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## **Leading a qualitative review in Bangladesh: Girls at school, with funding from Norway**

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### Abstract

*The paper presents some of the problems and results of working between cultures and languages on a project regarding teenage girls and young women at school in Bangladesh. It follows my work as an Australian researcher, international consultant and team leader (for the Female Secondary Education Stipend Project, final review 2001), with funding from the Norwegian government. As such the paper analyses the practices and policy arising from international attempts to (1) get girls going to school and (2) keep them going to school. Bangladesh is ranked number one on world corruption scales, with acute poverty and illiteracy, and the status of women affected by class division and religion. Institutionalised education is problematic. Working with two Bangladeshi consultants (a man economist and a woman sociologist) I conducted fieldwork in Bangladeshi schools, interviewed (with a translator) students, teachers and father/guardians; and liaised with Bangladeshi Government and Education Department officials, World Bank and Asian Development Bank consultants and representatives from local Non-Government Organisations. The resultant two volume written review (Rhedding-Jones et al , 2001, now published, 2002) recommended the continuation of the Norwegian donor project into another phase. It also presented a range of information, photographs, critiques and deconstructions. For a theorising researcher to undertake such work requests some professional relocations.*

### **The work of the qualitative review team**

The written review named 'Girls at School: A Qualitative Review in Bangladesh' is a text product from the Final Review of Female Secondary Education Stipend Project (FESP) Phase 2 (NORAD). The members of the review team were Dr Jeanette Rhedding-Jones, International Consultant and Team Leader in Bangladesh; Dr Sadeka Halim, Member of Review Team in Bangladesh; Dr Osman Haider Chowdhury, Member of Review Team in Bangladesh; and Ms Berit Helene Vandsemb, Consultant in Norway. We submitted our written review for comments to the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Dhaka, Bangladesh (GON); the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Oslo, Norway (NORAD); the Ministry of Education, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GOB); and Centre for International Education at Oslo University College, Norway (LINS). Eventually, after making

the required changes the written review was accepted. This conference paper is yet another textual product from my experience with the project in Bangladesh. At the start of the written review we wrote (Rhedding-Jones *et al* 2002):

We especially thank the girls and young women students in Bangladesh who informed us for this review. Their understandings of their own situations and their hopes have inspired our work. We also especially thank the women teachers and women deputy head teachers who told us that they had waited many days to talk to us. We thank also the year 11 students who no longer receive the stipend money but came back to their old schools to tell us about it.

To the many men we met at the Bangladesh rural schools and in the rural administrative offices we are also indebted. Many of the guardians had travelled distances to meet us and put forward their points of view. Head teachers, classroom teachers, area managers, district officers and others responsible for the welfare of the girls and the management of the stipend have all contributed to the product that results as this written review.

At the central level we thank the Female Secondary Education Stipend Project (FESP) Project Director, the Director of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), the Project Director and Director of Training at the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), the Director for Development of Selected Secondary Schools Government and Non-Government, and others employed at the Ministry of Education.

We are also grateful for input from the Project Director for the World Bank, the Senior Project Manager for the World Bank, consultants and reviewers working with the World Bank, consultants with the Asian Development Bank, independent consultants and academics working on women's issues, the team leader at PROMOTE working with assistance from the European Commission, the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) consultants and employees, and the many other people we met with informally or talked with on the phone in Dhaka during the review process. The names, the ideas and sometimes the photographs of these people appear throughout the pages that follow. Further, we have tried to insert their voices into what we now present.

### **Overview of the written review**

As an academic highly interested in texts I noted that at no point was it specified, by the bureaucrats requesting my work as an international consultant, that I should actually produce a report. Accordingly I interpreted the genre required to be that of a 'written review', with an emphasis on the qualitative as was out brief. This genre evolved because of the process of the consultations, investigations, meetings, readings and group interviews conducted by us as the reviewers. To fit normalized expectations we ended up with the following format, after much negotiation, between ourselves and also with the institutions commissioning us and named above. Of course what I wrote was much too much. Eventually most of this was accepted and what is now published by Oslo University College is 140 pages (Rhedding-Jones, Halim, Chowdhury and Vandsemb, 2002).

The organisation of the written review is as follows. First we summarise our recommendations, then introduce our findings, conclusions and recommendations in more detail. Then comes a summary of conclusions and the lengthy endnotes by which we arrived at our findings and conclusions. These endnotes serve as documented verification from our fieldwork. They also allow for various readers to find information, subjective positionings and

some descriptions of sites and events of Bangladeshi schooling as we saw and heard it. These endnotes take up 10 pages. All of this is chapter one.

Chapter two introduces the project reviewed. It names the objectives of our review, and the goals and objectives of the reviewed project. Then it presents an analysis of background history to the project; and the goals, objectives and changes over time. The project relevance in context follows, detailing the changes to project implementation over time, the project relevance to partner country priorities, and the factors and processes affecting achievement of objectives. The conclusion to chapter two regards sustainability and quality development. As you can see this is all written in the language (English) understood by bureaucrats as what is appropriate. Here my Bangladeshi colleagues were much better at this kind of writing than I, having worked on other similar consultative reviews, and being very used to such ways of writing.

Chapter three is about the qualitative methodology for the review. This was where we two women on the team in Bangladesh had much to say. We used our respective disciplinary backgrounds of sociology and education to write what we knew and did regarding study areas and review questions, focus group discussions, case studies, interviews, observations and document analysis, and finally, our reflections on qualities in methodology. None of this was actually research methodology; it was the methodology of a qualitative review. But reviewing and researching have some similarities, and we as qualitative reviewers drew from our experiences and our theories of research. The man economist was not thus involved in this, presumably leaving the chapter with something of a gender bias, or at least a gendered construction of what a qualitative review's methodology ought to be. Directly following this is chapter four, written by Sadeka Halim and Jeanette Rhedding-Jones, about women and development in Bangladesh. Here we wrote what we wanted, not what was asked for. Sadeka's topics are the situation of women in rural Bangladesh and the situation of women's education in Bangladesh. Jeanette's are gender perspectives and Bangladesh, and education perspectives and Bangladesh. These chapter sections could have been articles sent to international refereed journals perhaps, and may have advanced our careers better if they had been. But we wanted them in the written review, so that they might make a difference to practice and to policy.

Chapter five is what we were expected to write: the qualitative findings of the reviewers. We divided the chapter into what the three of us could each do best: institutional frameworks of schools regarding gender; gender analysis of project management and programs; results achieved as to goals and objectives for the project; sample recordings of findings; and summary of socio-economic aspects. The word 'gender' was quite contentious. Our male economist thought gender had nothing to do with the project we were reviewing; our female sociologist had just completed a Canadian Doctoral thesis on the topic of gender in rural forestry in Bangladesh. Our male financial consultant ate his meals beside the man economist; our female translator ate beside our female sociologist. Jeanette decided in the interests of conflict avoidance to eat with the men. As the oldest in the group and the leader, she found acting like a token man not too difficult. She wore the local clothes of a woman though, and chatted in the women's ways and places.

Chapter six is a critical analysis from fieldwork. It was Jeanette's doing. She wrote of political practices, institutional practices, economic and financial practices, socio-cultural practices, and curriculum practices. This took most of her summer holidays after she got back to Norway, whilst re-covering from cultural shock. (She gets cultural shock in both countries.) Her interest was not in publishing, she just had to write a lot. Osman sent her his work for the next two chapters via the email. This was delayed quite a bit when he was sick, and she edited and re-formatted so that it would make a more cohesive whole. Sadeka also sent her writing via cyberspace: not an easy task given Bangladesh's fluctuating electricity and the

volatility of just about everything imaginable. Chapters seven and eight thus comprise our reporting on project management and implementation (as overall management of the project and financial management of the project) and project efficiency and effectiveness (as resource use and cost effectiveness, targeted plans and achievements and project efficiency and monitoring). Given Jeanette's difficulties in managing even her own financial situation effectively and efficiently, across the nations of Norway and Australia where she lives and used to, we certainly needed the experts in our team. Moreover, as all the money stuff was written in Bengali script, Jeanette could not even read the numbers in the account books we saw in the schools.

Osman Chowdhury and Sadeka Halim wrote (though not together) chapter nine, about the sustainability of the project. Their chapter sections regard the concept of program sustainability, social and household sustainability, institutional viability and community development, financial and economic viability, and expansion and replicability. Jeanette suspects there is a formula for this kind of writing, and that economists and sociologists learn how to do it and educators don't. At any rate, she has learned to read it, though not to speak it.

Our last real chapter comprises our recommendations for the future of the project: a more expansive version than we gave earlier at the start of the written review. Here we write of the qualities of the project (funding from Norway for the girls' schooling); the delivery of services (the giving of money to each 12-18 year old schoolgirl so that she may go to school); the

management of financial aspects (where the corruption is in the system, and when and how the schoolgirls get their money); the coordination amongst donors and programs (how this Norwegian project fits with the related World Bank project, the Asian Development Bank's work and with Non-Government Organisations); the continuous processes of monitoring and evaluation (of the foregoing, given that none of this is computerised and most practices are local not centralised); the possible or predictable educational qualities in the long term (regarding education itself not only money for it); and gendered qualities in the long term (these last two written by Sadeka and Jeanette). An eleventh chapter, called reflections on the review is Jeanette doing: she was surprised she was allowed to include it.

All of the above came out initially (first as a series of drafts for everyone to comment on, then as an accepted written review which all except Jeanette refer to as a 'report') as a two volume straight-from-the-computer printout. Then a year later we got it published in Norway through the Teacher Education International Centre (LINS). Later this paper will draw from a recent paper written by the LINS Director Dr Bob Smith, who is English. This paper of his is called 'Exporting an educational culture: a critical review of the role of donors to Education in the South'. (Smith, 2002) No matter for now that Jeanette is from much further South than Bangladesh.

This description of what is in the written review continues, so that you know what we have been working on, and why I am now problematising the role of an academic who decides to do such work. Yes there is money in it: I earned a bit extra, and my employing institution earned a lot. It could have reduced my teaching load, given the formula we have here in Norway. But as I was by the time I got back from Bangladesh already a Professor, and coordinator of research and development in my section of the Faculty, and hence getting paid extra to work with postgraduates, this being beyond my workload. So I could get no further teaching reductions, nor did I need them. because of my Bangladesh consultancy, which I did over the 'summer' break in June and July, with much writing in August.

Volume Two includes the heart of the review: additional information, photographs, critiques and deconstructions. And this is all the work of 'the women'. Here I should say that Sadeka

and Osman earned an equal flat rate: regardless of how many hours each worked they were paid to do the review mostly while I was with them, but with writing after my return to Norway. 'Outside' work in Dhaka (the capital of Bangladesh, where we were based) for Sadeka included taking me to the University one Saturday with Taslima, the young woman who translated for me so sensitively. to hear Sadeka present a lecture to an all-male collection of colleagues. Sadeka also invited me to her house twice, where I met her mother and her son. Just before I left Bangladesh Sadeka's mother, who is my age, organised a most marvellous Bangladeshi banquet in my honour, with invited guests and many smiles.

Volume Two comprises 15 appendices and 7 papers, as supporting documents to what is in volume one. I was not allowed to put the two volumes together, presumably because people would only want to walk around carrying one, not both. And so the lengthy reference list I insisted on having (where is my academic identity without a reference list going way beyond all those compulsory-reading reports?) had to be printed twice. And I have no idea if anyone read what really matters in volume two. Here are the titles to its appendices: descriptions of photographs taken on field trip; photographs; schedule of events in Bangladesh for Review Team Leader; meeting of Appraisal Team, FSSAP World Bank and Review Team, FESP (NORAD); notes from meeting with staff of MOE, DSHE and Project Directors; meeting with Team Leader of PROMOTE; Terms of Reference; technological communication 1; technological communication 2; list of people invited to reception at the Norwegian Embassy in Dhaka; meeting of review team before fieldwork; sample rough notes for wider discussions; working paper regarding review team; quotes from minutes of meetings and reports held at Norwegian Embassy; letter requesting access to rural field sites, newspaper extracts classified; sample field notes classified. The newspaper extracts take up four pages. They provide a contextual basis, from Dhaka's daily English-language newspaper, for the project and its reviewing. Any reader who can read between lines, even without a poststructural positioning, can see what we have not actually said. I would like these readings and seeings to contribute to future work in related projects for developing countries.

The papers comprising together with the appendices volume two are: Government responses on gender perspectives and Bangladesh; Non-government interventions and integration of women in development; Norway and gender, education perspectives in Bangladesh; Critical analysis form fieldwork; Qualitative methodology of the review; Women and development in Bangladesh.

### **Professional relocations for a theorising researcher**

Besides the above, where I not only say what is in the written review but give some of my subjective narratives and reactions to it, I now have other reservations about doing this kind of work. To present these I draw briefly from Tsolidis (2001) and then from Fox (2001), to start by considering some problems in working between cultures and languages. As can already be seen, my placement was between my Australian-ness; my funding institutions which were Norwegian; and the normalised gender split between men's and women's cultures in Bangladesh. With languages, English was what mattered, at least in official writing. This English though was not an English with which I was skilled. Further, Bengali (or Bangla as the locals call it) was the language in use once I got away from 'the centre'. As an aside: when I got back to the Norwegian Embassy in Dhaka after the fieldwork trip to the rural districts with my all-Bangaldeshi colleagues, I was quite relieved to know everything that was said. During fieldwork I had relied very much on Taslima's translations, and as we travelled the Bangladeshis had spoken English with me. Have you seen my slip? The people in the Norwegian Embassy were of course speaking Norwegian. It felt like I was home. Everything is relative. I must, at last, be thinking in Norwegian.

As can be seen I was quite out of my depth in some of the matters I was called upon to lead. Whilst I know a leader can delegate and doesn't need to know or do it all, I also had a problem with my professional positioning as an educator. Here was a project about girls at school. Was I not to say anything about their schooling? Or about 'girls'? One I spoke with was secretly married, almost all I would guess were past menarche. At any rate Taslima my translator told me it was rude to ask them their ages, so I didn't. Sadeka and I thought it was rude to call them 'girls' once they had the bodies of women. But this is not the politeness of Norwegian women, even feminists, who call women "girls" without thinking this is belittling. So much for gender and cultural courtesies.

Regarding pedagogy, which I of course saw in evidence during my visits to the schools, Tsolidis (2001, p. 97) says:

pedagogies are themselves culturally situated knowledges ... cross-cultural pedagogies at the heart of international education have a radical possibility if the dialectical relationship between sameness and difference is mediated by an understanding that both students and teachers act and author in the classroom.

Not being employed, presumably, to write about this I nevertheless felt obliged to, even if only for myself. Hence the papers at the end of Volume Two of the earlier unpublished written review. For here was apparently, at least to me, colonialism of the worst kind: total take-over of a culture in the forms of course content, curriculum organisation, assessment and examinations, physical set-ups in classrooms. My reading of the 'textbook' (a book of paper only) for 'English' was sufficient to convince me that here was patriarchal traditionalism to the teeth. Of course 'we' recommended teacher education, in-service training with local leaders, curriculum reform, 'girl'-friendly coursework, changing practices. But it was outside our brief, even though we were supposed to investigate cultural context for the project, and changes over time. So when Tsolidis says (2001, p. 103) that 'pedagogy and curriculum, like all knowledges, are culturally-situated and as such as framed by social, political and historical context', then I as an academic also of her persuasion must remember what it is I am employed to write, and which institutions have the right to say no to what I would like to publish.

Eventually these institutions gave me a green light, but this has not usually been the case with people wanting to publish after consultancies. The result of this normalised and modernist practice, of not blurring the prestigious and well-paid work of an international review with the theoretical and intellectual work of writing an international refereed journal article, might have been catastrophic. Consider the following scenario: a professor who needs not any longer to publish such articles internationally decides instead to enjoy travel and to make more money. Or another possibility: academics not all that clever at getting into international refereed journals decide instead to not try; so they keep their employing institutions happy by doing consultancies, without bringing in any particularly up-to-date ideas and practices about methodology, about theory and about how and what you actually write. I shall not pursue this line further here, but you get my drift.

Now I know that Tsolidis would not have had the Bangladeshis in Bangladesh in mind when she published in *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*. More likely she meant the lucrative 'international' business of bringing 'foreigners' in (to Australia). But her point, I suggest, applies also to the context from which I write now: the taking over of a country, even in the highly laudable and absolutely necessary case of getting 'girls' to educate themselves. Tsolidis says (2001, p. 103):

cross-cultural education in the context of the colonialism of a by-gone era ... had the express purpose of teaching 'them' to be like 'us', and, therefore, not like themselves

... methods of instruction were universalised ... the belief that in order for some groups to succeed, education has to teach them how to unlearn who they are and instead learn the ways of the dominant.

So for me to have leave the 'Girls at School' project is difficult. The educator in me cannot let it go. I must at the very least keep talking about it. This is one of the reasons for the lengthy appendices and papers attached to the written review. Following Fox (2002, p. 210) I worry that 'I must not impose my Western perspective on the analyses of non-Western subjects. I must try to locate the agent of change in the "subaltern", not merely those with Western education. And I must be tenacious in my efforts to hear all indigenous voices in the texts I analyse.'

Whilst wanting to do this, and at least the voices of the schoolgirls appear in the text of the written review, one of my jobs as the international consultant for the program was the reading of the daily increasing piles of bureaucratic documents such as the Agreed Minutes (2000), the governments' Agreement (2000), Appraisals (1996), World Bank reports (Darnell, 2000; Miske, 2000; O'Gara and Jain, 2000), Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education reports (2000), task force support papers (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2001), chartered accountants' reports (Howlader, Yunus & Co, 2001), National curriculum statements (Ministry of Education, Bangladesh, 2000); Norwegian documents (Norwegian Embassy, 1997; OECD, 1999); Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 1999 report; earlier evaluations of the project (Pathmark Associates Limited, 2001a; 2001b; Sigvaldsen *et al*, 1999; Vandsemb, 2000a; 2000b), World Bank volumes, Terms of Reference and information (1999; 2001) and other Norwegian project reports in Bangladesh (Østberg and Braathe (2000; 2001), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (1999). So what I am saying is that it would be quite easy for me at this stage of my career to just go sideways, forget about everyday events and voices from the margins of education practice, and just become enmeshed in bureaucratic hee-haw.

There were many more documents than these that I read (how do Norwegians do this, in English?) which comprised but a small fraction of the required reading (and presumed memorisation, acronyms and all). I did this reading before I left Norway and continued when in Dhaka, as more surfaced. I began writing at the start of my Bangladeshi visit but did the bulk of it later. It took six more months of re-writing and negotiating before the final 'report' was accepted (by the four institutions of the Norwegian Foreign Office, the Norwegian Embassy in Bangladesh, the Government of Bangladesh and the International Teacher Education Centre here in Oslo.) For all of this my employing institutions earned a neat sum of money, and I got to pocket some of it myself. But what I did was officially three weeks' work, all expenses paid, with rice, dhall and curried vegetables (which I love) twice a day.

By choice I also read locally published information and academic articles written by Bangladeshis in English (Ahmed, 1999a; Akther, 1992-3; Begum, 1994; Huq and Khatun, 1992; Huq, 1997; Jahan, 1995; Khan, 2001; Khatun, 1992-3; Khatun, 1992; Mostakim, 1996; Rahman, 1992-3) and written in Norwegian from Bangladeshi fieldwork (Petersen *et al*, 2001). Additionally I read *Lonely Planet* (Plunkett *et al*, 2000), to avoid the most disastrous of mistakes; and the daily newspaper published in English (*The Independent*, 2001) during my time in Dhaka. Of course I found horrendous all the killings, wife violence, girl treatment, poverty of men and women, lack of education, sexism amongst the middle class. These formed a context for my work, which I wrote into the written review.

As an academic my work is reading, writing, teaching and research. What I did for this project in Bangladesh was read material I probably would not have chosen to read, plus some that I did. What I wrote was way too much, in terms of what the usual practices were

for international consultants. I had my reasons for this: one of them being to blur the lines between what is consultancy, what is reviewing, what is decision-making and what is critical reflection. In short I contested the role of the consultant. In this I was eventually successful, obtaining the permission of all of the various institutions to now present and publish from the qualitative work that we did. I say we although I did by far the most work. The Norwegian in the team, Berit Vandsemb, wrote some historical information about the project, as she has worked on it earlier and has much more Bangladeshi experience than I.

As an academic I am not sure that I want to continue with this kind of work. I know that matters of women's competence are pressing, and I know that I am in a privileged position to be able to choose whether I shall take on more of these projects or not. The difficulties of crossing generic borders were for me perhaps the strongest reason for not continuing. By this I mean the genres of texts: what is acceptable where and by whom. Linked to this are the bureaucratic mentalities of workplaces such as embassies, government departments, hierarchically organised institutions; and the problematics of an ever-prevailing patriarchy and a frequent lack of critique of social class. Yet the matter of experience is such that you can't just put it behind you. It stays there as a part of your present, even if you have decided it must stay out of your future. So what I wrote earlier is still in my head and still in my body (Rhedding-Jones, 1991; 1994; 1996; 1997, 2002). And so is my experience of working in Bangladesh and producing the 150 pages of the qualitative review (Rhedding-Jones, Halim, Chowdhury and Vandsemb, 2001). What I am saying is that this project engaged me as not only a reviewer but also as a teacher, researcher, writer and woman.

As is Tsolidis, I am in these four roles wary of both assimilationist and colonialist agendas. Like the teachers Tsolidis writes of (2001, p. 101), I feel 'a deep resistance to this as a potential outcome of ... work'. In such a complex situation we are 'transferrers of knowledges that are both despised and desired'. Here I agree with Tsolidis that 'new understandings of culture are needed in order to attempt ... a reconciliation ... of liberatory pedagogies with [the] cross-cultural teaching and learning at the heart of international education.' This I hope is one of the uses to which our written review will be put. Further, by blurring my reviewer's work with my academic work, I hope to have avoided the situation Tsolidis (p. 102) describes: 'Sometimes academics understand international education as something they have to do in order to sustain the university, the college or the school, and thus afford themselves the opportunity to continue their 'real' work.' In making this review 'real work' though there are prestigious publications I have not written, and a summer holiday I did not get.

A further issue in professional relocations for a theorizing researcher regards the impact of globalization on feminism and representations of globalization from a gendered perspective. Here I take the lead given by Bergeron (2001), published in *Signs, Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. Bergeron imagines a feminist subjectivity, and a construction of subjectivities in the political economy literature on gender and globalization. On the printout I took from the internet, and to which these page numbers refer, Bergeron says (p. 2) there is 'an emerging scholarship on gender and globalization...What gender identities, decisions, choices, and interventions do these texts invoke and elaborate?' This I am endeavouring to put into textual practice by my interventions in the writing of a funded written review. I do so by producing 'much too much', by refusing to put the written work of the Bangladeshi consultants into only an appendix (as is the practice in many such reviews), and by writing in the positionings of the Bangladeshi translator and financial adviser, who could have been rendered invisible. Further, I make apparent if not clear my own feminist, colonizing and white self.

My brief encounters with transnational corporations and international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, are also written into the text of the review. From this and from the

project in general I have learned that indeed 'globalization is a force that localise[s], fragments, and even renationalise[s] identities (Bergeron, 2001, p. 2). It is not necessarily the case though that 'globalization is the force that constructs its others' (p. 3), as the Bangladeshis working with me have demonstrated. Further, the NORAD (Norwegian) project itself reads positively as attempting to 'resolve the negative effects of economic restructuring on women' (Bergeron, p. 3) and to 'imagine the marginalized as potential world subjects'. That is, if you see the Bangladeshis in Bangladesh as marginalized in global terms. Certainly the women working on the project appear to 'imagine a different kind of world subject, one who stands in opposition to global capital'. And yes the work of we women on the rural fieldwork trip shows that 'feminist accounts have challenged the dominant scripts of globalization by elaborating the gendered assumptions and effects that are generally invisible' (Bergeron, 2001, p. 5). But there was an almighty row between the economist and the sociologist on this trip, and I ended up having to see each of them separately as they couldn't bear to see or hear each other.

Yet we women refused to write a 'report as usual' and omit the subjective positionings of the schoolgirls and their women teachers. Their mothers we could not write in, seeing none, as is the local Islamic custom. When fathers could not attend 'guardians' meetings, uncles came. As much as we could then, Sadeka and I followed the practices of 'feminist research [that] shows the importance of the private' (Bergeron, 2001, p. 5), knowing that we very often met at the bureaucratic, departmental and institutional levels 'exclusionary gendered, classed, and racialized meanings and practices ... images and their effects' (2001, p. 7). My experience of this was as Bergeron says (p. 7): 'The only effective form of resistance to global capital is global sisterhood, which means shedding our no longer meaningful national and local identities in favour of global ones.' In this way I found the work of the review a 'challenge [to] the boundary between global and local' (p. 9). In my case this was my experience of boundaries between the Norwegian funding from institutions, the Bangladeshi fieldwork and the Australian research and writing cultures from which I come.

### **Critical analysis from fieldwork**

This section of the paper presents chapter six of the written review (Rhedding-Jones, *et al*, Volume One, 2001) I give it because it is not otherwise available in English-speaking countries, and because it demonstrates what I have been saying above. My intention with this writing was, amongst other intentions, that it would be used in Teacher Education and in-service short courses for teachers in Bangladesh. This is now happening. It is also informing what happens as higher degree work for postgraduate students' research projects in developing countries and international work in general. Introducing the critical, as critical issues, critical pedagogy, critical theory and doing a critically qualitative review was my idea. I wanted not to bash down what is already happening, but to get reconstructions and reconceptualizations to happen in practice.

Here (as Chapter 6) some of the findings and conclusions of the review are briefly considered for what they may be saying about politics, institutions, economics and finance, socio-culture and curriculum. As an analysis of the qualitatively gathered data, the intention is to throw new light on what currently happens; and what is not yet happening. Such an analysis is informed by new international practices and theories of education and gender. By presenting such an analysis it is hoped that schooling for girls and for boys in Bangladesh will benefit. For this to eventuate, teaching and school administration will need critical consideration and change. As this is simply a review of practices we shall not go much into theory. Instead we make the critique apparent by focusing on particular sites, events and language. The data are from the fieldwork and its socio-cultural context, June-July 2001. Present are the Review Team (JRJ, SH & OHC), with Taslima as translator for JRJ, and AQ as financial adviser for OHC).

## Political practices

All contacts between people are in some ways political. This is because power plays an important part in who does what, who says what, who is silent and who is passive. The politics pointed to here thus regard unequal distributions of power, and changing those distributions. We take the perspective that the personal is political, and that politics exists not only in the actions of members of parliament but in every place and text where people interact and communicate with each other. What happens in documents, reports and textbooks then also is a form of politics, with writers and readers constructing their own political agendas. In classrooms the politics regards what the teacher does and what the students do; and what they are positioned to not be able to do and say. In particular the FESP program of giving stipend money to girls is an affirmative action designed to empower them. Here the politics regard the inequities of gendered possibilities for women and men. Because money matters it is money that has been seen as a solution to the problem of women's oppression and lack of agency.

Some examples from the data bear this out. The selections that follow are from the data not already exemplified (in the endnotes for Chapter 1: Summary that is chapter one, following our findings and conclusions). Photographs referred to may be found in the Appendices. The contextual sociocultural data comes from the local newspaper, *The Independent*. Here is the first example for critical analysis.

*Photograph 3. A focus group of five schoolgirls and five schoolboys from class 10. In the teachers' meeting-room on our request. Taslima talking with students. Photographer: JRJ.*

Here the politics regard equal numbers of girls and boys in the focus group. In actual fact what happened was that JRJ and Taslima sat directly opposite the boys. Maybe this is what caused them to talk more than the girls. Taking the photograph was then a deliberate ploy to change the physical set-up, as JRJ could then face the girls and speak more directly with them. The politics of equity are thus not easy to allow for. Getting the adults who hold the power (eg us in this situation) to see what the effects of their physical positioning are is thus an important step to gender sensitivity.

A second example comes from the newspaper, published in English in Dhaka. Here the political practices concern the empowerment of women at grassroots level, according to the article's headline. The politics of writing the article, however, have an additional agenda. At the start of the headline the journalist names 'lack of political will' as the reason for women's lack of empowerment. Because it is not clear whose will is being described, it could be that some readers think that women are not wanting to be powerful.

*\* (Headline) 'Lack of political will hinders empowerment of women at grassroots level' (26.6.01, p, 4) 'The aim of empowering women was being hampered due to inadequate support from the administration.' 'They also discussed the conspiracy of males, especially the chairmen and members against them.' 'a change in the mentality of male persons of the society should be brought to empower women of the country.'*

It can be seen that with this critical reading the heading could have been quite deceptive. Maybe a woman journalist would have produced a different headline, one where men are named as the problem.

Applying critical analysis of political practices such as these to the activities of the project under review, we therefore see that who does the reading of the sites, events and language is most important. This means that the politics you bring to a situation makes you see in

particular ways. Getting usually accepted interpretation or understanding critiqued thus leads to possibilities for doing things differently. A third example follows this through.

*Photograph 13. Official poster in English for the FESP project Phase 2. Showing well-fed appearingly affluent girls unlike those we met.*

Here the politics regard showing the public that the schoolgirls are thriving, not that they are hungry and unable to buy themselves another dress to wear while they wash the first one. This makes sense if you want to recruit girls for the project of getting the stipend, but it is not an accurate representation of the situation. Further, the politics of the scarf in a Moslem country are also glossed over by the smiling faces of the girls photographed. We met scarf-wearing girls who were Hindu (not required by religion to wear the scarf) but who told us their men teachers said they must. The following is from the notes handwritten at the school in the presence of the schoolgirls.

*All of the girls are wearing headscarves. One girl tells us she is Hindu not Muslim but here she has to wear the scarf because of the men teachers. In her class of 90 students five girls and six boys are Hindu.*

It can thus be seen that the data may be read not only for its realist meanings but for the many political meanings that underlie it.

### Institutional practices

There are many institutions involved in the FESP project. There are the schools, the banks, the Ministry of Education, the Norwegian donor, the families of the schoolgirls, the foreign banks lending money the Government of Bangladesh for related projects, and the non-government organisations also working for a better future and a better present in Bangladesh. Each of these has politically driven activities, within its own organisation structure, and between the individuals who work, learn or live there. Additionally these institutions have power conflicts and collaborations amongst themselves. Not least is the practice of not being aware of what the other institutions are doing or wanting. A critical analysis of all of this may be exemplified in the following ways. First is an extract from the field notes made during a meeting with guardians in a district where the stipend has been in operation for almost 20 years.

*Guardian: It is running OK .We have two meetings a year ... this area is very advanced. (The stipend started here in 1982.)*

*OHC to JRJ: Most people here are educated.*

Here the consensus is that the stipend project is working well. The men go to the guardians meetings twice a year; the girls get the money and go to school instead of getting married and having babies before the age of 15. A critical analysis of this, however, is that the guardians are concerned only with the specific and measurable objectives of the project, and not with its long-term goals of improving the status of women in society and reducing the disparity between men and women. If they were concerned about the latter they would be aware of the mothers missing from the guardians' meetings, and they would be inviting women teachers to participate in the economic and social development of the school's community. The fact that these guardians are educated, as OHC tells JRJ, has not affected their apparent blindness to the matters of gender contextualising the project and indeed the education of their daughters. Education, unless challenged, may be simply about the interests of men. A look at the text books used by the schoolgirls bears this out.

Photographs, names and activities represented in the girls' books are almost exclusively those of men (eg Ahmed, 1999a).

A further example regarding the possibilities of critical analysis of institutions comes from the newspaper.

*(Letter to editor)'Cheating or copying in examination is a crime. Every year a large number of candidates, when caught red handed, are expelled. What is more, even teachers are found to be involved in this practice, and they too are expelled and punished.'* (30.6.01, p, 6)

Here the institution is the school, with its binary opposites of teachers and students. In this case the teachers are described as acting like the students, and thus breaking the binary division: that is both groups are cheating in the exams. Here a critical analysis, instead of putting the blame on the badness of individual students and teachers, would stress the role of the institution in what becomes the practice. With this reading people take up particular practices because of how they are positioned by institutions and the discourses constructing them. In this case the problem may be read as that of the exam itself, and not the people who are trying to get around it. Changing the exam practices, by making the testing more appropriate to the learners, or by not having such an exam at all, are two possible solutions following this kind of analysis. Here it could be said that the politics of getting the students through in developed countries, at the University level and at the secondary school level, has resulted in radical changes to evaluations and assessment practices. Here more life-centred tasks and more interesting and useful reading and writing are slowly transforming institutionalised education.

A third example of institutional practices is from the fieldwork photographs (see Appendices).

*Photograph 6. At home with Sadeka Halim's mother Mrs Shamsun Chowdhury and translator Taslima Akhter. Photographer: Sadeka's 11 year old son.*

In the context of the analyses above, a critical reading of this particular photo is that this review is breaking the boundaries of what constitutes a review. Where are the border lines between the private and the public? Why is the personal mixed up with the impersonal? How are women positioned when they are denied the importance of home and family? Why are men's homes and families somehow different? Why can't the school become more community-centred, with women and men occupying equally important roles? These are critical questions regarding the institutions of the family and the school. They apply of course not only to Bangladesh.

### Economic and financial practices

For this sub-section we turn to non-data documents for examples. These are selected from the essential reading for the production of this review. The first example is taken from the Pathmark Final Report (2001a & b). Before opening the volumes the striking image is the colour photograph of the schoolgirls. This appears on the covers of both volumes, and shows the girls in their blue and white uniforms sitting at their desks, with heads tilted to the left and pens held in the right, writing. About twenty girls are visible in the photo.

As one of the major impacts of the project, we found, was the fact that classrooms which previously held 40 students now have up to 90, the photo is hardly representing the socio-economic impact in this particular instance. Yes, the girls are going to school and yes they are getting the money, but the economic and financial practices regarding the swelling of the class sizes must surely be one of the most crucial problems to be addressed. Opening the document and looking for this in the written text yields the following results.

The findings of the Pathmark impact study are numbered 1-20 (2001a, p. i-ii). Of these, education is not named until 14th. Education is named again in the 20th finding. Findings 1-13 thus regard, as socio-economic effects, immunisation, nutrition, births, pregnancy, families, marriage, children, paid employment and the dowry. Findings 15-19 regard social interaction, marriage, income and aspiration to leadership. A critical analysis here is not to say that these matters are unimportant. The point is that education itself is not importantly featured as having been effected by the socio-economic impact. Here as we have found are the socio-economic factors of recruiting and retaining teachers, especially women; and the over-riding issues of numbers of students in classrooms per teacher and per cubic meter.

Further, what is said regarding findings 14 and 20 is disappointing from a pedagogical or curriculum point of view. What Pathmark found was that 'predominantly more girls help in the education of children in project areas than in non-project areas'; and that 'more girls in project area ... can take decision on children's education than in non-project area.'. So the actual education of the girls receiving the stipend has not been considered at all: at least not as stated in the summary of findings.

We are not saying that all reports and reviews must do everything, In fact our particular brief is to focus on qualities; whereas many previous reports have focussed on statistics, survey information and large-scale data production. Here we are highly aware of the shortcomings of our work, and only hope that what we have managed to do is useful. Being critical however by analysing omissions, glossings over and blind spots, serves the purpose of reconstructing the future practices of projects, changing curricula and changing teacher professionalism. As can be seen by our selection of issues to be focussed on in our fieldwork, we have made much practical use of the Pathmark report (2001), and have followed up on their conclusions and recommendations regarding the uses of effectivity and improving impact at the program level and at the policy level (2001, Vol 1, p, 32-36). Additionally Pathmark's tables (Vol 2) showing numbers and situations of teachers, girls admitted to class 6, drop-outs and family expenditure were particularly useful.

From the kinds of data we were able to get with our more ethnographic methodology comes the following for a second critical analysis of economic and financial practices. Also exemplified earlier in this written review it now serves a different purpose.

*Photograph 14. After our lunch in the restaurant. 800 schoolgirls preparing a guard of honour and gymnastics exhibition for us. We were showered with the hard husks of hand-held flowers as we processed from the gate to the school. The girls thanked us many times over for NORAD's money. They had had nothing to eat that day. Photographer: JRJ.*

Here what we are acutely aware of is our own affluent positioning, and the economic and social class differences between ourselves and the communities represented by the schoolgirls. Given this then the critique must be not only of those countries not giving foreign aid, but the relative paucity of the aid that is given. Here sustainability has become an economist's term, with persons safely removed from the analysis. Living at the level of the Bangaldeshi Taka is the following: Tk 100 = NOK17. This is double some Bangladeshi families' monthly expenditure on education (Pathmark, 2001b, p. 9) or almost all of their money spent on food. In this society the effects of such poverty may be reflected as the kinds of event reported by the daily press. The following are examples for critical consideration.

*\* 'Four other youths were also beaten up by a mob when they were trying to snatch the belongings of a female passer-by at (named place) yesterday morning.' (29.6.01, p, 16)*

*\* 'A trained teacher of non-government primary school is now getting Tk,1,750, trained headmaster Tk,1,800 and a non-trained teacher Tk, 1,550. Besides, medical and housing allowances are being given to them. (29.6.01. p, 10)*

### Socio-cultural practices

In Bangladesh getting girls to go to school, giving them a stipend and then having them fail or pass class 10 exams represents a socio-cultural change. We have already pointed to the enormous success of the project from its innovation to the conclusion of its 2nd phase. In this section we are concerned with analysing critically so that practices may be developed; and underlying reasons or rationales for changing practices may be explored. The socio-cultural practices surrounding what women do and what men do are the context within which this project has been developing. There is ample evidence that much has happened that is positive regarding the girls, their futures and what they are wanting. Here Dr Sadeka Halim on the Review Team is a Bangaldeshi example of one woman's success story from education. The 23 year old translator, Ms Taslima Akhter, was herself a recipient of the FESP project stipend, when she attended a secondary school in one of the districts the review team visited. She now studies at Dhaka University as a Masters Degree student of Women's Studies, having obtained her Bachelors Degree by majoring in Sociology. Although social class necessarily affects which women are in a position to continue their education, the possibilities for any women are not those of a man, especially in Bangladesh. Here some socio-cultural context is provided by the newspaper.

*\* (Regarding frequently reported killings of women by their husbands) 'A man has been awarded the death penalty for killing his wife in Comilla (where we did our fieldwork) (29.6.01, p. 4); 'unnatural deaths of 3 housewives' (3.7. 01, p. 10) , 'body of housewife ... sent to the morgue for a postmortem (3.7.01, p. 10)*

*\* (Regarding frequently reported rapes) 'A young girl was raped by some miscreants near (named bridge) in (named place ) on (named date). ...They raped the girl the whole night. The police rescued the girl and arrested (one named man).' (30.6.01, p. 9)*

Here the murders and rapes relate not only to women's physical safety but also to the kinds of masculinity that are a part of some women's everyday life. Also in the Bangladesh newspaper are misogynies imported from beyond the subcontinent of India. The following are commonly found white Western patriarchal constructions of femininity, sexuality and the desirability of upper middle class niceness for women.

*\* (In the section beside an icon of a smiley face) 'Begin the day with a smile' (Joke) "I want a pair of stockings." "For your wife, or shall I show you something better?" (9.7.01, p, 1)*

*\* (Beside photo of well-fed woman in Western clothes sitting on exercise bike) 'Improvements in energy level after 10-minute exercise. Additionally the findings offer initial and tentative guidelines for the prescription of aerobic exercise toward the enhancement of psychological health. The women participating in the study answered questions about their mood before and after exercise sessions. Researchers measured their blood pressure, heart rate, height and weight ... The results showed significant declines in levels of fatigue and confusion and significant improvements in energy levels after 10 minutes.' (9.7.01, p. 13)*

*\* (Under photo of almost naked Western woman in minute bikini) 'Italian actress (named) poses with a flag during her performance at (named place) to celebrate (named event) in Rome on Sunday.' (26.6.01), p. 11)*

For any schoolgirl her gendered positioning is difficult and complex. For the Bangladeshi schoolgirls there are additional problems not faced by their Western or Northern sisters. Here are two examples from the fieldwork data for critical analysis:

*\* School 1, class 6*

*These girls are not yet getting the stipend, so we go to class 8, about 80 of them stuffed into a concrete classroom. The school was set up by a famous gynaecologist. Her picture is up on the wall in the senior man's office. JRJ meets with the 80 girls for one hour, with Taslima who translates. No teachers present.*

*\* Class 11 girls, former FESP recipients*

*Girl 1: There are a lot of problems in society for the girls to carry on with their study. Sexual harassment and street problems. Society thinks they should then marry.*

*JRJ: So what's the answer?*

*Girl 2: It should be stopped.*

*JRJ: How?*

*Girl 3: We are trying to convince our parents. (All talking loudly at once now.)*

In each of these examples there is a critical conflict. The first regards the juxtapositioning of the famous woman gynaecologist's photo and the senior man who sits beneath it. What are we women on the review team to make of this? Do the men who work in this office ever think about what gynaecology is and what gynaecologists do? Who selected the gynaecologist for photographic representation? How did a woman gynaecologist get to be setting up a school? How did she get to be a gynaecologist? Why are we told who she was? Is there any relationship between these questions and the fact that FESP aims to reduce the Bangladeshi birthrate? We were not able to pose these questions or even discuss them amongst ourselves.

The second example represents the thinking of young women after they have completed year 10 as FESP recipients. They themselves are being critical. They are attempting to convince their parents of their own radical viewpoints regarding forced marriage as a result of sexual harassment. How these young women became able to critique society in this way is not clear. Certainly a conformist and normalising curriculum could not be encouraging deviations, new thinking, challenging the status quo. Or could it? What do we know of the cultural context of this particular pedagogy and what its effects might be? Why think that education alone is encouraging teenagers to want their own lives to be free? What kind of schoolgirl culture is constructed around the schooling, by the girls themselves and their friendship patterns? As can be seen, a critical analysis of socio-culture regards not only institutions but the personal construction of self.

### Curriculum practices

Curriculum may be seen as all of the practices that go to make up planned and evaluated learning. It may also be seen more liberally as whatever we do ourselves so that we learn. In institutions however, curriculum usually includes policy documents and work programs for students as prepared by teachers; and it ends by giving the students an exam. A critical analysis is thus apparent already in these definitions.

In the process of conducting the fieldwork, the term 'curriculum' was only named by educationalist JRJ. This is not surprising given people's disciplinary backgrounds and the complications of English. However, if Bangladesh is to develop educational 'quality' then it must come to terms with how curriculum develops, changes, is flexible, depends on who the teachers and students are and the moments of learning as things happen. In part we conducted our qualitative review like this, by letting things happen as seemed appropriate at the time. Yet we planned carefully, and we had our own sets of issues and questions that we wanted to deal with.

The problem with adopting a 'quality' approach to education is that who decides which qualities count may be overlooked. And in eagerness to measure everything and put the named qualities into categories, the people who matter most (the students) get left out. Learning is personal. It is about people, not just about facts and right answers. A critical analysis of quality assessment then is that the qualities that matter cannot be fixed, and might not even be able to be named. The problem here is a host of new and old experts who then proceed to inform the unwary of what it is they know, rather than focussing on what students are knowing and what particular teachers might offer at particular times and in particular places. Following this our selected examples are as follows:

*Photograph 4 . In a classroom with approximately 60 schoolgirls. Review team leader, translator and women teachers. Photographer: man teacher.*

As was pointed out repeatedly by teachers, schoolgirls and guardians, the class sizes are too big. You cannot have qualities that matter when there are just too many students. Teacher recruitment and teacher retaining and teacher training and teacher in-services are prime needs. The fieldwork data show that many people are critical of what currently happens and many people want to change it. Exactly why people want less students per room and per teachers is not so clear. What sorts of curriculum activities would be possible with more space and less students? Would the curriculum activities be any different in classes with only 40 students instead of 80? Or would it just be rows of desks and rote learning? How could movement be part of what happens at school? How could curriculum materials other than a few small paper books be worked with in the classrooms? Where is the place for creativity? What about group work, projects, free writing? All of these questions must be taken into account if curriculum is to be looked at critically. So changing the practices here is not just a matter of buying some computers and hoping the electricity works.

A second example is from School 3, which we were told is one of the 'better' schools. This is evidenced in the following:

*Man 2: Of the girls here getting the stipend. Approximately 80% have gone on to College.*

*Man 3: The legal marriage age is 18 but here the average is 20.*

In this school the fieldnotes say:

*In meeting room with 6 women teachers sitting behind all the men. Later we ask to meet with the women only. The men are 24 teachers and head teachers.*

*Man 1: This is a positive program (the stipend program). If it is dropped the girls' education will go down. Early marriage is being stopped by this program. The economic situation here is better than in most of rural Bangladesh. But we still need the program to continue. There are 800 girl students here. The girls attend school in the mornings and the boys in the afternoons. Otherwise we don't have enough space or teachers.*

Here curriculum matters have been resolved by dividing time. The women teachers we spoke with were critical of this arrangement (see endnote 20 in Chapter 1). Critique thus appears to be already in place within the system as a springboard for change. Thought and other ideas are seen to be developed through informal conversations and social interactions. In these ways change comes about slowly, and it is initiated by the participants themselves rather than being imposed from above or by outsiders.

Some men teachers were also beginning to see that women teachers have positive effects on the schoolgirls (no-one mentioned the schoolboys in this regard):

*Man 4: (when asked about how many women teachers there are and if this makes a difference to the girls) There is a positive connection between women's positioning as teachers and what is happening with the girls.*

Here one critique is that the reviewer put the words into the man's mouth. Giving the required answer is thus a usual practice to be dealt with in a social science that depends on subjective meetings and the uses of language. Regarding matters of curriculum it appears that gender has not yet become a curriculum issue. This is even evident in the reports produced professionally by key men and NORAD, who occasionally let sexist pronouns (he) and nouns (head master, manhours) into their writing and their talk. Worse though is the lack of recognition of the misrepresentation of men in textbooks, journals and newspapers. Here a critical analysis would show that if 50% of the population are men than they should have no more than 50% of pictorial and textual representations (as writers, as the people whose interests are written about, and as the people photographed). Relatedly, an effort to reverse the attention this review gives to girls in education results in the following:

*Photograph 15 (see Appendices). In the village. Boys in a rickshaw outside the school. Photographer: JRJ.*

## **Concluding complexities**

Part of my unease in trying to deal with this project was the discrepancy between the rich (me) and the poor (them). Leon Gettler, book reviewing in Melbourne *The Age* (2002, p. 9) says: 'For all the promises of poverty reduction in the 1990s, the actual number of people living in poverty increased during that time by 100 million, but total world income increased by 2.5 per cent. If globalisation is about achieving equal outcomes, some are more equal than others.' Reading and writing about this, however, is not at all the same as being there.

My colleague in Education in Oslo, Dr Bob Smith, a veteran in such matters, says (Smith, 2002, p. 3) 'The more positive side of the donor business is the rise of greater interest in poverty reduction and debt relief, especially by the bigger players' [such as the World Bank]. Writing critically of the role of donors to education in the 'South' he says (p. 1) 'Despite the best efforts of international bi-lateral and multi-lateral organisations, education, in the sense of formal schooling, has failed to live up to expectations, both in terms of access and quality.' A major issue, he says, regards 'values - the extent to which recipient countries have found their value systems swamped by the incursions of Western-style educational provision.' In describing the function of the World Bank he says this has changed over the years, and it has now 'recruited and trained its own powerful group of education specialists'. However, 'Many of these people come from an economics background and tend to view education as an economic issue, preferring to talk about inputs and outputs rather than children and their needs.' (p. 1)

Development theory, here in terms of nations and humans, involves 'strategic interventions' and the demonstration that these 'actually pay off'. With the project we worked on in Bangladesh, of course we wanted to demonstrate this, between the lines of our report as well as on them, because the schoolgirls badly wanted us to keep their funding going. In saying 'we' I mean we women: the men were keen to continue the 'send the girls to school' project, but they lacked our commitment to feminist ideals, complex notions of social justice within patriarchy and life histories making us identify with the girl and young women students, the women teachers, mothers absent from meetings of 'guardians', the silent caretakers hovering in doorways, the old women outside, watching us enter the school.

So our backgrounds and foregrounds, as a woman sociologist, a woman interpreter and a woman educator, did not lead to a cost-benefit analysis about who went to school. Nor were we at all times comfortable with the 'language of international educators and development specialists' (Smith p, 2). This problematic of language extended in my case to the terms used in writing by the bureaucrats working in the institutions that funded us, and the people who reviewed the project earlier. My English, I found, was lacking. Subsequently, I practised when required a formality and objectivity foreign to my now normalised critical, subjective, theoretical and postmodern ways. But isn't this a form of prostitution? Earning money for yourself and your institution?

In working for education as a human right, our work may then be seen as subverted by capitalism, by the power of the so-called North (although my place of origin is the ultimate South: Melbourne, Australia). But employing two Bangladeshi women (the socialist and the translator) can hardly be seen as supporting capitalism, can it? Human capital theory sits uneasily with the notion of education as a basic human right, with the collective and the individual as binary opposites, and the global media increasingly informing the under-educated of what they don't have. The teenaged women we interviewed said they wanted to become scientists, surgeons, or visiting professionals like us. What we saw as we heard them say this (and I heard it through translation), what we saw beside the bodies of the girls were blank concrete walls, one teacher to 90 students, three students to a desk all facing one tiny blackboard, no electricity, no science labs, no libraries, no lunch and no breakfast before that. But there were also smiles, young people happy to be together, and eager to get us to let them keep going to school. Colonialism, pedagogical take-over and poverty had failed to put out a flame of happiness.

To take up numbers: in working for Norway, I work for a nation that gives 0.7% of its GNP (Gross National Product) as foreign aid (Smith, 2002, p. 2): 'This is eight times higher in percentage terms than the giving of the US.' Of this official development aid (ODA), about 15.5% goes to education and health 'with another 1.3% going to basic education'. This, says Smith (p. 2) quoting 2000 information, contrasts with 24.5% going to transport and industry and 9.5% to agriculture. Sub-Saharan Africa gets most of this money, with Far East Asia ranked next and South Asia last. Bi-lateral (or country to country) aid is most common, followed by multi-lateral provisions (like the UN), and then the EU (the multi-lateral development banks).

Since the 1980s the shift in what happens as development assistance to education has been to educational programs, from Ministry management structures to classroom methods of teaching. Yet, says Smith (p. 3) 'the trends in aid to education over the past 20 or so years have been towards forms of provision that fit a Western, capitalist model of society.' Given who decides what will be 'taught' and how, and what the economic and organisational problems are,

the model of schooling promoted [says Smith, 2002, p. 4] is one where a specialised teacher is placed in a square classroom with 40 or 50 desks and a similar number of

children, except where enrolments exceed the prescribed norms. The pupils in this set up are probably reading books prepared by a foreign publisher, the curriculum being followed is more or less identical whether in Bangladesh or Botswana and the examinations to be written at the end of the process will probably have been prepared by people trained in Cambridge, England.

This, says Smith (p. 4) is the 'Macdonaldization of Education'; the South being colonized by the North. In contrast is the desire of the South for 'children to explore the joy of being rather than the joy of having' (p. 5), to avoid the training of the next generation as global consumers.

As can be seen, an underlying complexity in any work such as that I have been describing regards identity. Here Ien Ang (2000, p. 3) says:

The conservative rhetorics of identity that has permeated the cultural and political landscape everywhere in a time when old certainties - of place, of belonging, of economic and social security - are rapidly being eroded by the accelerating pace of globalization: the processes by which intensifying global flows of goods, money, people, technologies and information work to dissolve the real and imagined (relative) autonomy and 'authenticity' of local traditions and communities.

So one reading of the consultancy work done in the name of this foreign aid project is that globalization confuses people, capitalism and homogenization to produce uncertainties of belonging and security, with the erosion of the local. Ang continues (2000, p. 4) by describing:

... complex, contradictory and multidimensional processes and forces that have come to be subsumed under the shorthand term 'globalization'. ...the world being made by these forces is a deeply unjust and inequitable one, dominated by the economic might of transnational corporations, the elusive power of mobil finance capital, and the ruthless logic of the market.

Here it may be seen that part of my dilemma is whether to join the forces of the transnationals; whether it is possible to opt in and opt out, identify with the Bangladeshi women instead of the Norwegians, be the boss of a senior man. At the same time, being confronted by poverty is not part of the everyday of an affluent Western (or token Northern) academic. The choice of (dis)continuing with international consultancies in 'developing' countries is thus complex. Here I shall try to follow Ang, who says (2000, p. 10):

Precisely as a member of the cosmopolitan elites, I take it as my responsibility to take seriously not just the pleasures, but also the difficulties associated with the construction of ... a progressive sense of place ... nationally and internationally, what Massey calls 'a global sense of place'.

This then is a case for continuing, even though some initial attractions in doing the consultancy were to get back into my language of English and to escape the Norwegian winter. (My work was delayed until the summer as it turned out; and my at-homeness with Norwegian was by then considerably increased.)

Final theoretical endings to this necessarily lengthy paper come from Barrett (2000, p.16-17). She says this, which I apply the Bangladesh I have experienced:

Modernity as a category of analysis ... can be described as a social order whose characteristics are ... an industrial division of labour, a secular democratic nation-state, rationalism and the market. But it is also the 'constitutive outside' of Western modernity involves a philosophy and self-identity constructed through its relation to the colonial other. The category of 'postmodernity' represents the disintegration of this philosophy and self-identity, as well as identifying a number of more specific social developments (displacement of the national by the global and the local); the production of hybridization through migration and diasporic movement; the compression of time and space; the displacing of production by consumption and so on.

So it is postmodernity that confounds my work on this review, that disrupts my ability to compartmentalize findings objectively, or leave my own identity and those of the review team outside the text. Hybridization and its effects on me, on Sadeka, Osman and Taslima has not yet affected the schoolgirls and their 'guardians'. Or has it? It is the unspoken future of the schoolgirls that is the risk, the fear. And this is that of which we must not write. Here Barrett, as a sociologist (2000, p. 18) writes of: 'this desire to couch a political choice as the inevitable outcome of sociological fact [as posed by Foucault, by Bauman and by Hall.] ... Sociologists classically produce evidence and arguments that support a particular political conclusion - it is second nature to them. You may ask what is wrong with that? What is wrong is that it hides political choices behind a veil of apparent objectivity. The theorists who have done most to expose the assumptions behind the specious connection are those influenced by post-structuralist ideas'. Here Barrett (p. 18-19) says:

Post-structuralism has made an enormous contribution, indeed a revolution, in exposing the processes that help us to understand how sociology has allied itself to modern rationalism, and has hidden its judgments behind a rhetoric of scientifically and objectivity.

So it is the politics of doing such a review that have troubled me. It is my desire for the poststructural that aints my writing, that makes its examining institutions suspicious of it. This brings me straight to Foucault and his 'artful dissection of a 'will to truth' ' (Barrett, 2000, p. 18). What is in question is 'the judgment [that] lies hidden behind a panoply of expertise that justifies and legitimates it ... a barrage of empirical proof' . Further, we should 'consider more critically, as Zygmunt Bauman has done, the effects of attaching sociology to a rational scientism so firmly that we have buried any possibility of considering the issues with which it deals as ethical issues.'

And yes, the ethics of such review work are also part of the problem: the matters of money, of status, of national relations, of assumed white supremacy. 'Political choice [says Barrett, p. 19] becomes a matter of ethical choice, a matter of personal responsibility. Yet post-structuralism's belligerent anti-humanism ... has made it difficult to take this forward - a problem that a number of writers are now addressing. ... The problem of science ... [is that] postmodernism equals literature, sociology equals science. Stuart Hall does not give us a sociology with much of the apparatus of social science. There are no tables to be found in his work, though there may often be pictures. His insights are imaginative, sensual even, in that they speak to experience, which includes the senses, rather than simply cognition. We have here a sociologist (if he is one) whose sociology is based on perception.'

So it is even sociology that I have challenged by my reviewing and my ways of writing. Barrett tells us (p. 19):

Sociology is conspicuously inadequate in the tiger department. Physicality, humanity, imagination, the other, fear, the limits of control; all are missing in their own terms, in their own dynamic, as Stuart [Hall] put it. This is the single most serious difficulty of contemporary sociology' ...'The nugget of truth that I suggest now is a simple one; it is that *sociology has become boring*.

To end with a tiger story, a true one and a sad one: in the far east of India, I was told by Bangladeshis, the men who gather wild honey do not die from attacks by tigers, as do their counterparts in the western borders of Bangladesh. This is because the Indians have enough money to wear tiger-proof masks on the backs of their heads, and the Bangladeshis do not. The tigers, seeing a face painted on the back of the head of the working Indian will not approach him. The Bangladeshis they will approach and kill, seeing only the faceless hair.

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