

The Technology Environment in Bangladesh – Access, Familiarity and Use



One of the series of baseline studies undertaken for English in Action in 2008-09

Why this study was undertaken?

- English in Action (EIA) aims to develop language learning and teaching over a 9-year period. It is funded by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DfID).
- The goal of EIA is to "contribute to the economic growth of Bangladesh by providing English language as a tool for better access to the world economy". The purpose of the project is to "increase significantly the number of people able to communicate in English, to levels that enable them to participate fully in economic and social activities and opportunities".
- The EIA intends to achieve its purpose and goals by introducing innovative pedagogical practices in English language learning in Bangladesh. Of these, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based interventions constitute a key component.
- Little is known, however, about the existing access, familiarity and use of ICTs in Bangladesh. Hence, this baseline study was undertaken in October 2008 and March 2009 to examine these issues in the country in order to inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of ICT based interventions in the EIA project.

How and where this study was carried out?

Over 2,900 individuals were interviewed for this study using a structured questionnaire. The sample included more than 2,100 school students, over 450 teachers and over 260 community adults in and around the Dhaka region and around Sylhet.

The study was undertaken in 2 phases: the first in NGO schools (October-November, 2008) and the second in Government schools (March, 2009).



Key Findings

“Access of students, teachers, and community adults to mobile phones was quite high; however, mobiles were used mainly for sending and receiving calls”

- Almost all teachers and a large proportion of adults own or have access to a mobile phone. About one-third of students in NGO schools and two-thirds of those in Government schools had access to a mobile phone.
- About half of teachers use a mobile phone frequently for calls; students do so less frequently. Across all categories of respondent, the frequency of using a mobile phone for sending or receiving text messages is relatively low.

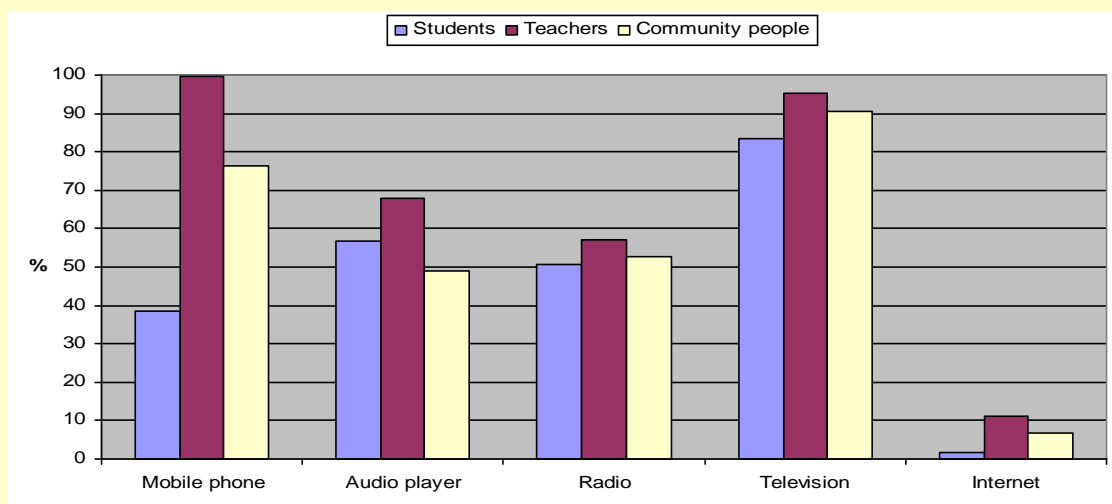
“Around half of the respondents had access to an audio player and a radio, but access to TV was higher”

- Just over half of respondents have access to an audio player – about two-thirds of those with access listen to music or other recordings ‘occasionally’.
- Just over half of respondents have access to a radio – about half of those with access listen to radio programmes ‘occasionally’. Across all categories of respondents access to a television was high (83% - 95%). A majority of teachers and adults reported watching TV programmes ‘quite often/frequently’, as did over 40% of students.

“Access of the respondents to the Internet was very low”

- Internet use is low, particularly among students. The frequency of use is also very low. Teachers in NGO schools were more likely to use the Internet than their counterparts in Government schools.

Figure 1: Respondents’ access to various technologies



Key Findings

“Use of audio or video materials for learning purposes was quite low”

- Between 80% and 99% of respondents had never experienced the use of audio or video materials for learning in school lessons, in college or in training. Those who had such experience had done so ‘occasionally’ or ‘not very often’.

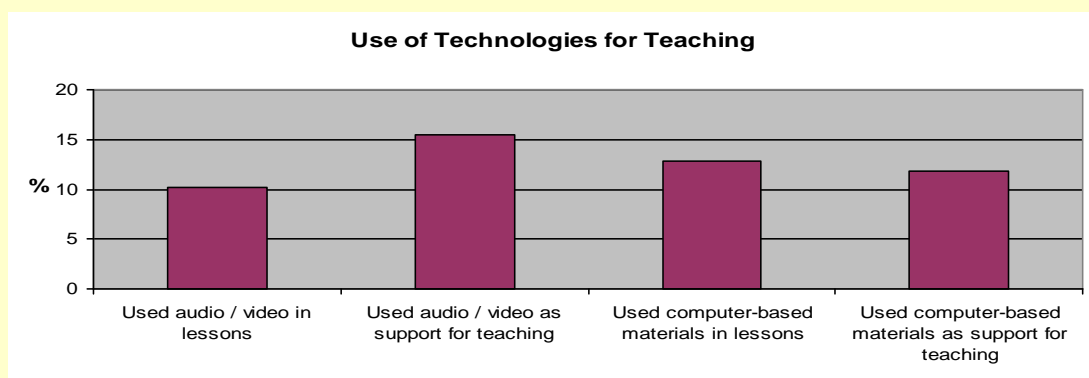
“Use of Internet and computers for learning purposes was almost non-existent”

- A very large proportion of respondents in all categories (77% - 97%) had not used a computer for learning in school lessons, in college or in training. Students in NGO schools were more likely than those in Government schools to have used a computer (22.2% compared with 12.8%).
- The frequency of educational computer use tends to be ‘occasional’ or ‘not very often’. A very large proportion of respondents in all categories had not used a computer for informal learning (i.e. outside of lessons, college or training). Where this had been done, it was only ‘occasionally’ or ‘not very often’.

“Use of audio-video materials, the Internet and computers for teaching purposes was almost non-existent; the extent of use of these materials varied between NGO and Government schools”

- A very large proportion of teachers (84% +) had not used audio or video materials to support teaching. A greater proportion of teachers in NGO schools had used audio or video materials to support teaching in comparison to teachers in Government schools.
- A very large proportion of teachers (87% +) had not used computer-based materials to support teaching. A much greater proportion of teachers in NGO schools had used computer-based materials to support teaching in comparison to teachers in Government schools.

Figure 2: Teachers’ use of various technologies



Key Conclusions

Access of students, teachers, and community adults to various technologies varied considerably. While the access to mobile phones was quite high, access to computers and the Internet was very low. However, a high proportion of the population had access to TV.

The use of audio-video materials for learning and teaching was quite low and same was true for computer use. However, the use of these materials is higher in NGO schools compared to Government schools.