



BRAC's (ব্র্যাক) Adoption of Community-Based Primary Education for Socially Disadvantaged Children in Bangladesh

BRAC (ব্র্যাক): adesão ao programa de educação de base comunitária para crianças em situação de vulnerabilidade social em Bangladesh

La Adopción por la ONG de Desarrollo BRAC (ব্র্যাক) de la Enseñanza Primaria para los Niños/as Socialmente Desventajados Basada en la Comunidad

L'Adoption par l'ONG de développement BRAC (ব্র্যাক) de l'enseignement primaire communautaire pour les enfants socialement défavorisés au Bangladesh

Mohammad Abul Fateh
Queen's University (Canada)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6382-6940>
16maf6@queensu.ca

Abstract

This article provides a critical-historical analysis of BRAC's adoption of non-formal primary education (NFPE) while de-emphasizing 'conscientizing' functional education in Bangladesh during 1980s. The central question of this paper is why did BRAC's adopt NFPE in 1985 within the framework of its needs. In this study, I analyze BRAC's education program from 1973 to 1985, with particular attention to the international neoliberal context of 1980s, policy shift of the western aid industry, and relationship that BRAC and its founder had with local power structures and consecutive Bangladeshi regimes (Fateh, 2020). I examine BRAC's curriculum documents, project proposals, evaluation reports, and statements made by BRAC's founder Fazle Hasan Abed. My findings suggest that beside supporting the disadvantaged children, BRAC's adoption of NFPE is for the sake of its organizational growth associated to its submission to local power structure, and dominant neoliberal framework of the international aid industry.

Keywords: International Aid. BRAC's. Conscientizing. NFPE. Bangladesh.

Resumo

Este artigo fornece uma análise crítica e histórica sobre a adoção da BRAC por uma Educação Primária Não Formal (EPNF), desmistificando a educação funcional ‘conscientizadora’ em Bangladesh durante a década de 1980. A questão central deste artigo é o motivo de a BRAC ter adotado a EPNF, em 1985, nos parâmetros de suas necessidades. Neste estudo analisou-se o programa de educação da BRAC, de 1973 até 1985, prestando especial atenção ao contexto internacional neoliberal da década de 1980, a mudança política da indústria de ajuda humanitária ocidental e a relação da BRAC e de seu fundador com estruturas de poder locais e com regimes consecutivos de Bangladesh (Fateh, 2020). Os documentos do currículo da BRAC, os projetos de pesquisa, os relatórios avaliativos e as declarações feitas por seu fundador, Fazle Hasan Abed, foram analisados. Os resultados sugerem que, além de apoiar as crianças em situação de vulnerabilidade social, a adoção da BRAC pela EPNF se deu pelo bem do crescimento da organização, bem como à sua submissão à estrutura de poder local e ao panorama neoliberal dominante da indústria internacional de ajuda humanitária.

Palavras chaves: Ajuda internacional. BRAC. Conscientização. EPNF. Bangladesh.

Resumen

Este artículo provee un análisis histórico crítico de la adopción por parte de BRAC de la provisión de educación primaria non-formal (NFPE) en Bagladesh, mientras desenfanzaba la educación funcional «concientizadora» en los años de 1980. La pregunta central en este paper es por qué BRAC adoptó EPNF en 1985 dentro del marco de sus necesidades. En este estudio, analizo el programa de educación de BRAC entre 1973 and 1985, con particular atención al contexto internacional neoliberal de los años ochenta, los cambios políticos afectando la industria occidental de ayuda, y la relación que BRAC y su fundador tenían con las estructuras de poder local y los varios Bangladeshi regímenes que se sucedieron (Fateh 2020). Examinó los documentos curriculares de BRAC, las propuestas de proyectos, los informes de evaluación, y las declaraciones hechas por el fundador de BRAC Fazle Hasan Abed. Concluyo que además de apoyar a los niños/as, la adopción de NFPE aseguraba el crecimiento organizacional asociado a la sumisión a la estructura de poder local y al esquema neoliberal dominante en la industria de ayuda internacional.

Palabras claves: Ayuda Internacional. BRAC. Conscientización. Educación Primaria no Forma en Bangladesh.

Résumé

Cet article est une analyse critique-historique de l'adoption par le BRAC de l'enseignement primaire non formel (EPNF) qui minimise l'emphase sur la « conscientisation » de l'éducation fonctionnelle au Bangladesh dans les années 1980. La question centrale de cet article est de savoir pourquoi le BRAC a adopté l'EPNF en 1985 dans le cadre de ses besoins. Cette étude analyse le programme d'éducation du BRAC de 1973 à 1985, avec un accent particulier sur le contexte néolibéral international des années 1980, sur le changement de politique de l'industrie de l'aide occidentale et sur la relation que BRAC et son fondateur avaient avec les structures du pouvoir locales et les régimes bangladais consécutifs (Fatah, 2020). Nous examinons les documents du programme d'études du BRAC, les propositions de projets, les rapports d'évaluation et les propos de Fazle Hasan Abed, le fondateur du BRAC. Nous concluons qu'en plus de soutenir les enfants défavorisés, l'adoption de l'EPNF par le BRAC vise à promouvoir la croissance organisationnelle de l'EPNF vis-à-vis sa soumission à la structure locale du pouvoir et en relation avec le cadre néolibéral qui domine l'industrie de l'aide internationale.

Mots clés: Aide internationale. BRAC. Conscientization. NFPE. Bangladesh.

Introduction

Building Resources Across Communities (BRAC)'s work is situated in the inherited and persistent coloniality of neo-colonial Bangladesh. Riding the tide of neoliberalism in the 1980s, BRAC transformed itself into a neoliberal organization from a social-value organization¹ to become a market-based solution to poverty and development.

Researchers have extensively studied BRAC's development projects and its innovative ways of alleviating poverty. Critical analyses of BRAC's adult education programs, village organizations, outreach programs, hegemony, and community and human development initiatives have also been undertaken². Alongside the many laudatory studies of BRAC's projects and initiatives, there are also studies that question its rise as a corporate NGO, its engagement with multinational organizations, its relationship with undemocratic governments, and its business of poverty³. There are also studies about BRAC's initiatives for empowering the poor⁴ and the quality of its education program.⁵ Other studies have looked at BRAC's transformation from a social-value organization into a neoliberal organization and its co-option of functional education⁶. However, although BRAC's Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) program is globally regarded as a successful program for the children of disadvantaged families,⁷ historical analysis of this program is scarcely represented in the literature. Present literature also lacks document analysis studies on the NFPE program. From the historiographic perspective, there is no critical-historical analysis of why BRAC adopted NFPE in a local and international socio-economic context within the framework of its organizational needs.

The purpose of this study is to examine why BRAC—primarily a social-value organization that was once inspired by Freire's radical ideas to “empower” the poor—adopted NFPE, a traditional, market-oriented skills and basic literacy development program, for the children of disadvantaged communities. Findings of this study will contribute to this gap in the literature.

To do this study, I examine BRAC's adult literacy programs connected to Freirean pedagogy and the NFPE program. I investigate BRAC's documents and publications including those of the functional education program curriculum, NFPE curriculum, annual reports, project proposals, and articles/studies produced by BRAC's staff. I review transcripts of interviews and statements of BRAC's founder Fazle Hasan Abed. I also draw on published articles and evaluation reports about BRAC's education program by local and international researchers. To undertake a critical-historical analysis, I use a mix of theoretical and methodological frameworks. To select and interpret documents about BRAC, I follow the document analysis

¹ Mohammad Abul Fateh, “A Historical Analysis on Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and Abed's Reception of Paulo Freire's Critical Literacy in Designing BRAC's Functional Education Curriculum in Bangladesh from 1972 to 1981,” Unpublished M.Ed. thesis, (Queen's University, 2020); Anu Muhammad, “Rise of the Corporate NGO in Bangladesh,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 53, no. 39 (September 2018): 45-52.

² Mohammad Abul Fateh, “Bangladesh: An Analysis of BRAC's Shift from Freire's Critical “Conscientization” to a Neoliberal Self-Optimization Approach of Development,” *Espacio, Tiempo y Educacion* 9, no. 1 (January-June 2022): 99-121; Manzurul Mannan, “BRAC: Anatomy of a ‘Poverty Enterprise,’” *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 20, no. 2 (04 December, 2009): 219-233; <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.250>.

³ Fateh, “A Historical Analysis;” Muhammad, “Rise”; Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee and Laurel Jackson, “Microfinance and the Business of Poverty Reduction: Critical Perspectives from Rural Bangladesh,” *Human Relations* 70, no. 1 (2017), 63–91.

⁴ Christian Seelos and Johanna Mair, *BRAC—An Enabling Structure for Social and Economic Development* (Madrid: IESE Business School—University of Navarra, 2006).

⁵ Samir Ranjan Nath, *Quality of BRAC Education Programme: A Review of Existing Studies*, Research Monograph Series No. 29 (Dhaka: BRAC, 2006).

⁶ Fateh, “Historical Analysis.”

⁷ Manzoor Ahmed et al., *Primary Education for All: Learning from the BRAC Experience. A Case Study*, (Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development, 1993).

method suggested by Glenn A. Bowen.⁸ I draw on Quentin Skinner⁹ and Martyn Thompson's¹⁰ theoretical frameworks of reception and interpretation in examining the intentions of BRAC's leadership behind the abandonment of its "conscientizing" Functional Education program and the move to NFPE. I draw on the works of Frantz Fanon, Andre Gunder Frank, and Anibal Quijano,¹¹ as well as post-colonial theories and critiques of neoliberalism including the work of Byung-Chul Han.

I divide the discussion into sections, where each section will have analysis drawn from documents and literature about BRAC. First, I introduce BRAC and the transition from its early Functional Education program to its NFPE program. I then analyse why BRAC adopted NFPE based on primary, secondary, and tertiary documents. I then summarize findings of this study, its limitations, and the need for further research.

Setting the Stage: About BRAC

BRAC is the largest non-government provider of secular education provider in the world. Its Non-Formal Primary Education program (NFPE) is lauded internationally for providing a safety net of basic education to socially disadvantaged children—especially school-aged girls—who did not have an opportunity to attend formal school or had dropped out from the government school system.¹²

BRAC started as a humble relief and rehabilitation organization in Bangladesh in 1972.¹³ Soon after the war of independence in 1971, Fazle Hasan Abed and his associates in Sulla, a remote rural area in the northeastern region of Bangladesh, established the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee (BRAC) to help returning refugees from India.¹⁴ In its annual report, BRAC stated that its "early objective was to provide relief and rehabilitation assistance to the refugees returning from India to resettle in Bangladesh."¹⁵ When the relief and rehabilitation phase was over, BRAC refocused its work on rural development and renamed itself the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC).

Until the mid 1970s, education programs were a central component of BRAC's rural development strategy, adopting a community approach to development.¹⁶ BRAC concentrated on education and village development programs that included adult literacy ("functional education" as termed by BRAC), health, family planning, agriculture, fisheries, rural crafts, and vocational training programs for women, and establishing village cooperatives.¹⁷ After the failure of its first adult literacy campaign, over a period of just 21 months (May 1974 to January

⁸ Glenn A. Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (2009): 27-40, <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>

⁹ Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory: Studies in The Philosophy of History* 8, no. 1 (1969): 3-53.

¹⁰ Martyn P. Thompson, "Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning," *History and Theory: Studies in The Philosophy of History* 32, no. 3 (1993): 248-272.

¹¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967); Andre Gunder Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment," *Monthly Review* 18, no. 4 (1966): 17-31; Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America," *International Sociology* 15, no. 2 (2000): 215-32.

¹² Tina Rosenberg, "Where Private School is Not a Privilege," *New York Times*, May 8, 2013; Scott Macmillan, "Glorious Failure: The Joy of Learning From Your Mistakes," *The Guardian*, March 30, 2015;

¹³ BRAC, *From Progress to Development in Sulla* (Dhaka: BRAC, 1974).

¹⁴ Ian Smillie, *Freedom From Want: The Remarkable Success Story of BRAC, The Global Grassroots Organization That's Winning The Fight Against Poverty* (Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2009), 35.

¹⁵ BRAC, *Annual Report* (Dhaka: BRAC, 2004), 9.

¹⁶ John K. Davis, "NGOs and Development in Bangladesh: Whose Sustainability Counts?" in *Global Poverty: Sustainable Solutions. Proceedings of the Anti-Poverty Academic Conference with International Participation* (Perth: Murdoch University Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy, 2006), 6.

¹⁷ Muhammad, "Rise."

1976), BRAC developed a new curriculum in three different cycles. According to BRAC, “much of the inspiration for this course was derived from the ideas of famous Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire.”¹⁸ By 1974, BRAC started providing microcredit and began evaluating its impact on the lives of the rural poor. But being unsatisfied with the community and integrated approach to development, they adopted a targeted group approach to rural development in 1977.¹⁹ During the late 1970s, BRAC also became the largest provider of functional education in Bangladesh, and was sharing its educational expertise and curriculum with other development NGOs and education providers.²⁰ After this shift in its development policy, BRAC largely focused on establishing village organizations and investing in different commercial ventures (e.g., printing presses, village craft shops) known as project support enterprises (PSEs) to generate cash flow to support its programs.²¹

With the initial success of its PSEs and expansion, BRAC started a rural development program in 1986 that included four major activities: credit operations and training, income generation and employment opportunities, support service programs, and institution building.²² By 1990, BRAC had 398,830 members and had established 10,496 village organizations. It had 4,220 staff and annual expenditures of US\$27.7 million, of which 68% was from donors, and net assets of US\$22.1 million.²³ Comparing BRAC’s remarkable growth and the expansion of its projects with commercial entities, *The Economist* called BRAC the most business-like and “fastest-growing non-governmental organization (NGO) in the world.”²⁴ In the last fifty years, BRAC has grown exponentially, transforming itself into a hybrid development organization²⁵ connecting the poor to corporate capital (Muhammad 2018), evolving as a global leader in microfinance, and becoming the largest non-government development organization in the world (NGO Advisor 2021).

BRAC pioneered innovative, community-based, one-room-one-teacher schools for children between eight and fourteen years of age.²⁶ Referring to the request of BRAC’s project members to create NFPE program schools, Abed stated that BRAC’s participants in the poverty-stricken communities told them firmly that educational opportunity for children was their priority because government schools were not serving the needs of their children. As Abed himself put it:

Interestingly, BRAC’s participants, those in poverty-stricken communities, told us firmly that their priority was educational opportunity for their children, because existing primary education was not serving their children well. Almost half the children had no access to primary education, and most of those who did enrol did not complete that stage.²⁷

¹⁸ BRAC, *Report on Development of Innovative Methodologies in Functional Education for Bangladesh* (Dhaka: BRAC, 1977), 3.

¹⁹ Davis, “NGOs and Development;” Mohammad Rafi, “Freire and Experiments in Conscientization in a Bangladesh Village,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 37 (Sept. 13-19): 3908–14.

²⁰ Smillie, *Freedom From Want*.

²¹ Fateh, “A Historical Analysis;” Muhammad, “Rise.”

²² Muhammad, “Rise;” Zahir Ahmed, Trevor Hopper and Danture Wickramasinghe, *The BRAC Independence Movement: Accountability to Whom?* (October 26, 2015). Available at <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2680208>.

²³ Ahmed, Hopper and Wickramasinghe, *Accountability*.

²⁴ Economist. “BRAC in Business; Face value” 2010. Extracted from <https://www.economist.com/business/2010/02/18/brac-in-business>

²⁵ BRAC became a non-profit social development organization that works for profit and invests in commercial ventures.

²⁶ BRAC, *Annual Report, Non-Formal Primary Education (Under Rural Development Programme)* (Dhaka: BRAC, December, 1987).

²⁷ Samirah Mustafa, “Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) in Bangladesh: A Case Study on BRAC’s Role,” *IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* 25, no. 12 (2020): 01-08.

BRAC launched the Non-Formal Primary Education program as a pilot project in 1985 to give 657 disadvantaged children in 22 Bangladeshi villages a second chance at basic education. By 2022, 14 million Bangladeshi children had graduated from the program. BRAC has since expanded it to nine countries in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean²⁸ reaching millions of children in conflict-prone, war-ravaged, and post-disaster regions. With more than 40,000 government schools in nations worldwide adopting NFPE's innovative curriculum, pedagogy, and learning models, BRAC is now the largest non-government provider of primary education in the world.

Educational Programming in the Early Years: Functional Education

Abed was aware of the multifaceted nature of poverty and systemic oppression in rural Bangladesh, and of the necessity of Freirean critical literacy to support disadvantaged people. Inspired by Freire's seminal book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), BRAC's founder Fazle Hasan Abed used Freirean concepts as the basis of a program to educate the rural poor in Sulla in 1974 (Fateh 2019).²⁹ A functional education program was BRAC's first initiative to build groups, create unity, establish interconnection among the participants, and form village organizations.³⁰ BRAC adapted Freire's radical conscientization philosophy to its Functional Education (FE) program within the framework of its organizational needs and Bangladeshi development strategy throughout the 1970s (Fateh 2022).³¹ It was BRAC's main and only tool rooted in Freire's notion of conscientization³² to make the participants critically aware of the complex nature of their poverty, exploitation, and praxis.³³ Most importantly, the conscientization approach embedded in its functional education initiative was institutionalized in BRAC's organizational commitment³⁴ and approach to development. According to Smillie, functional education is "an underlying fundamental in BRAC's organizing principles" and "where everything began."³⁵

It is important to note that although BRAC had noticed high illiteracy and high dropout rates among the rural children since the beginning of its development work in Sulla in 1972, it did not launch any education program for the rural children in the 1970s. Rather, it started the large-scale functional education program for adults in 1973.³⁶ It employed most of its energy and resources to make the adult education program a success (Smillie 2009).³⁷ BRAC's states that through its functional education program, participants were organized, came together to form cooperatives, and established village organizations (BRAC 1980).³⁸ BRAC's claims that the Functional Education curriculum, based on Freire's critical literacy concepts, reduced dropout numbers, increased course completion rates, stimulated class attendance, engaged

²⁸ Catherine H. Lovell and Kaniz Fatema, *The BRAC Non-Formal Primary Education Programme in Bangladesh*. (New York: United Nations Children's Fund, 1989).

²⁹ BRAC, *Sulla Project, An Integrated Program for Development, 1972–73* (Dhaka: BRAC, 1972). <http://dspace.bracu.ac.bd/xmlui/handle/10361/5708>.

³⁰ Smillie, *Freedom From Want*.

³¹ Mohammad Abul Fateh, "Bangladesh: An Analysis of BRAC's Shift from Freire's Critical «Conscientization» to a Neoliberal Self-Optimization Approach of Development," *Espacio, Tiempo y Educacion* 9, no. 1 (January-June 2022).

³² "Conscientization" refers to the raising of critical consciousness among the oppressed to bring in structural change.

³³ Rafi, "Freire and Experiments"

³⁴ BRAC adopted Freirean philosophy as one of its organizing principles.

³⁵ Smillie, *Freedom From Want*, 153.

³⁶ BRAC, *Report on Development of Innovative Methodologies in Functional Education for Bangladesh* (Dhaka: BRAC, 1977).

³⁷ Smillie, *Freedom From Want*.

³⁸ BRAC, *BRAC's Functional Education: An Overview* (Dhaka: BRAC, 1980), <http://dspace.bracu.ac.bd/xmlui/handle/10361/5710>.

learners in class participation, and created cultural circles and co-operation among the learners,³⁹ although there is no comprehensive empirical study on the program's success. BRAC further claims that there were visible and behavioural changes among its participants as a result of the program.⁴⁰ It states that, "a certain degree of change in knowledge, practices and attitudes can be seen among the learners who have gone through the functional education course."⁴¹ Referring to the accomplishments of the Functional Education program, BRAC also alleges that local and international voluntary organizations expressed keen interest in its approach to developing the Functional Education curriculum and materials, and adopted them in their regional context (BRAC 1977).⁴²

A Response to BRAC's Participants and the Transition to NFPE

Like its other development initiatives, BRAC's Non-Formal Private Education program was a product of the concerns and requests expressed by its rural development project members for disadvantaged families.⁴³ Women participants of BRAC's Functional Education program were concerned about the limited educational opportunities for their children. They asked BRAC, "What about our children? The existing schools don't meet our children's needs."⁴⁴ Women were also aware of the problems with government primary schools and the high drop-out rates. Since BRAC had already built a positive reputation among villagers from its Functional Education program for adults and other development projects, village women turned to BRAC seeking a remedy. They asked BRAC, "Can you do something for our children's education? Our children do not survive the public system" (Ahmed and French 2006, 37).⁴⁵

Following the request of the people and with donors' assistance,⁴⁶ BRAC spoke with villagers and conducted a formal and systematic survey to collect data about the government school system and the high dropout rates.⁴⁷ BRAC found that long school hours, big class sizes, the over-emphasis on homework, systemic low morale among female students, and expensive private tutors were the main reasons for high dropout rates from the government schools. BRAC also found that the government education system was regimented and inflexible.⁴⁸ Lack of encouragement and motivation among learners and parents, an irrelevant curriculum, the need for child labour, and the high cost of education materials all contributed to the problem.⁴⁹ Once the findings of the study were analyzed, BRAC decided to initiate a large-scale project to provide basic education, and with the assistance of foreign donors, introduced NFPE for disadvantaged children in 1985.⁵⁰

³⁹ BRAC, *Innovative Methodologies*.

⁴⁰ BRAC, *Innovative Methodologies*; BRAC, Functional Education.

⁴¹ BRAC, *Innovative Methodologies*, 10.

⁴² BRAC, *Innovative Methodologies*.

⁴³ John Richards, Manzoor Ahmed and Shahidul Islam, *The Political Economy of Education in South Asia: Fighting Poverty, Inequality, and Exclusion*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022)

⁴⁴ Lovell and Fatema, *BRAC Non-formal*, 21.

⁴⁵ Salehuddin Ahmed and Micaela French, "Scaling Up: The BRAC Experience," *BRAC University Journal* 3, no. 2 (2006): 35-40.

⁴⁶ Ahmed Zahir, Trevor Hopper, and Danture Wickramasinghe, "Counter Hegemony and Accountability in BRAC - A Bangladesh NGO," *Sixth Asia Pacific Interdisciplinary Research in Accounting Conference, Sydney, Australia*. 2010.

⁴⁷ Ahmed and French, "Scaling Up."

⁴⁸ Lovell and Fatema, *BRAC Non-formal*.

⁴⁹ BRAC, *Interim Report of Non-Formal Primary Education Program* (Dhaka: BRAC, 1987).

⁵⁰ Ahmed et al., *Primary Education for All*.

Functional Education was the most important educational component of BRAC's development strategy⁵¹ throughout the inception of its development work in the early 1970s.⁵² Despite its positive outcomes, as claimed by BRAC, it moved away from functional education and its conscientizing approach in the mid-1980s⁵³ in favour of neoliberal training and skills embodied in the Non-Formal Primary Education program, which linked disadvantaged children to the authoritative banking education system provided by government schools. Begum, Akhter, and Rahman report that, “in an attempt to provide *educational* facilities to the children of destitute families, who generally do not *enrol* in school and hence remain illiterate, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) designed and developed Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) project for them.”⁵⁴ They add that BRAC developed the NFPE model for the unreached or out-of-formal-school children, that can also be implemented and replicated nationally according to the needs of the program and people.

By adopting NFPE, BRAC supported the government mandated traditional banking education that Freire strongly criticized.⁵⁵ Its adoption of NFPE to link disadvantaged children to government schools in support of the status quo, and its abandonment of the conscientization approach (functional education) to comply with local, national, and international hegemony at the dawn of neoliberalism (1980s) signaled a clear shift in its development policy⁵⁶, and is worth investigating.

An Overview of NFPE

Although BRAC formally launched its NFPE pilot program in 1985 in 22 villages, it actually had started an experimental school in Savar, near Dhaka, in 1979 in response to concerns raised by the village women.⁵⁷ This school would be the precursor to the NFPE program. BRAC's Training and Resource Centre in Savar conducted an experimental education project that designed and developed a set of instructional materials based on the pedagogy and critical literacy concepts of Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire⁵⁸ that would later form the foundation of the NFPE program. The material development team produced a large book, designed to be used as both a workbook and textbook, that covered topics in mathematics and Bangla (reading and writing), adapting a lot of materials from BRAC's adult Functional Education curriculum rooted in Freire's critical literacy concepts.⁵⁹

BRAC initiated planning for the NFPE program for children in rural villages in October 1984. The program's first set of curriculum and instructional material was largely adapted from its Functional Education program curriculum after being field tested and subsequently revised with the assistance of the Institute for Educational Research at Dhaka University. The material development team spent six months planning the NFPE curriculum, designing learning activities, and developing material (BRAC 1986).⁶⁰ The initial aim of the project was to develop

⁵¹ Rafi, “Freire and Experiments;” BRAC, *Innovative Methodologies*.

⁵² Smillie, *Freedom*.

⁵³ Rafi, “Freire and Experiments.”

⁵⁴ Kamrunnessa Begum, Salma Akhter and Sidiquir. Rahman, *An Evaluation of BRAC's Primary Education Program* (Dhaka: Institute of Education and Research, 1988).

⁵⁵ Paulo Freire, *Letters to Cristina: Reflections on My Life and Work*, trans. Donaldo Macedo (New York and London: Routledge, 1996).

⁵⁶ Rafi, “Freire and Experiments”; Smillie, *Freedom*.

⁵⁷ Ahmed et al., *Primary Education for All*.

⁵⁸ Fateh, “Historical Analysis;” Ahmed et al., *Primary Education for All*.

⁵⁹ Ahmed et al., *Primary Education for All*.

⁶⁰ BRAC, *Non-Formal Primary Education Program Report: October 84 to March 86* (Dhaka: BRAC, 1986).

an easily replicable NFPE model to deliver basic literacy and numeracy skills in three years to the rural children of the most disadvantaged families “who as yet had remained unreached by the formal school system.”⁶¹ Once the preliminary work was done, NFPE staff selected two BRAC project regions and one non-BRAC project region for laboratory schools –in Mirzapur, Manikganj, and Dhamrai– and launched the program in 1985.⁶²

The main objective of the NFPE program was to provide basic education to the children of poor families, aged between eight and ten years, who had never attended school or had dropped out from a government school in their first year. Besides offering basic literacy and numeracy skills, BRAC also wanted to stimulate students’ eagerness to learn more about health and awake their attention toward social issues.⁶³ Special emphasis was given on enrolling girls (students) in the program. BRAC’s target was to have 70% of the program enrolment made up of girls.

BRAC selected the location of the schools in the designated regions based on the demand exhibited by parents, involvement of the community, number of students, availability of teacher candidates, and proximity to neighbouring villages. To ensure the smooth operation of each school, a five-member village level committee was formed consisting of one community leader, two parents, one teacher, and a BRAC program organizer.⁶⁴ Each school required a minimum space of 240 square feet in a rented facility, where children sat on the floor in a “U” shape on woven mats (Lovell and Fatema 1987). Every school was equipped with learning and teaching materials including a blackboard, literacy and numeracy charts, supplies for the teachers (chalk, dusters, etc.), and a storage trunk that also served as a table. Children got textbooks, slates, pencils, and notebooks from BRAC. Most importantly, children were guided by the teachers to learn all their lessons in class with little homework.⁶⁵

In selecting teachers, BRAC preferred to hire married teachers drawn from the permanent residents of the village where the school would be opened. They were educated women with a minimum of nine years of schooling.⁶⁶ Teachers were trained to follow a structured curriculum and daily lesson plans that were supplemented with helpful teaching notes, and to use learning materials and illustrative activities. Teachers were also trained to follow learner-centered methods in the classrooms and provide enough scope for learners’ personal daily activities. BRAC states that it intended to create a teaching method to create a “paraprofessional cadre of teachers in the community”.⁶⁷ It believed that if the paraprofessional teachers were trained carefully, they could be trained quickly and would be effective in the class.⁶⁸

The NFPE curriculum covered three subject areas: Bangla, mathematics, and social studies. Bangla and mathematics lessons included topics related to basic literacy and numeracy skills; social studies lessons included topics touching on health, hygiene, first aid, community, country, nutrition, sanitation, safety, world, and basic science. In terms of designing the curriculum, special attention was given to helping learners achieve basic numeracy and literacy skills and an awareness of their immediate society⁶⁹ states that the overarching objective of the

⁶¹ Lovell and Fatema, *BRAC Non-Formal*, 5.

⁶² Mustafa, “Non-Formal,” BRAC, *Annual Report December, 1987*.

⁶³ “BRAC Education Program Bangladesh,” BRAC, accessed September 25, 2022, <http://www.brac.net/program/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Factsheet-BRAC-Education-Programme-June-2019.pdf>.

⁶⁴ Lovell and Fatema, *BRAC Non-Formal*.

⁶⁵ Lovell and Fatema, *BRAC Non-Formal*.

⁶⁶ Brenda M. Haiplik, “An Educational Success Story from Bangladesh: Understanding the BRAC Non-Formal Primary Education Model and Its Teacher Training and Development System” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2004).

⁶⁷ BRAC, *Non-Formal Primary Education Program Report October 84 to March 86* (Dhaka: BRAC, 1986), 1.

⁶⁸ Haiplik, “Success Story.”

⁶⁹ BRAC, *Program Report*.

NFPE curriculum was to develop the required skills, cognitive concepts, and social development expected from primary schooling.

In the first year, social studies books were not given to students. It was taught by the teacher through discussion with the aid of a specially designed teachers' manual.⁷⁰ English was not taught in 1985 and 1986, but was introduced after a curriculum change in 1986. Students were given mathematics and vernacular books every year, but social studies and English books were only provided when the students reached the second and third years of their studies in the program. The curriculum emphasized extra-curricular activities, and provided 40 minutes each day for activities such as drawing, games, crafts, dancing, singing, and physical exercise. In the first eight weeks of the first grade, students were prepared for writing by colouring and drawing shapes. They also engaged in pre-reading, writing, and numeracy activities. A more structured class schedule was followed during the second eight weeks. About the class routine and distribution of time, Lovell and Fatema state that:

The two-and-a-half-hour day is divided into 30 minutes of reading with structured reading exercises, 20 minutes of writing including handwriting, spelling, making words and dictation, 35 minutes of mathematics, 25 minutes of social studies, and 40 minutes of co-curricular activities. Each day of the week is expected to include certain pre-set activities and a one-page suggested class routine is utilized. As the teacher gains experience, the pace and emphasis can be varied to meet the needs of the particular group of children.⁷¹

BRAC's NFPE schools were flexible and accommodating to provide an opportunity to as many students as possible to attend school. The ratio of students to teachers in NFPE classes was 30:1, whereas it was 60:1 in government schools.⁷² The cost for NFPE schools was about \$20 US per student per year.⁷³ While parents and the community were responsible for classroom maintenance, BRAC paid all other expenses. However, parents and communities were engaged in deciding the class schedule and providing labour and materials to build the schools in their community.⁷⁴ Unlike government primary schools, BRAC schools did not have annual examinations. Students were assessed through weekly and monthly tests, and their performance was regularly documented.⁷⁵ Based on teachers' assessments and the students' performance, supports to help students with learning difficulties and individual problems were discussed in monthly teachers' meetings. Unlike banking education in government schools, BRAC's classes were learner-centred where students were encouraged not to be passive or empty learners, but to be active contributors in the process of teaching and learning. The emphasis was on functional learning to enhance and encourage children's interest and curiosity.⁷⁶

After analyzing BRAC's NFPE curriculum, I argue that, like its adult Functional Education curriculum rooted in Freire's critical literacy and pedagogy, BRAC's NFPE

⁷⁰ Lovell and Fatema, *BRAC Non-Formal*, 18.

⁷¹ Lovell and Fatema, *BRAC Non-Formal*, 17.

⁷² Kabeer, Naila, Simeen Mahmud, and Jairo G. Isaza Castro. "NGOs and the Political Empowerment of Poor People in Rural Bangladesh: Cultivating the Habits of Democracy?" *World development* 40, no. 10 (2012): 2044–2062

⁷³ Md. Moshir Rahman, Azam Md. Golam, *Enhancing Children's Enthusiasm towards Learning at Rural Areas in Bangladesh: The Case of BRAC Non-Formal Education*, accessed September 25, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348590131_Brac_Non_formal_Education_Dr_Moshir_Rahman.

⁷⁴ Md. Altaf Hossain, *Community Participation in Improving Non-Formal Primary Education in Bangladesh: A BRAC Experience* (Dhaka: BRAC Research and Evaluation Division, 1999).

⁷⁵ Begum, Akhter, and Rahman, *An Evaluation*.

⁷⁶ Lovell and Fatema, *BRAC Non-Formal*.

curriculum was also influenced by Freirean concepts. Although there are no political and radical components for complete freedom, humanization, conscientization, and praxis in the NFPE curriculum, its curriculum is inspired to some extent by Freirean concepts in terms of teacher selection, curriculum design, dialogical classroom, teacher-learners' relationship, mutual respect, seating arrangement, and its generative theme.

It is important to note that BRAC's NFPE program was not introduced overnight after being requested by the villagers. Rather, BRAC's interest in primary education for children can be traced to BRAC Phase II, a 1972 project proposal it presented to its donor Oxfam.⁷⁷ In it, BRAC suggested launching a program to strengthen the admission of school-aged children to government primary schools. It stated, "BRAC proposes to launch a campaign to get all the children in the five to eleven age group admitted to primary schools and, where facilities are lacking, to co-operate with the government".⁷⁸ BRAC also distributed to hundreds of primary schools a monthly journal called *Gonokendra* that was designed for neo-literates in its Functional Education program.⁷⁹

Whereas BRAC's Functional Education program for adults was inspired by Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1971) with an objective to organize the disadvantaged people for power by igniting their critical consciousness through functional literacy to make its learners aware of their situations and "why deprivation happens in society, why power relations are important to understand, and how you can also challenge certain power groups to get your rights"⁸⁰, objective of BRAC's NFPE program was different. Unlike the Functional Education (FE) program, NFPE had the same objectives as the government primary schools.⁸¹ BRAC claimed that its Functional Education curriculum was influenced by Freirean concepts and pedagogy to conscientize and mobilize the rural poor,⁸² but the NFPE program aimed to equip destitute children with basic numeracy and literacy skills to prepare them for traditional government funded secondary schools.⁸³ In doing so, BRAC was preparing its students for the government schools that were following traditional banking method of education which is non-dialogical, non-mutual and does non-communicative "deposits" of knowledge, the model that is strongly criticized by Freire.⁸⁴

I argue that although village women voiced concern about the education of their children to BRAC, these concerns were not the only reason for BRAC to design, develop, and launch the NFPE program. It raises a question about why BRAC did not launch a children education program when it had already introduced an education program for the adults. I argue that BRAC gradually de-emphasized and abandoned its adult education program in the late 1980s⁸⁵ to adopt the NFPE program to comply with neoliberal ideology and the education-for-all campaign that gained momentum in the early 1980s. Therefore, I view BRAC's NFPE program for disadvantaged children not as a response to the village women, but as a paradigm shift in its development policy in line with the global campaign of the education-for-all movement to comply with neoliberal ideology and mandates of the international aid industry within the framework of its developmental and organizational needs.

⁷⁷ BRAC, *Sulla Project*.

⁷⁸ BRAC, *Sulla Project*, 7.

⁷⁹ BRAC, *Sulla Project*.

⁸⁰ Fazle Hasan Abed, "Interview with Fazle Hasan Abed," interview by Tarun Khanna, Creating Emerging Markets Oral History Collection, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School, April 24, 2014, https://www.hbs.edu/businesshistory/Documents/emerging-markets-transcripts/Abed_Fazle_Web%20Copy.pdf.

⁸¹ Richards, Manzoor, and Islam, *The Political Economy*.

⁸² Rafi, "Freire and Experiments."

⁸³ Richards, Manzoor, and Islam, *The Political Economy*.

⁸⁴ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 109

⁸⁵ Rafi, "Freire and Experiments."

Education for Freedom Versus Education for Development

Education is a critical component in BRAC's social development initiatives, and "BRAC considers education as a key to upward social mobility".⁸⁶ From the beginning of its development work, "BRAC was all about education"⁸⁷ and education came to BRAC in different experimental shapes and sizes. BRAC recognized that illiteracy was one of the biggest reasons for underdevelopment and systemic poverty in rural Bangladesh.⁸⁸ People needed to be educated to alleviate poverty, the main purpose of development. BRAC understood that sustainable development builds on human development and human development is rooted in education.⁸⁹

Abed, the main architect of BRAC's NFPE program, was convinced that education was the great equalizer for the poor,⁹⁰ and that meeting educational needs was critical to enhancing socio-economic growth. Abed saw education as a developmental tool and a critical component in the fight against poverty and rebuilding war-ravaged, newly independent Bangladesh and its people.⁹¹ He also extensively read about development in 1970s⁹² and was inspired by Andre Gunda Frank's dependency theories. Thus, taking into account the reciprocity of education and development, BRAC initiated the Functional Education program in Sulla, northeastern Bangladesh in 1973, an intense literacy campaign for adults.⁹³ Referring to this literacy drive as a key component of its rural development initiative, BRAC stated that, "a strong literacy drive was therefore launched in early 1973 as a major element of BRAC's rural development strategy."⁹⁴ BRAC also used its education programs to build village organizations, cooperatives, and cultural circles to support rural development programs (RDPs). BRAC's development strategy from the early 1970s was largely built on its adult education programs.

BRAC ultimately abandoned its adult Functional Education program and moved to the NFPE program in the mid 1980s. It used the NFPE program to link disadvantaged children to mainstream education. BRAC wanted to give children of poor families a second chance to take responsibility for their own future development. In this way, the purpose of the NFPE program was not largely different from the government primary education program. The focus of the NFPE program was to develop literacy and numeracy skills just like that of the government schools. Referring to the similarity of the objectives of BRAC's NFPE and the government's primary school programs, John, Ahmed and Islam commented that "...[the NFPE program's] objective was the same as that of primary schools: to equip children with literacy and numeracy skills and prepare them for secondary school."⁹⁵

I argue that BRAC introduced the NFPE program as a component of its integrated development program, and not as an extension of its conscientization approach (Functional Education program) drawn from Freirean educational concepts. The aim of NFPE program was to support the government school system to educate children unreached by schools in line with BRAC's broader development initiatives. While Abed was inspired by Freire's liberating philosophy (Rafi 2003), NFPE was purely a long-term market-oriented education campaign (read "skills development and training") for creating better income opportunities and poverty adjustment

⁸⁶ Mustafa, "Non-Formal," 3.

⁸⁷ Smillie, *Freedom*, 153.

⁸⁸ BRAC, *Sulla Project*.

⁸⁹ BRAC, *Annual Report 1987*.

⁹⁰ Fazle Hasan Abed, (Laureate speech for the Wise Prize for Education at the Wise Summit, Qatar, November 4, 2011), <https://blog.brac.net/wise-prize-for-education-laureate-speech-by-sir-fazle-hasan-abed/>

⁹¹ Richards, Manzoor, and Islam, *The Political Economy*.

⁹² Rafi, "Freire and Experiments."

⁹³ Fateh, "BRAC's Shift."

⁹⁴ BRAC, *BRAC's Functional Education: An Overview*. (Dhaka: BRAC, 1980), 2.

⁹⁵ Richards, Ahmed, and Islam, *Political Economy*, 14.

of the poor. NFPE was not intended to liberate poor children from systemic oppression nor to humanize them from their state of dehumanization as Freire suggested. The fundamental objective of NFPE was to bring children into the mainstream of neoliberal development to support the existing production system, not to challenge the unjust social structure and oppressive hegemony. I argue that, although Freire considered “the essence of education as the practice of freedom,”⁹⁶ BRAC viewed education as a market-based tool for creating better employment opportunities in the neoliberal market economy and production system. In short, BRAC did not regard education as freedom, but rather used it as practice of neoliberal development.

No Challenge to Hegemony, No Risk for BRAC

In the 1970s, international and local NGOs in poverty-stricken countries were predominantly influenced by Schumacher (1973).⁹⁷ They began to invest mainly in the qualitative growth of human beings and human infrastructure as a process of development. At the same time, NGOs involved in self-help activities recognized the limitations of development activities organized by socially disadvantaged groups, and observed that their works were resisted by the oppressive social structure.⁹⁸ They also noticed that development initiatives by disadvantaged people were obstructed by social, economic, and political elites. Development NGOs responded to these issues gradually, and increasingly considered development as a method of liberating the poor and socially disadvantaged people from the dominant status quo, human oppressors, and systemic poverty (Clark 1991).⁹⁹ BRAC also engaged in the qualitative development of human beings. Although they were involved in poverty alleviation programs, their focus was on ‘empowering’¹⁰⁰ the poor and bringing them to the mainstream of development (Rafi 2003).¹⁰¹

As previously stated, since Abed was aware of the philosophies, theories, and ideas of Frantz Fanon, Ivan Illich, Paulo Freire, Andre Gundar Frank, and Ernst Friedrich Schumacher¹⁰² his ideas of human and social development were translated into BRAC’s social development initiatives. Therefore, in the early 1970s BRAC also viewed development in Bangladesh as a process of investing in people and their education, organizing cooperatives, and developing infrastructure. BRAC realized that the poor should be made aware of their immediate problems, the complex nature of systemic poverty, and the dominant process of exploitation as practised by the oppressors (BRAC 1977). BRAC understood that if the deprived do not realize they are systematically exploited, all economic inputs and development work “would be misappropriated or siphoned off by better-off sections within the society.”¹⁰³ For these reasons, BRAC adopted a policy to systematically conscientize its program participants at the time of establishing their village organizations and, “accordingly from 1978 onwards BRAC made deliberate effort of conscientizing the village organizations members through Functional Education program.”¹⁰⁴ Therefore, I argue that as dominant ideas of development in 1970s and the influence of Frantz Fanon, Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich, Andre Gundar Frank, and Ernst Friedrich Schumacher were translated into BRAC’s

⁹⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy*, 87.

⁹⁷ Ernst Friedrich Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful. A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

⁹⁸ Rafi, “Freire and Experiments.”

⁹⁹ John Clark, *Democratizing Development*, (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1991).

¹⁰⁰ Fateh (2020) argues that BRAC’s approach to development was not intended to empower the rural poor in the true sense of the term and practice in reality.

¹⁰¹ Rafi, “Freire and Experiments.”

¹⁰² Smillie, *Freedom*; Rafi, “Freire and Experiments;” Nobonita Chowdhury, “Sir Fazle Hasan Abed KCMG in Conversation with Nobonita Chowdhury,” YouTube video, 43:16, November 28, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDrAP551X00&t=637s>

¹⁰³ Rafi, “Freire and Experiments,” 3908.

¹⁰⁴ Rafi, “Freire and Experiments,” 3909.

works after 1972 to support the rural poor, BRAC was primarily an altruistic organization in principle, like other mainstream NGOs in Bangladesh in the 1970s.

BRAC's approach to development in terms of structural change, liberating the poor, and humanizing them went in a different direction (Fateh 2022) after their development projects were launched. BRAC co-opted a non-political, non-radical, and non-revolutionary version of Freire's critical literacy and pedagogy.¹⁰⁵ However, soon after introducing its functional education campaign to conscientize the rural poor in 1974, BRAC faced resistance from the local elites and the dominant power structure.¹⁰⁶ The existing power groups regarded BRAC's Functional Education program, charged with conscientization, as a threat to their dominance and privilege.¹⁰⁷ Regardless of their beliefs in liberal democracy, pluralism, radical political movement, secularism, and progressive ideology, BRAC found that their programs, especially the Functional Education program, were opposed by local power structures and other vested interest groups. Abed's colleague Rafi stated that BRAC's conscientizing education "was a direct challenge to the rural power base, whether or not the participants (the poor) demanded economic, political or social justice with or without changing the system."¹⁰⁸

On the other hand, the central government and local administration did not support BRAC's adult education program. They opposed the conscientization campaign of BRAC and other NGOs because they were dependent on the local power structure to implement social and political agendas to maintain the status quo. Consecutive undemocratic and military governments of the 1970s and 1980s were also suspicious and uncomfortable with the conscientization program of the NGOs, fearing political unrest. They were reluctant to bring in structural change at the risk of upsetting the local power structure in villages.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, resistance to and pressure on BRAC by local power groups, political parties, administration, businesses, and conservative religious groups pushed BRAC to redefine its approach to its Functional Education program. Such opposition from different corners challenged BRAC's growth and threatened its existence as an organization (Khanna, 2014).¹¹⁰ In such circumstances, BRAC "did not want to be in conflict with social and political elites or risk the government's anger"¹¹¹, so, they decided not to challenge the hegemony of the established status quo and shifted away from the objective of "empowering" the poor. As a result, BRAC gradually de-emphasized and compromised its conscientization education program and moved to credit (microfinance) and other income-focused development programs (Smillie 2009; Rafi 2003),¹¹² and the NFPE program, none of which would convincingly challenge the powerful forces as wanted by Freire.

Although Abed understood that poverty was caused by the powerlessness of the poor and that they should be organized for power through the process of conscientization, BRAC abandoned this approach and focused on NFPE to complement government provided banking education, strongly criticized by Freire. BRAC knew that wealthy farmers, money lenders, rural elites, and political leaders were the oppressive dominant groups in society and recognized that the complex nature of poverty in rural Bangladesh was rooted in a neo-colonial power

¹⁰⁵ Fateh, "BRAC's Shift."

¹⁰⁶ Smillie, *Freedom*.

¹⁰⁷ Rafi, "Freire and Experiments".

¹⁰⁸ Rafi, "Freire and Experiments," 3909.

¹⁰⁹ Syed Hashemi, "NGO Accountability in Bangladesh: Beneficiaries, Donors and the State," in *Non-governmental Organizations: Performance and Accountability Beyond the Magic Bullet* eds. Michael Edwards and David Hulme (London: Routledge, 1995), 103–10.

¹¹⁰ Fazle Hasan Abed, "Interview with Fazle Hasan Abed," interview by Tarun Khanna, Creating Emerging Markets Oral History Collection, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School, April 24, 2014, https://www.hbs.edu/businesshistory/Documents/emerging-markets-transcripts/Abed_Fazle_Web%20Copy.pdf.

¹¹¹ Fateh, "BRAC's shift", 110

¹¹² Smillie, *Freedom*; Rafi, "Freire and Experiments".

structure.¹¹³ Nevertheless, BRAC adopted the NFPE program to conform with the local power structure instead of implementing the radical, political, and revolutionary ideas of Fanon and Freire. Abed knew that functional education was key for the poor to achieve freedom from poverty, oppression, and dehumanization, but BRAC abandoned the program to align itself with the local power groups and government hegemony. I argue that BRAC compromised Freire's radical and revolutionary concepts of popular education when it adopted the NFPE program to avoid antagonizing local power structures and government hegemony.

Abed's associate and BRAC employee Mohammad Rafi¹¹⁴ claims that BRAC endeavoured to empower the poor by alleviating (read "adjusting") their poverty and linking them to the "mainstream of development."¹¹⁵ He further stated that through functional education, BRAC intended to organize the poor to develop self-initiatives and motivate them to seek action and solutions to their problems (Rafi 2003).¹¹⁶ But Fateh (2022)¹¹⁷ counter-argued that BRAC adopted a pacified and materialistic version of Freire's radical conscientization in its adult education program to make its participants aware of their abilities around economic and income-generating opportunities. BRAC's main objective was upward economic mobility for the poor, not humanization and complete liberation as Freire suggested. Fateh stated that while Freirean concepts were revolutionary and highly political, BRAC intentionally depoliticized its curriculum and limited the real struggle of the poor to seek power to address underlying causes of their problems.¹¹⁸ Instead of motivating and mobilizing the rural poor to fight against the dominant status quo to establish social justice and fair treatment for all, BRAC focused on poverty adjustment programs.

Clearly, BRAC's adoption of the NFPE program was connected to its submission to local power structures, undemocratic political forces, and government hegemony to minimize risk and strengthen its growth as an organization.

Slow Returns of Conscientization Versus Quick Return of Service Delivery

BRAC's orientation to service delivery over conscientization to gain tangible and quick returns explains why it adopted the NFPE program. In line with Freire, BRAC understood that conscientizing education is a work of political action, social organization, and grassroots development (Rafi 2003).¹¹⁹ But overcoming the prevailing power structure by making people critically conscious or conscientized is not an easy task and needs enduring commitment. It also requires time and a large power base organically formed by the oppressed themselves. Since conscientization is a psycho-social process followed by action and reflection against the established status quo in the social reality of the oppressed, the fight of the poor and oppressed is resisted by the oppressors. For BRAC, the process of conscientization needed a long-term goal and an input of resources over an extended period of time. It had to invest time and money and then wait to see the actions and reactions ("praxis" as termed by Freire) of its participants. By contrast, the results of NGO service delivery activities are quick and tangible. For example, credit-based activities, farming, fisheries, sanitation, health, and agricultural works all have speedier returns than that of conscientizing education. BRAC's outreach program, credit operations, Aarong (BRAC's commercial outlet), health care, family planning, OTEP, poultry,

¹¹³ Fateh, "BRAC's Shift"; Muhammad, "Rise of Corporate NGO".

¹¹⁴ Mohammad Rafi was a senior research sociologist at BRAC who worked closely with Abed.

¹¹⁵ Rafi, "Freire and Experiments," 3909.

¹¹⁶ Rafi, "Freire and Experiments".

¹¹⁷ Fateh, "BRAC's Shift".

¹¹⁸ Fateh, "BRAC's Shift".

¹¹⁹ Rafi, "Freire and Experiments".

and other PSEs also had quick and tangible gains. Most importantly, these service delivery projects also generate quick cash flow, reach more people, and attract more external funding. Correspondingly, neoliberal organizations and western aid agencies also preferred to invest in service delivery projects, reflecting a shift in their development policy being influenced by the recommendations of Washington Consensus¹²⁰. During the 1980s, with the growing influence of neoliberalism, the aid agencies were also gradually becoming less interested in projects that were not already tested in the field, had made positive impacts, or were known to work effectively.¹²¹ They became more selective and prescriptive and began to impose conditions on funding projects to promote their own agendas.¹²² They also moved to market-based solutions to poverty alleviation (read “adjustment”) and service delivery programs to align with neoliberal ideology.¹²³ Increasingly, they pursued NGOs to deliver services and wanted to see tangible outcomes of their investment in a relatively short period of time.

Neoliberal organizations and western aid agencies began to ask NGOs to provide them with project details, activity reports, and proof of achievements.¹²⁴ Since donors were becoming less interested in conscientization projects, such programs got less attention from donors and the NGOs. And because NGOs in the post-colonial countries in the 1970s and 1980s were heavily dependent on donor funding, they had to comply with the exigencies of the donor agencies. NGOs started to implement service delivery projects with quick and visible outcomes in order secure funding and support for their projects and organizational growth. Consciousness raising programs became less well funded than service delivery projects.

During this period, BRAC also faced the same circumstances as other NGOs when it came to support from western aid agencies in terms of conscientization versus service delivery projects. With the growing influence of neoliberalism (1980 to 1995) and the pressure from the western aid industry, BRAC also moved to a market-based solution to poverty from its conscientization program (Fateh 2022). Anticipating the neoliberal globalization dogma and changes in the aid granting scenario and policy in the coming years, BRAC merged its Rural Credit and Training Program (RCTP) and outreach program into the rural development program (RDP) in 1986 (Ahmed and Hopper 2012). This was to support the economic benefit of the rural poor through institution building, credit operations, employment generation, and other support and service delivery programs (Howes and Sattar 1992). With BRAC’s shift to programs that provided quick and tangible gains and away from conscientizing (functional) education, BRAC was no longer a value-driven organization but a market-driven agency that kowtowed to donor preferences.

I argue that following the policy shift of the international aid agencies toward service delivery, BRAC moved from slow and long structural transformations to quick and tangible market-based service delivery. During this shift, BRAC compromised Freirean revolutionary principles as a social-value organization, abandoned its Functional Education program, and adopted the NFPE program to support the banking education system funded by the consecutive undemocratic governments. In short, BRAC retreated from its conscientizing approach that was designed to ‘empower’ the rural poor, to submit to neoliberal hegemony of service delivery in order to capitalize on the opportunities that emerged from this compliance.

¹²⁰ Muhammad, “Rise of Corporate NGO”.

¹²¹ Kim Jonker, “In the Black with BRAC,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 7 no. 1 (Winter): 74–79.

¹²² Zahir Ahmed and Trevor Hopper, “Politics, Development and NGO Accountability,” in *Performance Management in Nonprofit Organizations*, eds. Zahirul Hoque and Lee Parker (New York: Routledge, 2014), 39-64.

¹²³ Muhammad, “Rise of Corporate NGO”.

¹²⁴ Fateh, “BRAC’s Shift”.

Small is Beautiful but Big is Necessary

After the war of independence in 1971, a war-ravaged albeit independent Bangladesh inherited myriad challenges related to poverty, illiteracy, health, hygiene, safe drinking water, malnutrition, and family planning etc., all of which needed immediate government funding and attention (Mittal Harvard May 1, 2014). However, government services were insufficient to meet the pressing needs of the people (Jonker 2009; Back with BRAC, 75). Basic services were usually limited to urban areas and nonexistent elsewhere (Smillie 2009). The education system established in the colonial past was never meant to develop and flourish, and the little infrastructure still in place was ravaged by the war. There was a dire need for more, big-scale education programs along with service delivery projects nationwide.

In such circumstances, failure of governments to provide basic services created opportunities for NGOs like BRAC to get involved in education and service delivery. To western donors, NGOs emerged as more suitable alternatives than governments to deliver basic services (Ahmed and Hopper 2014). Abed observed the crisis and realized that long-term and large-scale development activities were needed to have a quick and meaningful impact on the lives of disadvantaged people nationwide (Ahmed and Rafi 1999). He saw opportunities to scale up programs to serve more people in different regions across the country (Ahmed and Rafi 1999) and make BRAC into a sustainable organization. He therefore decided to expand BRAC's projects to provide nationwide services as much as possible (Smillie 2009). To Ernst Friedrich Schumacher's ideas in *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as If People Mattered* (1973), Abed countered that small was beautiful but big was necessary in the socio-economic context of Bangladesh (Fateh 2022; Smillie 2009). BRAC's such move to grow and run more service delivery projects for more and more people was a significant shift from its early development policy (Ahmed and Rafi 1999) and organizational principle rooted in Freirean philosophy.

BRAC understood that to become big, serve more people, and run more projects, it needed more resources and donor support. At the same time, BRAC did not want to be dependent on aid agencies and government support to run its projects. For that reason, BRAC changed its development strategy and initiated its "own businesses to generate cash flow to supplement donations to support its projects" (Fateh 2022, 14). They established a printing press in 1975 that generated a profit of US\$17,400 in its first year and a retail village craft shop called Aarong in 1978. Aarong became one of the biggest sources of cash for BRAC within a few years. The BRAC Learning Center (BLC) was established in 1978 and became a source of revenue by providing training to people and staff of other organizations and NGOs working in the area of social development (Fateh 2020). By 1980, BRAC had invested in poultry, cold storage, livestock, an iodized salt factory, a tissue culture laboratory, and cattle breeding centres across the country. BRAC grew exponentially from the late 1970s and "in its seventh year, BRAC was clearly well established, and it was gaining recognition in Bangladesh and abroad," (Smillie 2009, 137).

Although Freire was a critic of neoliberalism and neoliberal interventions in education, BRAC embraced neoliberal ideology. BRAC's shift to focus on income generation and market-based solutions to poverty alleviation indicates its embrace of neoliberalism. Instead of strengthening the conscientizing approach to functional education, it invested in income-generating projects and PSEs with an aim to be big and sustainable. Since the programs were generating cash, BRAC leadership became more confident to invest the funds in other social enterprises and pilot projects (Jonker 2009, 75). According to Abed, BRAC was able to invest in new projects and try out innovative ideas by generating its own resources (Jonker 2009). For example, BRAC invested in an oral rehydration program from the profit it made from the

printing press. Thus, I argue that BRAC's such move signals its transition from a social-value organization to a neoliberal organization in the name of "small is beautiful but big is necessary," contradicting the "small is beautiful" movement promoted by Schumacher (1973).

BRAC's desire to expand its development program throughout the country is another reason they adopted the NFPE program. Since the beginning of its NFPE program, BRAC's purpose was to design and demonstrate a cost-effective, high-standard, and relevant education system for disadvantaged rural children, which could be duplicated throughout the country (BRAC, NFPE Report 1984 to 1986). In its annual report, BRAC (BRAC NFPE Report 1988, 2) states that it wanted to develop a community of paraprofessional teachers in the country and "to experiment with different modalities of community participation to encourage further support for the NFPE program on a national scale."

BRAC felt threatened by the rural elites and powerful groups after launching their conscientizing Functional Education program. BRAC noticed that local power structures had started to view BRAC's functional education as a threat to their dominance (Rafi 2003). There was pushback from certain power groups who wanted BRAC to be disconnected and disregarded. Abed realized that if BRAC remained small and beautiful, it could easily be eliminated by oppressive forces. But if it became big and powerful, it could not be removed easily (Abed 2014). Referring to scaling up BRAC's projects, Abed stated that he deliberately wanted to expand BRAC's development projects and asked for the support of its donors to grow big for dealing the threats of the powerful groups. That means, to save BRAC from being intimidated and removed by the dominant forces, Abed purposely started expanding its programs. By 1979, BRAC had a staff of 400 with many ongoing projects. Although it was not very big as an organization, it was substantial enough to face the threats and challenges of the dominant forces (Khanna, 2014).

Although Abed justifies scaling up its projects because they were being challenged by the dominant forces, the result was BRAC's shift from a social-value organization to market-based organization. Additionally, Abed realized that the cooperation of local dominant forces was needed for the expansion, security, and sustainability of BRAC projects. It was not possible for BRAC to run and expand projects throughout the country without winning the "confidence" of local elites. Since dominant power structures had already viewed BRAC's Functional Education program as a threat and resisted the program (Rafi 2003), BRAC did not want to upset the rural power structure for the sake of expanding its projects.

I argue that BRAC's increased interest in service delivery and neoliberal policies to become a market-based development organization (read "corporate" enterprise), to grow big and sustainable, expand its projects throughout the country, and to save it (BRAC) from the threat of being eliminated, BRAC adopted the NFPE program within the framework of its development policy and organizational needs. In short, BRAC initiated NFPE program not only to support the children of the disadvantaged families but also to serve its own organizational needs.

Conclusion

BRAC has done a tremendous job of providing basic education to unreached children, especially school-aged girls and indigenous communities in Bangladesh. Its primary education model has been proven to be an effective program in different parts of the world. However, in my analysis, I found that BRAC adopted the NFPE program for reasons other than a response to requests by disadvantaged communities. In launching this program, BRAC saw the potential to support disadvantaged rural children, but also saw opportunities to grow as an organization and scale up its development projects across the country. BRAC leadership clearly understood

the shifting interest of the international aid agencies in the emerging context of neoliberalism in the world in 1980s and wanted to create opportunities for itself.

Since BRAC was heavily dependent on donor funding in the 1970s and 1980s to run their programs, they wanted to follow in the footsteps of their funding agencies. As a result, they abandoned the conscientizing approach and gradually moved to service delivery and microcredit. Remarkably, although Abed read Freire in 1970, recognized the role of education in human development, and was aware of the importance of primary education for the children of the rural and disadvantaged communities, BRAC, a third world rural development organization—as developing countries were labeled at that time—did not launch its primary education program until 1985. It was heavily engaged with rural people—especially women—through rural development projects in the 1970s, had already launched microcredit and commercial PSEs, and had become the largest NGO in Bangladesh by the early 1980s. But it did not launch a primary education program for the rural children until later. Additionally, in its first development proposal to Oxfam (BRAC 1972), BRAC largely focused on rural development projects (agriculture, fisheries, and forming cooperatives, etc.) to create more income-generating opportunities, although it recognized the importance of functional education in developing basic numeracy and literacy skills. Prior to 1985, BRAC had launched many development and economic mobility programs for hundreds of thousands of people across Bangladesh, but had never initiated programs for disadvantaged children. In my analysis of Abed's statements, interviews, and biography, I found that BRAC had a calculated approach, took its time, did its homework, and waited for the right time and opportunity to launch NFPE. I argue that although BRAC responded to the concerns of village women, NFPE was not solely the result of villagers' requests.

On the other hand, BRAC wanted to scale up its programs throughout the country to provide its services to more and more people. It also wanted to grow big and powerful to counter the threats of powerful local and national forces. For BRAC, NFPE was such a program that had the potential to grow big and powerful in the course of time. Additionally, although BRAC's Functional Education program had some positive impacts in terms of forming village organizations (VOs) and cooperatives (BRAC 1980), it was limited to a few regions and failed to reach all across the country. While functional education brought some positive attitudinal changes among the participants (BRAC 1977), it failed to become a significant education program among the poor and exploited. Additionally, the Functional Education program was considered as a threat to the local power structure and their privileges. By contrast, the NFPE program had the potential to spread across the entire country without upsetting the rural elites. Therefore, I argue that BRAC's NFPE program was launched not only to support rural children, but also to replace the Functional Education program, not to upset the rural power structure, and to fulfill BRAC's desire to scale up its development program across the country. Thus, it can be argued that BRAC's intention to grow big and powerful, and the failure of its Functional Education program to expand throughout the country, created an opportunity for BRAC to launch NFPE.

In my analysis, I have also found that BRAC adopted NFPE as a component of its integrated development approach. It never intended to use NFPE as a tool to instill critical awareness and thinking among its learners; rather it was a tool to support traditional education, the existing production system, and neoliberal development. Although some concepts of Freirean literacy and pedagogy were used in terms of selecting teachers, determining classroom seating arrangements, dialogical classroom¹²⁵, and developing a student-centered curriculum, they were never meant to be radical, political, or critical. As for

¹²⁵ A teaching technique to promote dialogue among learners and teacher in classrooms.

developing basic numeracy and literacy, the objective of the NFPE program was not entirely different from that of the government schools. While government primary schools were preparing students for secondary schools, BRAC's NFPE program was doing the same to link disadvantaged children to the government secondary schools. It was a great opportunity for them to access mainstream government education and the skills to be employable in the neoliberal market without questioning the oppressive social structure and status quo.

Additionally, NFPE also had the potential to attract donor funding and the support of international aid agencies. I found that USAID and UNICEF in particular were interested in the role BRAC's NFPE program had in achieving universal primary education in Bangladesh. I argue that, although BRAC was once inspired by Freire and was aware of Andre Gunda Frank's dependency theory, its adoption of NFPE was a sign of submission to the local power structure and international hegemony in the wake of neoliberalism in the 1980s in favour of its own organizational growth.

BRAC is probably now the largest hybrid development organization in the world (Ahmed, Hopper and Wickramasinghe 2012). Being a not-for-profit, non-government organization (NGO), BRAC is now a purely profit-driven corporation in its approach to development. It has profit driven commercial ventures starting from salt factory to banking and leasing companies. Interestingly, being a not-for profit organization, the majority of BRAC's current top executives and senior management team members worked in reputed multinational companies before joining BRAC. It is now also the second largest employer in the country after the Bangladesh government. In terms of microcredit and the business of poverty, BRAC is now the most innovative and most diversified poverty enterprise in the field of development. It provides non-formal education to millions of people worldwide with a focus on providing market-based skills and training. Although BRAC was once inspired by Freirean philosophy, its NFPE program and curriculum are rooted in a community development approach. Their market-based approach to training and skill development have made the NFPE program very successful. However, I found that when BRAC's NFPE students join government primary and secondary schools, they face different challenges. Their transition is not smooth and they are looked at differently by the mainstream government school teachers and students. As the assessment practices, assessment, teaching styles, and the student's socio-economic backgrounds at government schools are different from that of BRAC's schools, transitioning NFPE students face difficulties in the new government school system. This creates tension among them and results in two streams of students in secondary and higher education.

However, I do not claim that the launch of BRAC's NFPE program was driven only by BRAC's own self-interest and growth aspirations. I have analyzed BRAC's NFPE primary curriculum, reports, and documents, but it would have been ideal to interview Abed and his staff who were engaged in the program at the beginning. It would also have helped to interview the BRAC teachers, teacher educators, and NFPE curriculum developers involved in designing the objectives and activities in the 1980s. But obviously, none of that was possible.

For the past 37 years, BRAC has been implementing the NFPE program both domestically and internationally, establishing itself as a pioneer in initiating cost-effective one-room one-teacher school models for socially disadvantaged children worldwide. However, by this time, it has also distinguished itself as the largest, sustainable, and most business-like NGO in the world. It appears that BRAC's own growth and sustainability as an organization hold greater prominence than the growth and resilience of the clients it serves and was initially established for. Therefore, further research is necessary to ascertain the primary beneficiaries of the NFPE program: BRAC itself or the socially disadvantaged children who have been recipients of the program for an extended period. The answer to this question remains to be determined.

References

“BRAC Education Program Bangladesh,” BRAC, accessed September 25, 2022, <http://www.brac.net/program/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Factsheet-BRAC-Education-Programme-June-2019.pdf>

ABED, Fazle Hasan, “Interview with Fazle Hasan Abed,” interview by Tarun Khanna, Creating Emerging Markets Oral History Collection, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School, April 24, 2014, https://www.hbs.edu/businesshistory/Documents/emerging-markets-transcripts/Abed_Fazle_Web%20Copy.pdf

ABED, Fazle Hasan, Laureate speech for the Wise Prize for Education at the Wise Summit, Qatar, November 4, 2011, <https://blog.brac.net/wise-prize-for-education-laureate-speech-by-sir-fazle-hasan-abed>

AHMED, Manzoor et al., *Primary Education for All: Learning from the BRAC Experience. A Case Study*, (Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development, 1993)

AHMED, Salehuddin and FRENCH, Micaela, "Scaling Up: The BRAC Experience," *BRAC University Journal* 3, no. 2 (2006): 35-40

AHMED, Zahir and HOPPER, Trevor, "Politics, Development and NGO Accountability," in *Performance Management in Nonprofit Organizations*, eds. Zahirul Hoque and Lee Parker. New York: Routledge, 2014), 39-64

AHMED, Zahir, HOPPER, Trevor and WICKRAMASINGHE, Danture, *The BRAC Independence Movement: Accountability to Whom?* (October 26, 2015). Available at <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2680208>

BANERJEE, Subhabrata Bobby and JACKSON, Laurel, “Microfinance and the Business of Poverty Reduction: Critical Perspectives from Rural Bangladesh,” *Human Relations* 70, no. 1 (2017), 63–91

BEGUM, Kamrunnessa, AKHTER, Salma and RAHMAN, Sidiqur., *An Evaluation of BRAC's Primary Education Program*. Dhaka: Institute of Education and Research, 1988

BOWEN, Glenn A. , "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (2009): 27-40, <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>

BRAC, *Annual Report, Non-Formal Primary Education (Under Rural Development Programme)*. Dhaka: BRAC, December, 1987

BRAC, *Annual Report*. Dhaka: BRAC, 2004

BRAC, *BRAC's Functional Education: An Overview*. Dhaka: BRAC, 1980, <http://dspace.bracu.ac.bd/xmlui/handle/10361/5710>.

BRAC, *From Progress to Development in Sulla*. Dhaka: BRAC, 1974

BRAC, *Interim Report of Non-Formal Primary Education Program*. Dhaka: BRAC, 1987

BRAC, *Non-Formal Primary Education Program Report: October 84 to March 86*. Dhaka: BRAC, 1986

BRAC, *Report on Development of Innovative Methodologies in Functional Education for Bangladesh*. Dhaka: BRAC, 1977

BRAC, *Sulla Project, An Integrated Program for Development, 1972–7*. (Dhaka: BRAC, 1972. <http://dspace.bracu.ac.bd/xmlui/handle/10361/5708>

BRAUDEL, Fernand, *On History*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980

CHOWDHURY, Nobonita, “Sir Fazle Hasan Abed KCMG in Conversation with Nobonita Chowdhury,” YouTube video, 43:16, November 28, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDrAP551X00&t=637s>

CLARK, John, *Democratizing Development*, (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1991

DAVIS, John K., "NGOs and Development in Bangladesh: Whose Sustainability Counts?" in *Global Poverty: Sustainable Solutions. Proceedings of the Anti-Poverty Academic Conference with International Participation*. Perth: Murdoch University Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy, 2006

FANON, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1967

FATEH, Mohammad Abul, “A Historical Analysis on Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and Abed’s Reception of Paulo Freire’s Critical Literacy in Designing BRAC’s Functional Education Curriculum in Bangladesh from 1972 to 1981,” Unpublished M.Ed. thesis, (Queen’s University, 2020);

FATEH, Mohammad Abul, “Bangladesh: An Analysis of BRAC’s Shift from Freire’s Critical “Conscientization” to a Neoliberal Self-Optimization Approach of Development,” *Espacio, Tiempo y Educacion* 9, no. 1 (January-June 2022): 99-121. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14516/ete.542>

FRANK, Andre Gunder, “The Development of Underdevelopment,” *Monthly Review* 18, no. 4 (1966): 17-31. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-018-04-1966-08_3

FREIRE, Paulo, *Letters to Cristina: Reflections on My Life and Work*, trans. Donaldo Macedo. New York and London: Routledge, 1996

HAIPLIK, Brenda M., “An Educational Success Story from Bangladesh: Understanding the BRAC Non-Formal Primary Education Model and Its Teacher Training and Development System”. PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2004

HASHEMI, Syed, “NGO Accountability in Bangladesh: Beneficiaries, Donors and the State,” in EDWARDS, Michael and HULME, David (eds) *Non-governmental Organizations: Performance and Accountability Beyond the Magic Bullet*. London: Routledge, 1995, 103–10

HOSSAIN, Md. Altaf, *Community Participation in Improving Non-Formal Primary Education in Bangladesh: A BRAC Experience*. Dhaka: BRAC Research and Evaluation Division, 1999

JONKER, Kim, "In the Black with BRAC," *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 7 no. 1 (Winter): 74–79

KABEER, Naila, MAHMUD, Simeen, and CASTRO, Jairo G. Isaza. "NGOs and the Political Empowerment of Poor People in Rural Bangladesh: Cultivating the Habits of Democracy?" *World development* 40, no. 10 (2012): 2044–2062

LOVELL, Catherine H. and FATEMA, Kaniz, *The BRAC Non-Formal Primary Education Programme in Bangladesh*. New York: United Nations Childrens Fund, 1989

MANNAN, Manzurul, "BRAC: Anatomy of a 'Poverty Enterprise,'" *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 20, no. 2 (04 December, 2009): 219-233; <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.250>

MUHAMMAD, Anu, "Rise of the Corporate NGO in Bangladesh," *Economic and Political Weekly* 53, no. 39 (September 2018): 45-52

MUSTAFA, Samirah, "Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) in Bangladesh: A Case Study on BRAC's Role," *IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* 25, no. 12 (2020): 01-08

NATH, Samir Ranjan, *Quality of BRAC Education Programme: A Review of Existing Studies*, Research Monograph Series No. 29. Dhaka: BRAC, 2006

QUIJANO, Anibal, "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America," *International Sociology* 15, no. 2 (2000): 215–32.

RAFI, Mohammad, "Freire and Experiments in Conscientization in a Bangladesh Village," *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 37 (Sept. 13-19): 3908–14

RAHMAN, Md. Moshir, GOLAM, Azam Md., *Enhancing Children' Enthusiasm towards Learning at Rural Areas in Bangladesh: The Case of BRAC Non-Formal Education*, accessed September 25, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348590131_Brac_Non_formal_Education_Dr_Mos_hiur_Rahman

RICHARDS, John, AHMED, Manzoor and ISLAM, Shahidul, *The Political Economy of Education in South Asia: Fighting Poverty, Inequality, and Exclusion*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022

ROSENBERG, Tina, "Where Private School is Not a Privilege," *New York Times*, May 8, 2013; Scott Macmillan, "Glorious Failure: The Joy of Learning From Your Mistakes," *The Guardian*, March 30, 2015

SCHUMACHER, Ernst Friedrich, *Small is Beautiful. A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*, New York: Harper and Row, 1973

SEELOS, Christian and MAIR, Johanna, *BRAC—An Enabling Structure for Social and Economic Development*. Madrid: IESE Business School—University of Navara, 2006

SKINNER, Quentin, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory: Studies in The Philosophy of History* 8, no. 1 (1969): 3–53

SMILLIE, Ian, *Freedom From Want: The Remarkable Success Story of BRAC, The Global Grassroots Organization That's Winning The Fight Against Poverty*. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2009

THOMPSON, Martyn P., "Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning," *History and Theory: Studies in The Philosophy of History* 32, no. 3 (1993): 248–272

ZAHIR, Ahmed, HOPPER, Trevor, and WICKRAMSINGHE, Danture, "Counter Hegemony and Accountability in BRAC - A Bangladesh NGO," *Sixth Asia Pacific Interdisciplinary Research in Accounting Conference, Sydney, Australia*. 2010.