INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REFORM IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF BANGLADESH: LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Inclusive education (IE) is at an early stage of development in Bangladesh. In response to international policies and declarations over the past two decades (UNESCO, 1990; UNSCO, 1994, UNESCO, 2000) IE reform in Bangladesh has enacted a number of national policies and developed several professional development initiatives. This paper reports on the challenges identified by school leaders in attempting to implement IE policies in ten regular primary schools in Bangladesh. Interview data were collected from teachers, head teachers, members of school management committees and sub-district education officers. Data were analyzed using a general inductive thematic analysis procedure. The challenges identified by the participants included lack of authority, students' lack of acceptance, non-supportive views of parents and community, teachers' resistance, limited professional development, limited resources, and physical environment. School leaders also suggested strategies to address the identified challenges that included making local authority active, increasing resources and valuing diversity.

Keywords: leadership challenge, representation, collaboration, distributed leadership, inclusive education (IE)

Introduction

The intent of Inclusive education (IE) policy is to address and to respond equitably and appropriately to the diverse needs of *all* children irrespective of disability, gender, ethnicity or other disadvantages (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006; Booth & Ainscow, 1998). It refers to a continuous process that is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers. It also focuses on presence, participation and achievement of all students with a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement (UNESCO, 2005). IE is at an early stage of development in Bangladesh. International policies and declarations such as the *World Declaration on Education for All* (UNESCO, 1990), *Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action* (UNSCO, 1994) *and Dakar Framework for Action* (UNESCO, 2000) have provided the impetus for national initiatives for IE in Bangladesh.

Over the past two decades, in response to international policies and declarations IE reform in Bangladesh has enacted a number of national acts and policies, and developed several action plans. The *National Plan of Action Phase II* (NPA II) is an important strategy in primary education. It emphasized that *all* primary school-aged children, including those from different ethnic groups, socio-economically disadvantaged and those with a disability, should attend and successfully complete the primary school (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education [MOPME], 2003). The NPA II was extended through the *Second Primary Education Development Programme* (PEDP II) with the overall goal of providing 'quality' education accessible to *all* children of primary school age (Nasreen & Tate, 2007). More specifically, PEDP II has targeted the educational needs of four groups who are considered 'at risk' of exclusion because of gender, special needs, ethnicity and socio-economic disadvantages (Nasreen & Tate, 2007).

While commitment to the ideal of achieving 'education for all' is an evident feature of policy the reality of achieving IE reform remains a challenge. There is evidence that the current practices of IE in primary schools are qualitatively different to the goals set out in IE policy (Sarker & Davey, 2007). More than one and half million children (9.2% of the total child population) in the groups targeted by IE policy are reported to remain out of school (Directorate of Primary Education [DPE], 2009). Further, only 50% of the enrolled students are reported to complete the 5 years of primary schooling (Nath & Chowdhury, 2009). If Bangladesh's efforts to make IE are to become a reality, it will need to identify and challenge exclusion at a national level and in the local social contexts in which it occurs (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2011).

Developing IE

The "democratic processes of representation and collaboration are essential for understanding and incorporating diverse perspectives" and for actively involving teachers, parent, students and others in the inclusive school community in finding solutions to the unique challenges of their context (Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey, 2010, p.87). Representation and collaboration are practiced through professional learning communities (PLCs) which involve shared responsibilities, understandings and decision making, and genuine collaboration focused on quality teaching and learning to achieve what cannot be accomplished alone (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2009; Dufour, Eaker, & Dufour, 2006; Harris, 2003). The broad philosophy of PLCs is that all members of the school community (e.g. teachers, students, families and members of the local community) work together and

make decision to achieve the goals they have identified for themselves (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Thomas, Wallace, Greenwod, & Hawkey, 2006).

Building PLCs requires "forms of leadership that support and nourish meaningful collaboration among teachers" (Harris, 2003, p.322). Distributed leadership is relevant in this context because it recognizes that every individual in one way or another is able to demonstrate leadership and acknowledges both formal and functional leadership in a school (Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Research has confirmed that along with positional leaders, others without formal positions of authority (e.g. teachers, parents and members of the local community) can actively share leadership practices (Mullick, Deppeler, & Sharma, in press; Spillane, Camburn, Pustejovsky, Pareja, & Lewis, 2008).

Distributed leadership and collaborative practices in PLCs are not possible in a managerial accountability system. The managerial system employs a hierarchical structure where responsibilities are assigned solely to those in supervising authority. It has been argued that to meet the challenges of IE , the hierarchical model be replaced with forms of leadership where responsibilities are shared (Ainscow & Miles, 2008) and with a *professional accountability system* in which a community of professionals share the responsibilities for maintaining the standards of the profession (Møller, 2009).

The following study used the features of PLCs, namely of representation, collaboration and distributive leadership as a lens to understand the challenges and suggested strategies to address those challenges identified by school leaders in implementing IE policy in Bangladesh.

Method

Participants

The participants for this study were school leaders identified through Social Network Survey (SNS) by all the teachers (n=79) of ten schools. The SNS was developed in Bangla from the SSSNQ (School Staff Social Network Questionnaire) for identifying leaders and measuring leadership practices (Pitts & Spillane, 2009). SNS was applied to ask teachers to identify to whom they go to for advice regarding enhancing student participation in their schooling, enhancing student behavior, and enhancing student learning in relation to school curricular domains (e.g. Mathematics, Language and Science). Teachers were able to select multiple names from a list of their school staff and other professionals for each area of advice. The list included all teaching staff in their school along with members of the School Management Committee (SMC) and the local education professional designated with responsibilities for providing support to primary schools in the sub-district (in Bangla 'Upazila'). Through the SNS process (i.e., aggregated identification score) thirty five nominated leaders were identified and approached to take part in an interview. Twenty one participants accepted the offer which included head teachers (n=10), teachers (n=7), members of School Management Committees (n=2), and sub-district education officers (n=2). The participants were from ten regular primary schools, seven Government Primary Schools (GPSs) and three Registered Non-Government Primary Schools (RNGPSs) of one sub-district of Bangladesh that are involved in the IE reform initiative: PEDP-II. The participating schools of the study were selected purposively to ensure the involvement of different groups including: schools with male and female head teachers, schools in urban, sub-urban and rural locations, and schools that have been graded by the district education office at low, medium and high levels of performance.

Data collection

A semi-structured interview protocol was designed to collect qualitative data. The protocol was employed to identify the challenges school leaders face in implementing IE policy and to nominate strategies to address the identified challenges. The interview was considered appropriate as a method because it allowed the researcher to "engage, understand and interpret the key feature of the life-worlds of the participants" and to uncover the "descriptions of specific situations and actions, rather than generalities"(Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 355). The final protocol was developed through a piloting process which included: 1) developing a draft protocol, 2) sending the protocol to relevant experts (one academic person and an education practitioner) for reviewing, 3) making necessary alterations, and 4) pilot testing involving three school leaders. The final protocol applied for data collection had the following questions.

- What changes have your school experienced as a result of the policy decision about including diverse learners in regular primary school?
- How does your school respond to the policy decision of including diverse learners in your schools?
- How does your school set direction of the school?
- How does your school support professional development of the school?
- How does your school design school organization?
- How does your school supervise teaching learning of the school?
- What does your school do to promote inclusive education in school?
- What do you perceive as necessary to lead an inclusive school?

The interviews were conducted in person and in Bangla by the first author, whose first language is Bangla. The interview took place at participating schools at a time suitable to the participants. Participants were assured of confidentiality. While the semi-structured protocol guided the conversation for the specific purposes, the process was flexible and allowed the interviewer to change the sequence and rephrase the words where necessary in order to maintain the intended focus (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Patton, 2002). The interviews were audio recorded and were between 45 to 70 minutes in duration.

Analysis

The audio recorded interviews were transcribed to analyze the responses of the participants. To enhance internal validity (Creswell, 2008), the transcribed data was shared with the participants and necessary changes were made according to their suggestions. The final transcript was translated by the first author into English. "General inductive analysis approach" (Thomas, 2006, p. 238) was followed to analyze the interviewed data. This analysis approach has five steps including: 1) preparation of raw data files (data cleaning), 2) close reading of text, 3) creation of categories, 4) overlapping coding and un-coded text, and 5) continuing revision and refinement of category system (Thomas, 2006). Initially, the first author developed the themes based on the sample of transcripts. The coding process described by Creswell (2002) was followed to develop the themes. There are five steps in coding process for inductive analysis which included: a) Initial reading of text data, b) identify specific text segments related to objectives, c) label the segments of text to create categories, d) reduce overlap and redundancy among the categories, and e) create a model incorporating most important categories (Creswell, 2002, p. 266).

5

To ensure reliability of inter-coding, the first and second author compared the completed themes and discussed discrepancies until agreement was reached between them. Seven themes were identified related to challenges in implementing IE that included: lack of authority, students' lack of acceptance, non-supportive views of parents and community, teachers' resistance, limited professional development, limited resources and physical environment. Three themes emerged from the analysis related to strategies to address the challenges that included: local authority, making resource available and valuing diversity. The coding is provided in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Findings

The findings are presented in two broad sections that included both the perceived challenges of implementing IE and the strategies nominated by leaders to address some of the identified challenges.

Challenges in Implementing IE

Lack of authority. School leaders identified the centralized management system as one of the most challenging aspects in making school level decisions for IE. They criticized the centrally controlled process that does not allow the involvement of teachers and school community members in policy development and decision making. School Leaders found it unrealistic that decisions made in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, must be implemented in schools all over Bangladesh. One school leader noted:

> To whom will you tell the problem? They [Directorate of Primary Education (DPE)] will not pay any attention at all. What they have learned sitting in the AC [Air Conditioned] room is correct to them. But I face the reality and it [DPE's decision] is not always right to me. [*Head teacher, school ten*]

School leaders reported that the head teacher and the School Management Committee (SMC) do not have any authority to employ teachers. Recruiting teachers is the activity of the government officials. The only thing school leaders can do is to inform the Upazila Education Office (UEO) about the class size and number of teachers in their school so that the UEO can report to the higher officials about appointing more teachers. Finally, the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) situated in Dhaka arranges recruitment exams for teachers based on the requisitions it receives from the schools all over Bangladesh. One school leader said:

> Recruitment is done by the government [DPE]. If we feel there is need for teachers, we make a request. They verify the number of students. The rule states that recruitment dependents on number of students. We just wait for the decision. [*Head teacher, school two*]

Even in respect of more minor issues (e.g., when funding was needed to carry out minor school works), leaders needed to write to the education office and wait for at least a year to get a decision. The decisions do not always go in their favor. Every leader mentioned that the professional development of teachers depends entirely on the decisions of the government education office. School leaders' and teachers' opinions do not contribute to design, content or participation of any of the professional development activities. A head

teacher stated, "... we have little involvement in decision making about training program. Upazila education office can only decide about it... They inform us with notice about topic, schedule and venue of trainings" [*Head teacher, school eight*].

Students' lack of acceptance. Acceptance of diversity is essential for successful implementation of IE. Another strong theme was students' lack of acceptance. School leaders explained that while they are trying to build a culture of respect, understanding and acceptance of *all* children, particularly those with disabilities and the indigenous children within the school community, they are not always successful. The children with disabilities were identified as those in a particularly vulnerable position at school. The students were not considerate or tolerant of the behavior of students with disabilities and did not want to play with them. Moreover, students with disabilities often become the object of fun and were bullied by other students. A head teacher shared his experiences about students' unconstructive attitude towards a boy with special needs. He said:

> Everybody looks intently at him, observe his every activity and always stick with him, wants to tease him and laugh at him…Some other day that student [child with disability] had saliva dripping from her mouth which got the desk wet. So others do not want to sit next to her. No matter how much we try to make it understandable, this doesn't always happen. [*Head teacher, school two*]

A head teacher said:

> In many cases we found that children who have some form of impairments are discouraged to come to school by their own parents. The reason behind this is they believe that their children might victim of teasing and bullying by their peers. [*Head teacher, school eight*]

Children from indigenous groups faced similar intolerance from their fellow students. Indigenous children were teased by other students because their pronunciation and sentence structure pattern is different. A head teacher said, "When they [indigenous children] talk among themselves, the rest [other Bangla speaking children] mock them or make fun of them" [*Head teacher, school three*].

Non-supportive views of parents and community. The response of adults towards IE is important, because they are considered to be models for the children. Parents were believed to be non-accepting of diversity including those with children with disabilities. School leaders perceived that some parents of children with disabilities believed that their children would not be successful in life, would eventually become burdens for them, and did not have high expectations for them in school. Describing one of her experiences about a boy with a disability in her school one teacher said, "…his guardians are not that much aware. They think he will remain like this … will just live for some time, what else he can make out of life" [*Head teacher, school ten*].

The non-supportive view of community people sometimes creates challenges for the school leaders in attempting to build support for acceptance of diversity in their schools. There was a perception that the community is much more positive about IE because of the awareness promoting programs on IE by the Bangladesh government, development organizations and media. However despite this there was the perception that the many parents and others in the community do not value diversity in schools and believe that opportunities

provided to them to learn in school are wasted on them. One school leader shared her experience of a meeting with parents and other community people:

> They [community people] told us that those who are normal they failed to get proper support to learn when you [teachers] are thinking of disabled children...Is it [learning] in any means possible by them? It is not possible by them. [*Assistant teacher, school ten*]

One head teacher described the very non-supportive views of parents about the inclusion of children with disabilities he encountered in the school. He stated, "The parents sometimes complain that due to this disabled kid, their children are having problems in school. Their learning is hampered" [*Head teacher, school one*].

Teachers' resistance. Despite practical experiences and a 7-days IE professional development (PD) program, primary school teachers remained resistant to IE, wishing to exclude various students from their classrooms. One school leader shared his experiences about enrolling a child from one of the IE targeted groups who had some identified behavioral difficulties. He indicated that some of the teachers in his school voiced their opposition to his enrolment. "They told me that, keeping him the school environment will be threatened and the other kids will not come to school anymore" [*Head teacher, school two*].

Other school leaders said teachers argued for exclusion from the students' perspective:

> It would be a bit better if they [students with additional learning needs] are separated. If they are in the same place...it is observed that the children who are here have negative feelings to those children, that's why... the disabled children feel disturbed. But if they are in separate place it might not happen. [*Assistant teacher, school one*]

> They [indigenous students] do not want to speak. We have to give more effort to make them speak…If we have someone here from their community it would have been better. They would have been more open; staying among so many Bengali is sort of discomfort for them and they remain shy. They don't want to become close and doesn't try to share their culture. [*Head teacher, school three*]

Teachers' resistance was believed to relate to workload. School leaders believed that including children with special needs, indigenous children and children from disadvantaged groups increased the workload of the teachers. They were faced with complaints from teachers about workload. One leader stated that teachers had described their workload as "double compared to their previous workload before introducing the IE policy" [*Head teacher, school four*]. She added:

> [Because of introducing IE] the workload of teachers has been increased. A general child could understand and write properly about something after telling him/her about that once or twice. They [children with special needs and indigenous children] require more time. [*Head teacher, school four*]

Limited professional development. School leaders confirmed that while some teachers voiced support for IE, this was countered by statements regarding lack of confidence or knowledge and skills in teaching diverse learners. Leaders identified that teachers limited knowledge and skill in developing appropriate learning-teaching activities is an important

barrier in getting them to embrace the idea of including *all* children in their classrooms. School leaders believed that teachers needed further professional development (PD) related to teaching in inclusive classrooms as well as on the philosophy of IE. Currently, teachers participated in information sessions related to IE policy that had limited focus on the 'knowhow' or practice of the IE in classroom:

> Each of us [teachers] should have training that would help us to identify that for such disabled student we need to follow such process to support their learning…Currently the process we follow is basically our commonsense. [*Head teacher, school one*]

Another school leader noted, "Training for the teachers is not sufficient. This very short, 7-day training [orientation] is not sufficient for the teacher to teach this type of children [children with special needs]" [*Assistant Thana Education Officer, X sub-district*]. PD was believed to be an effective means of helping teachers to managing diverse learners in ways that would lessen their workload.

Limited resources. The school leaders were concerned about the financial support. They were provided a limited stipend with no financial support for assistive devices, language support, or food for the hungry students. The stipend payments for students (approximately US $ 1.50 for each student per month) in the targeted groups were considered insufficient. School leaders believed this level of financial support was not a satisfactory incentive for the parents to have their children in school rather than employed in paid work which was essential for a family's income. There was no funding for assistive devices or additional care for students with special needs and a general shortage of learning-teaching materials in schools. Language was perceived to be a major barrier to success for indigenous students in primary education. School leaders emphasized that additional language support was required to enable these children to participate in their schooling. Leaders described how hunger prevented children from being active and engaging in learning. "Students cannot regularly come to school without breakfast and do not bring tiffins (play lunch) to eat during school break time" [*Head teacher, school four*].

Another leader stated:

> The kids from poor families cannot come to school with proper meal...making them an active part of the class is quite problematic. With a stomach ache [from hunger] they can't concentrate to learn and are distracted. [*Assistant teacher, school four*]

Physical environment. Other challenges related to the lack of resources for education raised by the school leaders related to the physical conditions of the school environment. The high teacher student ratio (1:50) (DPE, 2009) was not believed to be conducive to IE by the school leaders. Leaders strongly believed that the teachers could not adequately address individual needs of students under these conditions, and that the high teacher student ratio negatively impacted on the range of quality of learning-teaching activities teachers are able to use (e.g. providing opportunities to students to actively participate in group work). Large classes were considered to be particularly disadvantageous to students who were new to schooling (e.g., indigenous children, children living in urban slums, street children, refugee children, children from very poor families).

> Adequate proportion of teachers and students is needed for this type of education [IE]. We don't have that ratio here. If we want to provide additional care for the students of special need in inclusive system we need to have more teachers to provide the extra care for them. [*Head teacher, school seven*]

The quality of teaching is further exacerbated by the physical conditions of the schools with appropriate modifications for students with special needs are absent, as the following quotes illustrate:

> Students with special need may have the mobility limitation and for their access in many schools ramp is available. Some schools do not have this, for example our school do not have ramp. [*Head teacher, school eight*]

> To implement the IE, we need spacious classrooms, more equipment and good toilet facilities. There is a need to renovate the current toilet facilities. Kids cannot get into it. [*Head teacher, school two*]

Strategies to Address Challenges

School leaders suggested a number of strategies that could be adopted to address the identified challenges of implementing IE policy in primary schools in Bangladesh. Three themes were common: local authority, increased resources and valuing diversity.

Local authority. Although school leaders are largely responsible for implementing IE, they do not have the authority to devise or enact solutions to the challenges of this in their school communities. To work for IE, leaders believed they were powerless without authority to make decisions in a number of identified areas: employing teachers and caregivers, devising and implementing initiatives, or identifying and/or mobilizing resources, enabling collaboration with other schools or local organizations, developing and conducting professional development activities, and getting members of the community involved in school activities. One school leader indicated her disappointment when her suggestion to include private schools along with GPS (Government Primary School) and RNGPS (Registered Non-government Primary School) in the survey for identifying children that are excluded from schooling and other information about children in her school's catchment area. She said:

> The rules and regulations they [DPE] set are very rigid. If they would take our opinion, it would be better…the department [DPE] ordered that you have to do it as we said, I mean, they didn't pay any attention to my opinion. [*Head teacher, school ten*]

She believed if they were given authority to make decisions at local and school level the private schools would have been engaged in the work and, in her words, "*the government would get an authentic work*".

Increased resources. Another strong theme related to address the existing challenges was increased resources. School leaders believed that they needed funding to appoint more teachers to reduce the high teacher student ratio, provide professional development opportunity to teachers on inclusive practice, ensure access, and provide inclusive friendly

teaching learning materials to *all* students. School leaders believed that an improved stipend could support the families to manage the cost of buying materials like pens, pencils, rulers, exercise books, etc. Moreover, funding was necessary to arrange the school feeding program to combat against hunger and malnourishment. According to the suggestions of the school leaders, the increased funding could also allow them to provide assistive devices and appoint caregivers for the children with special needs. However, many school leaders believed that if they were allowed to mobilize resources involving the community, they possibly could address all the challenges related to resources and contextual issues. A chairperson of a School Management Committee (SMC) stated:

> My understanding is they [DPE] should allow us to mobilize funds to arrange various necessary school activities like sports competition, picnic, award ceremony etc. If they allow us, we could also take initiative to have more classrooms, improve our toilet facilities and renovate our schoolyard. [*Chairperson of SMC, School nine*]

Valuing diversity. Leaders emphasized the need to increase the valuing of diversity with people in the wider school community. Their suggestions ranged from local awareness activities through to mass media campaigns directed at parents of children in the IE target groups. One head teacher said:

> ...to change their mind more TV and radio programs are needed. Everybody watches TV if they see that all types of children can learn and do well their understanding might be changed. [*Head teacher, School two*]

Many school leaders also believed that involvement of parents and community in school improvement programs was an important strategy for bringing understanding about diversity and improving responses towards IE. Some school leaders believed that teachers working together were a good strategy for solving problems and for reducing teachers' resistance to having students with diverse learning needs in their classroom.

Discussion

Consistent with previous research (Agbenyega, 2007; Caceres, Awan, Nabeel, Majeed, & Mindes, 2010; Deng & Guo, 2007; Giffard-Lindsay, 2007; Huang, 2007; Kuyini & Desai, 2007; Prinsloo, 2001) the findings of this study confirmed that implementing IE as perceived by school leaders in Bangladesh requires empowered local authority, increased resources, and a school community that values diversity. Huang (2007) found three major challenges to implement IE in Taiwan which included: incomplete teams of special education professionals, a lack of concepts about inclusive schooling and limited time for planning and training. That study also identified high student teacher ratio, large class size and school size as barrier to facilitating inclusion successfully. In another related research (Agbenyega, 2007) conducted in Ghana identified the four issues of behavior, student needs, resource issues and professional competency which requires further attention for successful implementation of IE policy.

This study identified the administrative control system and decision making process as a major challenge for making schools more inclusive. It indicated that managerial accountability system limits the capacity of school leaders rather empowers them to meet the challenges and dilemmas involved in IE reform. Empowerment of school leaders to mobilize resources to successfully implement IE is necessary, because empowered school leaders can involve community people in school development work and reform activities. The

hierarchical management system makes the schools of Bangladesh less accountable to the community (Mullick & Deppeler, 2011). Among the South Asian countries decentralization and school-based management are less practiced in Bangladesh (Ahmed & Gavinda, 2010), but meaningful decentralization in planning and resource management is required for effective governance and management (Sabur & Ahmed, 2010). A study by Chowdhury, Chowdhury, Hoque, Ahmad, and Sultana (2009) revealed that 'high accountability of teachers to the local community' had a positive relationship with overall improved performance of the school (p. 27). Loreman (2007) argues for the involvement of the community in schools as one of the pillars of support for IE. Ainscow (2005) also acknowledges the community-school collaboration as one of the key levers for change. Additional resources, which the participants of the study broadly reported to ensure accessibility for students with special needs and food for the students from poor families, can be managed if the close involvement of community is maintained.

Further, the findings of this study indicated that making a school community value diversity might be possible if the members of the community get involved with the school activities. It is echoed in the study of the Save the Children, UK (2008). They argued that, "participatory dialogue and planning approaches can have a big impact on overcoming prejudice and discrimination at local level because they bring mainstream and excluded populations closer together and focus attention on achieving all children's rights to education" (Save the Children, 2008, p. 15). PLCs can also play an important role by encouraging teachers to value diversity. The main beliefs of PLC are, as Servage (2008) described, (1) professional development is crucial to improve student learning; (2) most effective professional development is possible through collaborative and collegial practice; and (3) collaborative work needs to involve inquiry and problem solving in daily teaching practices' contexts. Collaborative practice, the core belief of PLC, would drive teachers to share best practices to implement IE. Collaborative practice is also necessary to increase the efficacy of teachers to facilitate IE in classroom and identify possible strategies to address the challenges they face during daily learning-teaching activities. The existing management system does not allow school leaders to set PLCs, which they believed can work better for the professional development of teachers.

Collaborative practice and collective decision making processes at the school level also indicate to the 'practice aspects' and 'leader plus aspects' of distributed leadership. Spillane (2006) described *practice aspects* as the interaction of leaders, followers and their situation outline the leadership practice. Spillane (2006) was also advocating for leader plus aspects which emphasizes the notion that all members of an organization can lead, and leadership is a form of agency to be distributed or shared (Harris, 2003; Møller, 2009a). Decentralization of the decision making process and support to distributed form of leadership can enhance and contribute to school development and improvement through implementing IE policy.

To address the challenges in implementing IE policy, school leaders also need to see themselves as part of the system which is making progress towards inclusion. Leaders also need to engage themselves in interaction with other schools for capacity building of all partners towards sustainable development. In England, it is known as school-to-school collaboration and some researchers (Ainscow & Howes, 2007; Ainscow, Muijs, & West, 2006) described it as networking. The National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services formerly NCSL of the UK is advocating for school-to-school collaboration activities, denoting it as network leadership. The network leadership has openness and trust which support networked schools in sharing data and professional practice to increase the ability of practitioners in identifying good practice and it prepares the schools

"for meaningful external engagement and promotes a momentum for change" (National College for School Leadership [NCSL], 2006, p. 2). Schools in Bangladesh have systematic arrangements for school networking from the early 90s known as cluster meeting and sub-cluster training (Moulton, Rawley, & Sedere, 2002). Though the cluster meeting and sub-cluster training were introduced for information dissemination and in-service professional development, these tools can be used for school-to-school collaboration and joint effort to facilitate inclusion.

PEDP II has taken initiative of decentralization of school management in recent years under the name School Level Improvement Plans (SLIPs). The broad purpose of SLIPs is to strengthening participation of teachers, members of School Management Committee, parents and community in the school activities to support the improvement of the quality of learning for *all* children (ADB, 2008). Successful implementation of SLIPs can acquire the features of PLCs to include *all* children in regular primary schools of Bangladesh to ensure their quality learning. Moreover, school-to-school collaboration or in other word PLCs between schools can provide confidence and increase efficacy of teachers and school leaders to enact IE policy. Nevertheless, initiatives and efforts carried out by positional leaders, principals or head teachers at school are not enough to ensure IE. It indicates leadership needs to be observed from all sources of the school environment and encourages all to play their role in leadership practice to make schools more inclusive. Study on leadership practices for IE is expected to focus on this issue for further understanding. If the goals of equity and equality of opportunity of education are to become a reality in Bangladesh, then the challenges of discrimination and exclusion will need to be identified and addressed by those in the social contexts in which they occur. It is the leaders and other members of the local school communities who are best placed to find the solutions to meet these challenges.

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