Participants
1-5 years	25 %
5-10 years	60 %
Above 10 years	15%

Sample Size Estimation

Questionnaire survey was conducted among 10 administrators and academicians, 50 special teachers, 50 mainstream teachers and 50 guardians.

In case of interview, 5 experts of related fields (university professors of special education) were interviewed. The questionnaire was prepared for understanding strengths and limitations of the proposed integrated and early childhood education model in Bangladesh as well as abroad.

Instruments

To administer the survey, the researcher has used document analysis, a questionnaire survey and an interview session with few participants. The questionnaire was arranged with regard to distinguish their view on proposed integrated education model of Bangladesh to view and discover the effectiveness of proposed model. Besides, the interview session was done to get some detailed idea on the research area that was not mentioned in the questionnaire.

Data Collection Procedure

Information were collected from document analysis and from teachers and experts. Information from secondary sources such as text books, journals, printed materials, programme reports of different agencies and internet publications were the major source of information. In addition, the government policies, legislation and guidelines on the related area published as gadgets and reports were also reviewed. Related research reports or articles have been reviewed as the secondary sources of data. International trend of integrated education was also reviewed with the help of available books, journals, online articles and write-ups. The survey participants were briefed about the questionnaire in detail. The researcher was present there while the participants were filling up the questionnaire. As mentioned above, some learners (randomly chosen) were also surveyed through an informal interview session.

Result and Discussion

In the findings part, the document and questionnaire have been analyzed in details with the obtained responses. The themes that evolve from the document analysis and questions have also been explained in this chapter.

Comparative Analysis of Bangladesh Education System with Austria, Japan, Ireland, Switzerland, Macedonia and Latvian Education System

At Austria, Japan, Ireland, Switzerland, Macedonia and Latvia, the school starting age is between 5 to 6 years. These countries have been following integrated education system for long time, where the most striking feature of their education system is the recognition of education as a right and not a business. They have many private special education centers, however, amazingly they are also low cost or totally free. They also operate and provide all facilities like public schools by government mandate. Early recognition of disabilities and intervention is required to provide proper care, which is ensured in all the countries discussed in this paper. The governments as well as educators have realized the importance of integrated education system in those countries i.e. Austria evolved their integrated system as a result of mass awareness and systematic experiment conducted with the participation of all stakeholders. The rights of all children are preserved not only by the constitution, but also by the people themselves, which they believe to keep as a core value. Their integrated education system is well developed and special needs children attend early childhood programme and primary education in same schools and their disabilities are taken into account (Austria and Ireland). The children begin their education in normal school together and then their education system is gradually separated for regular and special students respectively.

It is noticeable that, their governments and special educators have realized the importance of small class size. The teacher-student ratio and the class size are limited. Furthermore, they provide outstanding facilities for children with special education needs. Another important factor of their success is the proper flow of information to all, which is controlled and monitored centrally. This centralized system provides required information regarding available institutions, services etc. to the parents, educators, and caregivers, by which they can decide and choose the best for them and their children.

The curricula are also unique and most innovative. The philosophy is to allow mainstream and special children to enjoy learning and discover their potentials together. They have only one state curriculum or in other words their primary education follows a unified or integrated/inclusive curriculum. However, this curriculum is flexible and provides teachers independence in classrooms.

The focuses of education of those countries are unique and the special students spend more time in the normal classroom. Students are not burdened with work – little or no homework is provided. Physical exercise and outdoor activities are a big part in their curriculum. There is also a great emphasis on reading for pleasure and watching TV which allows learning outside the class and helps to develop independent thinking. They also emphasize on learning first language. Furthermore, there are courses in art, music, cooking, carpentry, metalwork and textiles carpentry etc; that give students a well-rounded education and encourage them to opt for vocational schooling. In fact, about half of the students choose to go to vocational school after completing their high school.

The philosophy of grading and evaluation is also based upon what is best for students. Just like homework, they have very few examinations. The aim is not to make a comparative evaluation of students but to make sure every student gets the lessons. Automatically, students are almost given promotion which is prudent. Holding a student back is one of the worst things a school can do. Weak students are given extra support so they can overcome their weaknesses while not being held back a year. The grades of students are kept unpublished but used to determine the needs of individual students. For a failing student, decisions to help the student to be taken together with parents and teachers. At the end of the primary experience there is a mandatory standardized test – the only major examinations.

Due to the close care of teachers and lack of demoralizing strategies every student performs well. The best student, special student and the worst student are all good students and the difference between the best and the worst is the lowest in the world.

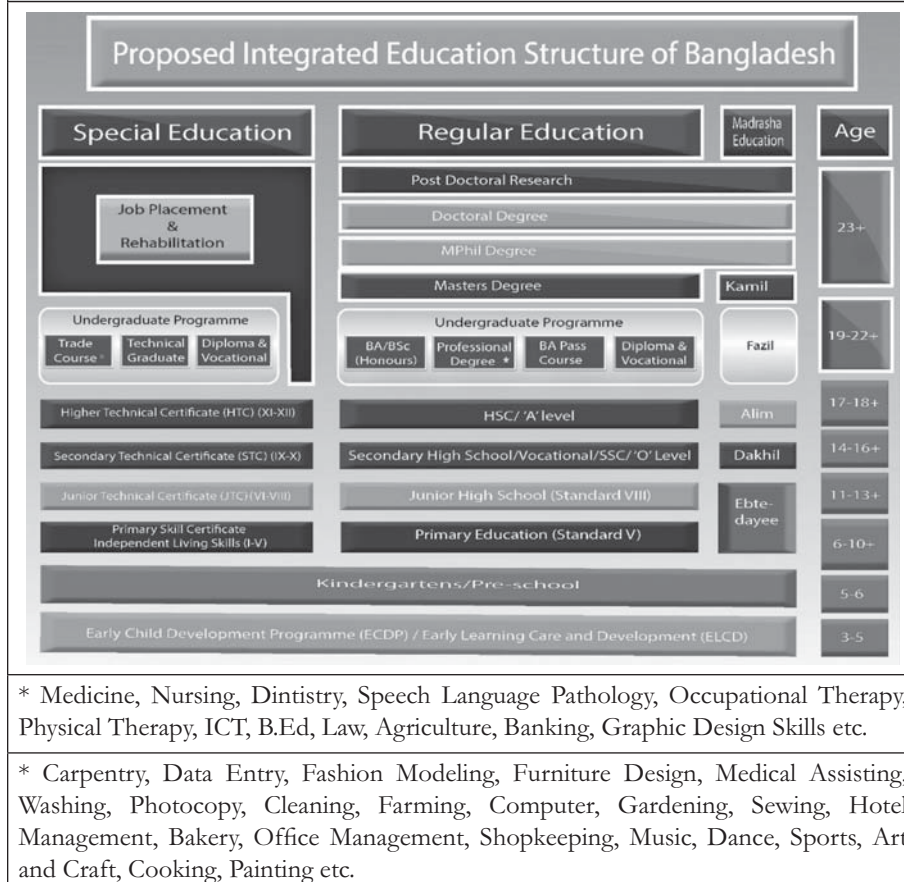
This is not a testament to the amount of money a developed country can spend on special education but the philosophy and strategy. Special teachers of those countries are paid more than Bangladesh as well. The number of hours' students spend in schools and teachers are required to teach only four hours daily. In those countries, the teachers are also given 2 days a week for personal professional development.

Important reason for their success is of high quality teachers. The minimum requirement of a primary school teacher is Master's degree and then teachers are chosen from only the top 10%. The salary of the teachers of those countries are also higher than our country. The salary is quite substantial and is a reason for attracting the best qualified teachers. They are provided with best possible academic and on job training for handling special children. There is much to be learned from their success.

Proposed Integrated Education Structure for Bangladesh

Taking lessons from Austria, Japan, Ireland, Switzerland, Latvia and few other countries education system, an integrated education structure for Bangladesh has been proposed as stated below:

Figure 3: Proposed Integrated Education System Model for Bangladesh



In this model, four types of education system namely: regular education including English medium, madrasa education, vocational and special education is considered. According to the model, special education will have equivalent degree to normal education. As per proposed model, education system in Bangladesh has been divided into several categories: special education, regular education including English medium and madrasa education.

As illustrated in the figure, early childhood development programme (3-5) and pre-primary education/kindergarten (5-6) are equally important and obligatory for all children. In the second stage, primary skill certificate/

primary education/standard V/Ebtedayee (6-10+) education will be valued with parallel class/grade. Thereafter, the further upper grade for all category students will be Junior Technical Certificate (JTC)/Junior High School/Standard VIII/Dakhil (11-13+). Next upper grade for all category students will be Secondary Technical Certificate (STC)/Secondary High School/O level/Dakhil level (14-16+).

Next higher level for all category students will be Higher Technical Certificate (HTC)/HSC/A level/Alim (17-18+). Thereafter, undergraduate programme for special needs students will be trade course, diploma & vocational graduate and technical graduate which will be considered as equivalent to regular undergraduate programme consisting of BA/ BSc (Honours), professional degree, BA (Pass), Diploma & vocational and Fazil (19-22+). Finally, Master's Degree, MPhil degree, Doctoral degree and post-doctoral degree and research will be applicable for regular students only (23+).

As per proposed model of normal, vocational, madrasa and special needs education examinations system should be different while certificate value of it will be considered equal for job placement or any other needs. In special needs education, each child will be assessed by the respective class teacher based on his/her performance.

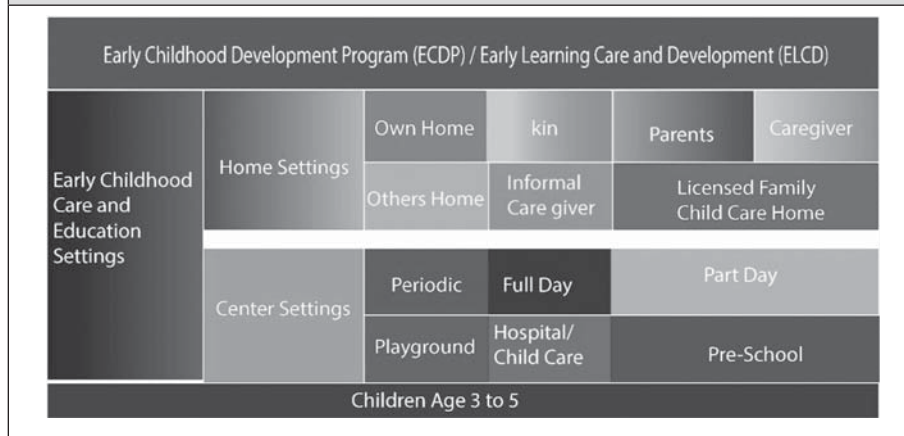
Proposed ECDP Model for Bangladesh

At the moment, there is no recognized ECDP programme in Bangladesh. In international arena, ECDP is considered as the base of general education for all category of students. Proposed ECDP model will be applicable for all category students of Bangladesh. The most important feature of the model is the values of educational thinking. Proposed model shows more flexible, integrated and collaborated approach.

This will promote an education based on global and total approach to children's overall development. This model has two parts: early childhood care and education settings and early childhood development activities.

ECDP Model 1: Early Childhood Care and Education Settings

Figure 4: Early childhood care and education settings



As per proposed model, the age of early childhood programme range is between 3 to 5 years. The children will be allowed to participate in two settings for ECD programme: home settings and center settings. Home settings are categories to own home (kin, parents, care giver) and others home (informal caregiver and licensed family child care home). Again, center settings are categories into three parts: periodic (playground), full day (hospital and child care) and part day (pre-school).

ECDP Model 2: Early Child Development Activities

Figure 5: A dynamic model of early childhood development programme and activities

Early Childhood Development Activities	Developmental Domains	Sub-Domains (Area of Activities)					
	Physical & Muscle Development	Fine Motor Activities	Gross Motor Activities	Balance Control	Eye Hand Coordination	Vision	
	Implementation Method	Play	Practice	Play	Practice	Practice	
	Personal & Social Skills Development	Personal Narrative	Participation in Games	Sharing and Helping friends	Learn social and Religious values	Awareness of Hygiene and Cleaning	Participation in Cultural programme
	Implementation Method	Question Answer	Group play	Group Play, Role Play	Answering questions, Individual and group work	Poster Practices	Planning and Decision making
	Intellectual Development	Memory and Attention Activities	Art and Craft	Problem Solving	Logical Thinking	Touch, Smell and Taste	Understand and Describe
	Implementation Method	Question Answer & Memory Game	Individual and Group Play	Group work	Allow questioning in specific topic	Display, Feel and Justify	Question answer Practice & Group Play
	Language and Communicative Development	Listening and understanding	Speaking	Reading	Writing		
	Implementation Method	Narrative question answer and Practice	Question answer, practice, Individual and Group play	Teach letter sounds, Book	Fun tools, Pencil Extension Toppers, Starting Blocks Plus; etc.		
	Emotional Development	Express Happiness	Empathy to others	Participate in Competition	Fear Shyness and Trust	Praise to others	
	Implementation Method	Play willingly, Question answer	Role play and Question answer	Group Activity and Question answer	Role play and Question answer	False belief test	
	Ethics and Values	Think positive about own and others	Responsibility and Values	Conserve from harming others	Improve Values & conduct through good works	Application of ethical values to own life	
	Implementation Method	Story telling	Individual and Group work	Story telling	Different play and relevant conversation	Family and center Activities	

Model 2 as the core model of ECDP illustrated its different activities. The proposed activities of ECDP model have got its two domains: developmental domain and sub-domain. Developmental domain includes

specific activities and its implementation strategy like muscle development, personal and social skill development, intellectual development, language development, emotional development, ethics and values etc. Sub-domains consist of some skills which include different activities, such as: play, practice, question answer, group play, group work, role play etc; methods are necessary. These are the skills with which a child can acquire the ideal values he/she need to achieve in life. These skills also help to keep the developmental domains functional. Parents and siblings are most important factors influencing children's development. Therefore, it is important to include them in the learning process.

Questionnaire Analysis

The questions lead to survey about two important themes and models. Those are Corresponding Integrated Education Structure and Integrated Early Childhood Development Programme for Bangladesh.

Question 1

Do you feel the necessity of integrated corresponding education structure for Bangladesh?

In response to this question total 84% participants agreed with the model integration of education structure and only 21% did not agree with the proposed model.

Question 2

Do you feel the necessity of certificate for special education system as good as regular mainstream education system?

Almost all the participants (90%) agreed on the point that the certification system for special education to be introduced as good as regular mainstream education system while only 9% did not agree with the proposal.

Question 3

Do you agree with the proposed corresponding in targeted education structure for Bangladesh?

In reply to the question of the proposed corresponding integrated education structure of Bangladesh, 90% participants agreed on the model structure. In contrary, only 6% opined against it and 3% recommended for medication.

The positive response on the necessity of the proposed model indicate the serious need of such an integrated structure for corresponding special as well as the mainstream education system.

Question 4

If the answer of question number 3 needs modification, please specify the specific modification?

Table 3: Feedback of Question 4		
Answer type	No. of Participants	Percentage (%)
Need to clarify rehabilitation system	35	21.22 %
Need to define more specific about equivalence system	65	78.78%

Most of the participants believe that proposed model of corresponding integration of education system for Bangladesh is a good innovation. However, few also suggested for some modification and clarification of the model, especially rehabilitation system, equivalent system of special education and mainstream education. In response to their suggestions few modifications have been incorporated. However, before further implementation a detail analysis may also be carried out.

Question 5

In order to implement the proposed model, do you feel the necessity of a separate education board? Or same board should be given the responsibility?

Most of the Participants (72%) supported for a separate education board for special education system. However, few participants (27%) believe that existing education board can take the responsibility with some resource's augmentation.

Maximum percentage of response is in favor of individual education board.

Question 6

Do you feel the need of early childhood education programme for Bangladesh education system?

Most of the Participants (96%) agreed on this point that early childhood education programme for Bangladesh education system is very significant. On the contrary, only 3% participants think that, existing education system of Bangladesh can provide early childhood education facilities.

Question 7

All special and regular children should attain ECD programme together and screening should be done in the process of ECD programme?

In response to this question 84% participants agreed that special and regular children should attain ECD programme together and screening should be done in the process of ECD programme. On the other hand, only 15% participants opined against.

As most of the participants' responses are in favor of integrated and mainstream education, children should attain ECD programme together and screening should be done in the process of ECD programme.

Question 8

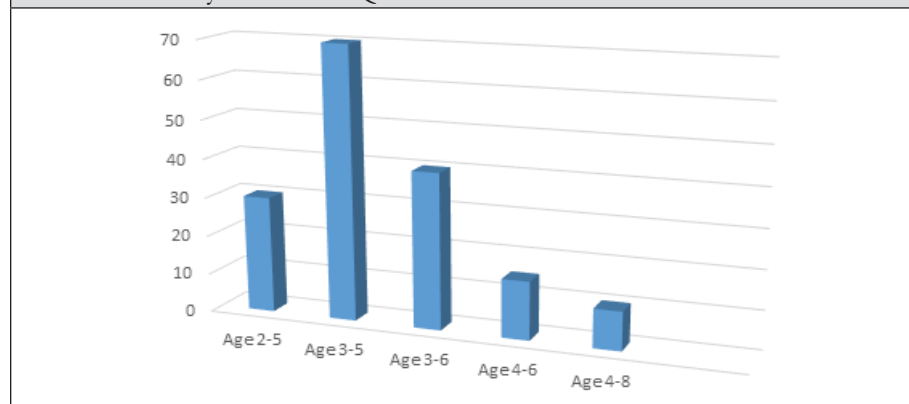
What should be the appropriate age range for early childhood education programme?

Table 4: Feedback of Question 8

Answer type	No. of Participants	Percentage (%)
2-5	30	66%
2-6	110	18%
2-8	15	9%
2-10	10	6%
No Comment	0	0

Maximum participants suggest appropriate age range of early childhood programme is 3-5, few participants opined about appropriate age range of early childhood programme is 3-6, few participants think that, appropriate age range for early childhood programme is 4-6, the rest of the participants (6%) think about appropriate age range of early childhood programme is 4-8. Participant's response to this question is given below in a Bar chart.

Chart 1: Survey Result on Question 8



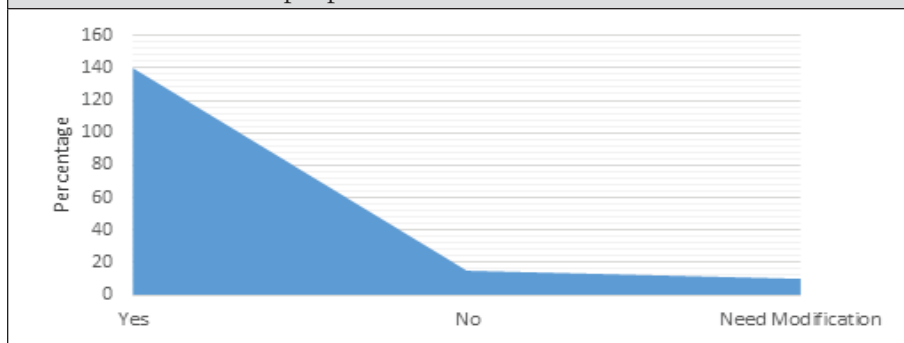
As maximum participants suggest, appropriate age range for early childhood programme should be between 2-5 years of age.

Question 9

Do you support the proposed ECD model or you suggest modification?

Most of the participants believe that proposed model of ECDP for Bangladesh is a good innovation. However, few also suggested for some modification and clarification of the model. As 84% said 'yes' to this question, it has been proved that proposed ECD model is well accepted. They only understand the literal meaning of words and phrases. However, only 9% responded 'no' to this question and only 6% responded 'need modification' to this question. Participant's response to this question is given below in an area chart.

Chart 2: Answer the proposed ECD model



Maximum percentage of responses are in favor of proposed ECD model of Bangladesh. Therefore, only minimum percentage of response neglected it and few respondents suggested to revise it. However, before further implementation a detail analysis may also be carried out.

Question 10

If answer needs modification, please specify the specific modification?

Most Participants believe that proposed model of integrated education system for Bangladesh is an innovative research work in the perspective

of Bangladesh. But they suggested us some areas of the model needs to modify, especially age range, parent's acceptance and related areas need to be more specified. Most of the Participants (72%) supported for a separate education board for special education system. However, a few participants (27%) believe that existing education board can take the responsibility with some resources augmentation.

Conclusion

From the literature review and through examination of existing educational arrangement of Bangladesh, a model of integrated education system or structure and an ECD programme for Bangladesh has been proposed. Following the proposed model, a thorough survey and interview was carried out to validate the applicability of both the model. The result of the survey and interview was analyzed in length and breadth, where most of the respondents agreed on the proposed model while a very few have not agreed. From the survey it seems that it's a very useful and timely proposed corresponding integrated education structure for Bangladesh. This will also create an opportunity for the government to review the model of Bangladeshi education system.

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