

## Socio-economic Factors in Basic Education Competencies: Focusing on PROSHIKA(NGO)'s Program in Bangladesh

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### 1. Perspective of the Problem

#### 1.1 Introduction

Education is the basic need for socio-economic transformation and advancement of a country. It is the prime ingredient of human resource development. In Bangladesh educational development was not adequately geared to meet this human need. The overall literacy rate (7 years old and above) in Bangladesh is about 44.3 percent (1995), the female literacy rate being 28.5 percent and the male, 50.4 percent. The gap of literacy rates between the urban and rural areas is very wide- 36.6 percent in rural and 63.0 percent in urban areas (Bangladesh Education Sector Review, Volume II, The University Press Limited, 2000). As a step towards increasing the literacy rate, Universal Primary Education has been made compulsory.

Bangladesh as a signatory to the 'World Declaration on Education for All (EFA)', the Government launched EFA program in Bangladesh to improve the education and to raise literacy rate to 62 percent by the year 2000. After 'The Dakar World Education Forum 2000' target is cent percent literacy by the year 2015. To achieve this target, primary education has been made compulsory (Act in 1990). Besides, an Integrated Non-Formal Education Program (INFEP) was launched in 1991.

In Bangladesh, government involvement in Non-Formal Education/NFE (also called "Mass Education") has been primarily aimed at providing literacy and basic functional education for those who have not had the opportunity to go to school or who dropped out. According to government estimates, there are currently about 40 million illiterates between 8 and 35 years old. About 6.3 million of these are working children between the ages of 5 and 14, many of whom are involved in hazardous child labor<sup>3</sup>.

To supplement government efforts, there is need for greater participation of the private sector, community and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). In addition, from the decade of the 1980s several NGOs emerged in the field of literacy to complement the state efforts. During the period 1980-90, NGOs have evolved some innovative methods and materials for basic and adult education

and tested these impaired their schools and thus have been playing an active role in providing NFE to disadvantaged people of the society.

The three initial letters of the Bangla words for training, education and work constitute the nomenclature of PROSHIKA which is one of the front-rank NGOs of Bangladesh. Right from 1976, PROSHIKA has been conducting coordinated multi-lateral programs for human and socio-economic development of the grass-root people. PROSHIKA's programs are run by popular organizations at the grass-root levels. The implementation of various programs is bringing about positive changes in the lives of the poor and unprivileged people. PROSHIKA started Universal Education Program as a full-fledged program from the year 1990<sup>4</sup>.

The objectives of this program were:

- a) to provide for the poor children, who were either never admitted to the schools or were dropped out, the equivalent standard of primary education through PROSHIKA schools;
- b) to help to improve the quality of life through basic education for those who will not be able to join higher studies.

Achievement is the measure of success attained after putting certain amount of effort. It is also an output which reflects physical or intellectual competencies of an individual. Students' achievement relates not only the intelligence but also indicates the effectiveness of the school curriculum, teacher and the school administration (Chancey and Dobbin, 1963, in Akter 1996:1). And here lies the importance of the present study.

## 1.2 Definition of Basic Education

The Inter-Agency Commission of the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) defined 'basic education' in the following ways (WCEFA, 1990).

Basic Education 'refers to education intended to meet basic learning needs; it includes instruction at the first or foundation level, on which subsequent learning can be based; it encompasses early childhood and primary (or elementary) education for children, as well as education in literacy, general knowledge and life skills for youth and adults'.

The Task Force and the Advisory Group formed to develop methodology for the study Assessment of Basic Competencies (ABC) developed in 1992 in Bangladesh (Chowdhury et al., 1992), discussed at length the above definitions and arrived at the following definition of basic education for Bangladesh:

Basic Education will refer to education intended to develop basic learning skills (i.e. "3 R's") as well as some basic life skills necessary for the children to survive, to improve the quality of their lives and to continue learning.

The definition of basic education included three components:

- a child's ability to read and write a short, simple statement on everyday life;
- a child's ability to work out everyday arithmetic; and
- a child's knowledge/attitude on selected life skills necessary for him/her to improve the quality of his/her life.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. to assess the existing level of Basic Education Competencies of the learners.
2. to identify the socio-economic factors influencing basic education of the learners.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Nature of the Study

The Study was jobbed down in view of the interpretive paradigm i.e. the qualitative approach. We had taken the quantitative data to support the qualitative approach, i.e. for exploring the context properly.

### 2.2 Instrument for Assessment

Given the above definition for basic education in Bangladesh, the following aspects/ principles of the definition were considered in developing instrument for assessment:

- a) a child's ability to read and write a short, simple statement on everyday life;
- b) a child's ability to workout everyday arithmetic; and
- c) a child's knowledge/attitude on selected life skills necessary for him/her to improve the quality of his/her life.

Based on the above principles the survey instrument was developed and further modified. The instrument had four sections: Reading, Writing, Numeracy and Life Skills/Knowledge.

### 2.3 Background Information

Apart from then above information form the sample learners, several background characteristics of the learners and their parents were also collected. These were collected from the teachers/facilitators of the PROSHIKA's NFPE schools.

### 2.4 Sampling

Because of geographical reasons and known variations between them, two different surveys were carried out, one in each of the following strata:

- a) Rural Rajshahi Division and
- b) Urban Dhaka Division.

For each stratum similar sampling strategy was used. In each, 50 learners, studying in 4th grade or final grade and equally represented between boys and girls, were selected in four stages. In the first stage, one District (like Prefecture in Japan) was selected at random; In the second stage, one Upazila or Thana (like City in Japan) was selected at random from the selected district; In the third stage, three unions/wards were selected at random from the selected Thana and in the final or fourth stage, five NFPE centers<sup>5</sup> were selected at random from the selected three unions/wards. Total learners sampled, in each center was 10 (5 girls & 5 boys). The sampling plan allowed separate estimates for boys and girls.

### 2.5 Data Generating Process

Before administering the Test, the answering procedure was explained to the learners. The Test was administered in this order: life skill level, reading, writing and numeracy skill. Sufficient time was given to the participants for the Test. In most cases the completion time ranged from 100-120 minutes. The participants, who could not understand certain items of the Test, were assisted by the researcher.

### 2.6 Data Analysis

After completion of each sub-test, the answer sheets were collected. Then the answer sheets were scrutinized. According to marks distribution to the level of correctness of answers, the participants' individual scores in four sub-tests were determined. Then data were processed and analyzed manually and by using SPSS.

## 3. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

### 3.1 Performance in Basic Education Competency

According to the definition of basic education used in the ABE methodology<sup>6</sup>, 73.8% of the final-grade learners of PROSHIKA's NFPE program satisfied all four criteria of basic education competency (Table 3.1). The performance of boys and girls of different schools was very similar. On average, learners of NFPE in Rural areas performed the best (76.4%) followed by the NFPE learners of Urban areas (73.1%); this difference was, however, not statistically significant. Girls of all these two types of schools showed slightly better performance than boys, this was also not significant. Among the four groups of learners, girls of NFPE of Rural areas did best (77.7%) and the boys of NFPE of Urban areas did worse (72.3%), though the difference was statistically insignificant.

**Table 3.1: Proportion of learners satisfying all basic competency criteria by school category and sex**

School category	Boys	Girls	Both	Remarks
NFPE in Urban areas	72.3	73.4	73.1	ns
NFPE in Rural areas	73.2	77.7	76.4	ns
All (weighted)	72.2	74.3	73.8	ns
Level of significance	ns	ns	ns	

Table 3.2 presents 'partial basic competency' defined as learners satisfying at least one of the four criteria but not all. This table shows that more than 25% of the respondents possess the basic competency skills partly and a negligible proportion (0.6%) of the respondents could pass none of the four criteria.

Performance on each of the four assessment criteria for different study groups of learners is presented in Table 3.3. The learners of NFPE in Rural areas performed the best in all the skills criteria. Girls of all study areas did better in life skills and writing skills. But in reading skills, girls did better in NFPE

of Rural areas and boys did better in NFPE of Urban areas. On the other hand, in numeracy skills boys of all study groups did better than girls. Gender difference was significant only in two cases: reading skills among the NFPE in Rural areas learners and numeracy skills among the learners of NFPE in Urban areas.

**Table 3.2: Proportion of learners satisfying partial and none of the basic competency criteria by school category and sex**

School category	Partial			None		
	Boys	Girls	Both	Boys	Girls	Both
NFPE in Urban areas	27.2	26.2	26.5	0.5	0.5	0.4
NFPE in Rural areas	25.4	21.3	22.5	1.4	0.9	1.1
All (weighted)	26.7	25.1	25.6	1.1	0.6	0.6
Level of significance	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns

*Note: Partial competency means satisfying at least one of the four competency criteria but not all. None means satisfying none of the four criteria.*

**Table 3.3: Proportion of learners satisfying different basic competency criteria by school category and sex**

School category	Boys	Girls	Both	Remarks
<b>Life Skills</b>				
NFPE in Urban areas	85.0	86.9	86.0	ns
NFPE in Rural areas	90.4	91.9	91.2	ns
Level of significance	ns	ns	p<0.05	
<b>Reading Skills</b>				
NFPE in Urban areas	91.3	87.9	89.5	ns
NFPE in Rural areas	89.5	94.3	91.9	p<0.10
Level of significance	ns	p<0.10	ns	
<b>Writing Skills</b>				
NFPE in Urban areas	83.0	85.0	84.0	ns
NFPE in Rural areas	82.3	86.7	84.5	ns
Level of significance	ns	ns	ns	
<b>Numeracy Skills</b>				
NFPE in Urban areas	98.1	93.9	96.0	p<0.05
NFPE in Rural areas	98.1	96.7	97.4	ns
Level of significance	ns	ns	ns	

### 3.2 Parental education and basic competency

Tables 3.4 and 3.5 show the proportion of learners satisfying the basic competency criteria according to the schooling status of their parents. These tables show that parents' schooling significantly helped

to increase the basic competency of the NFPE learners under Urban areas ( $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0.01$ , respectively for mothers and fathers). On the other hand, due to parental schooling no significant difference in basic competency was found among the NFPE learners in rural areas.

**Table 3.4: Proportion of learners satisfying all basic competency criteria by mother's schooling, school category and sex**

Mother's schooling	Boys	Girls	Both	Remarks
NFPE in Urban areas				
Some schooling	86.4	80.9	83.0	ns
No schooling	71.6	73.0	72.3	ns
Level of significance	$p < 0.05$	ns	$p < 0.05$	
NFPE in Rural areas				
Some schooling	79.1	75.5	77.2	ns
No schooling	71.7	78.4	75.0	ns
Level of significance	ns	ns	ns	

**Table 3.5: Proportion of learners satisfying all basic competency criteria by father's schooling, school category and sex**

Father's schooling	Boys	Girls	Both	Remarks
NFPE in Urban areas				
Some schooling	83.7	84.1	83.9	ns
No schooling	67.9	67.5	67.7	ns
Level of significance	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.01$	
NFPE in Rural areas				
Some schooling	76.0	80.5	78.4	ns
No schooling	71.6	75.8	73.6	ns
Level of significance	ns	ns	ns	

### 3.3 Yearly food security status of household and basic competency

When basic competency of the learners were observed according to variation in yearly food security status of their household it was found that the performance increased with the increase of such status (Table 3.6). Difference in basic competency due to yearly food security status was shown statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) only among the girls' as well as learners of NFPE in Urban schools.

### 3.4 Cultivable land size and basic competency in rural areas

Learners of the households which have  $\geq 50$  decimals of land in the Rural areas were more likely to have basic competency than the learners of the households which have less than 50 decimals of land (Table 3.7).

**Table 3.6: Proportion of learners satisfying all basic competency criteria by yearly food security status of household, school category and sex**

Yearly food security status	Boys	Girls	Both	Remarks
NFPE in Urban areas				
Always deficit	69.2	58.3	63.2	ns
Occasionally deficit	71.1	73.0	71.9	ns
Balance	74.0	76.8	75.4	ns
Surplus	77.8	87.9	84.3	ns
Level of significance	ns	p<0.05	p<0.05	
NFPE in Rural areas				
Always deficit	75.6	73.7	74.7	ns
Occasionally deficit	70.6	83.6	76.4	p<0.10
Balance	73.4	74.7	74.2	ns
Surplus	75.0	77.8	76.3	ns
Level of significance	ns	ns	ns	

**Table 3.7: Proportion of learners satisfying all basic competency criteria by cultivable land size of household, school category and sex**

Land size	Boys	Girls	Both	Remarks
NFPE in Rural areas				
<50 decimal	70.0	75.5	72.5	ns
≥50 decimal	77.5	79.6	78.7	ns
Level of significance	ns	ns	ns	

### 3.5 Monthly income of the household and basic competency in urban areas

Difference in basic competency by monthly income was significant among the boys of NFPE in Urban areas and girls of NFPE in Urban areas (p<0.05, p<0.01 and p<0.05, respectively).

**Table 3.8: Proportion of learners satisfying all basic competency criteria by month income of household, school category and sex**

Monthly income	Boys	Girls	Both	Remarks
NFPE in Urban areas				
<3000 taka	65.8	68.3	67.1	ns
≥3000 taka	81.4	80.2	80.8	ns
Level of significance	p<0.05	p<0.05	p<0.01	

### 3.6 Communication media and basic competency

The respondents were asked whether they had access to radio or television during the previous 7 days of interview. Table 3.9 shows that learners who had access to communication media performed well than who did not have access.

**Table 3.9: Proportion of learners satisfying all basic competency criteria by access of different communication media, school category and sex**

Sex	Listened radio			Watched TV		
	Yes	No	Remarks	Yes	No	Remarks
NFPE in Urban areas						
Boys	79.0	65.7	p<0.05	78.3	67.0	p<0.10
Girls	80.4	68.0	p<0.05	82.4	66.7	p<0.01
Both	79.7	67.0	p<0.01	80.3	66.8	p<0.01
Level of significance	ns	ns		ns	ns	
NFPE in Rural areas						
Boys	77.1	69.7	ns	83.6	61.5	p<0.01
Girls	79.4	76.6	ns	85.4	72.5	p<0.05
Both	78.2	73.3	ns	84.4	67.8	p<0.01
Level of significance	ns	ns		ns	p<0.10	

Access to radio had no significant influence on basic competency among the learners of NFPE in Rural areas. But among the learners of NFPE in Urban areas, access to radio had significant positive influence on basic competency ( $p<0.01$ ). On the other hand, access to television significantly influenced the basic competency of all respondents.

### 3.7 Determinants of basic education competency

What are the socioeconomic determinants of basic education competencies of the learners of PROSHIKA's NFPE program? In previous section, bi-variate analysis gave some idea about the relationship between basic education competency and different socioeconomic characteristics of the learners. This analysis explored only the independent contribution of the socioeconomic variables. So, to know the determinants of basic education competency of the learners it was felt necessary to apply advance statistical technique such as multiple logistic regression analysis. Taking basic competency as dependent variable, two separate models were estimated by using software SPSS for Windows 6.0. A total of 9 explanatory variables were considered. These were: sex, mother's education, father's education, yearly food security status of the household, cultivable land size, access to radio and television and school category. For Model 1 all the 9 explanatory variables were considered and using step-wise approach the best model was identified by forward selection. For Model II, two variables (school type and sex) were forcefully introduced with the selected variables of Model 1. The regression coefficients and their respective odds ratio are displayed in Table 3.9.

From 9 socioeconomic characteristics Model 1 included only three. This means that these three



socioeconomic characteristics came out as statistically significant ( $p < 0.10$ ) determinants of basic competency of the learners of PROSHIKA's NFPE program. The explanatory variables included by the model were age and father's education, cultivable land size of household and respondent's access to television. The results of regression analysis suggest the following:

- a) The learners who watched television within the previous seven days of interview had 2.19 times higher performance than the learners who had no access to television ( $p < 0.001$ ). Access to television was found second important determinant of basic education competency of the learners.
- b) Father's schooling contributed significantly to the performance in basic competency of the learners. The learners whose father ever enrolled in any school had basic competency 1.6 times higher than that of learners whose father had no schooling ( $p < 0.01$ ).
- c) Cultivable land ownership of the household was found as a significant ( $p < 0.10$ ) variable that affects the basic competency of the learners. The learners whose household had more than 50 decimals of cultivable land were 1.3 times more likely to have basic competency than the learners whose households had less than 50 decimals of land.

**Table 3.10: Determinants of basic education competency of the learners of PROSHIKA's NFPE programme: logistic regression estimates**

Determinants	Model I		Model II	
	Reg. coeff.	Odds ratios	Reg. coeff.	Odds ratios
PROSHIKA School Category				
NFPE in Urban			0.00	1.00
NFPE in Rural			0.17	1.19
Sex				
Boy			0.00	1.00
Girl			0.10	1.00
Father's Education				
Non-schooling	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00
Schooling	0.47***	1.60	0.49***	1.63
Cultivable land				
<50 dec.	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00
≥50 dec.	0.26*	1.30	0.25*	1.29
Watched TV				
No	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00
Yes	0.78***	2.19	0.78***	2.19
Constant	-0.70***		-0.86***	

\*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$

Including the variables "school category" and "sex" with the explanatory variables of Model I, the regression coefficients of Model II were estimated. Findings of Model II suggest very similar conclusions as in Model I. Model II further confirms the results of bi-variate analysis that the effect of school category and sex on basis competency was in significant.

#### **4. Findings and Discussion**

##### **4.1 Findings of the Study**

A very important consideration of any education program is the quality of education given to its learners. The Jomtien Conference on Education for All declared to equip the people of the developing countries with basic education (WCEFA, 1990). PROSHIKA's education program provides basic learning needs to its learners. In fact, 73.8% of a recent cohort of its learners satisfied all four criteria of basic education and more than one-fourth (25.6%) possesses partial basic competency. This performance is far better compared to the national performance level (Chowdhury et al, 1992). This may be due to better quality of education provided through PROSHIKA's education program. The study observed no significant difference in performance among the learners of different school category. Though the girls performed slightly better than the boys (74.3% and 72.6%, respectively), but no significant gender difference was found. The learners of comparatively better-off households were more likely to have basic competency than the respondents of poor households.

#### **Socio-economic background and basic education competency**

##### **4.1.1 Parental education and basic competency**

The analysis shown that parents' schooling significantly helped to increase the basic competency of the NFPE learners under Urban areas ( $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0.01$ , respectively for mothers and fathers). On the other hand, due to parental schooling no significant difference in basic competency was found among the NFPE learners in Rural areas (Table 3.4 & 3.5).

##### **4.1.2 Yearly food security status of household and basic education**

It was found that the performance increased with the increase of such status (Table 3.6). Difference in basic competency due to yearly food security status was shown statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) only among the girls' as well as learners of NFPE in Urban schools.

##### **4.1.3 Cultivable land size and basic education in rural areas**

Learners of the households which have  $\geq 50$  decimals of land were more likely to have basic competency than the learners of the households which have less than 50 decimals of land (Table 3.7).

##### **4.1.4 Monthly income of the households and basic education**

Difference in basic competency by monthly income was significant among the boys of NFPE in Urban areas and girls of NFPE in Urban areas ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$ , respectively).

##### **4.1.5 Communication media and basic education**

The analysis (Table 3.8) shown that learners who had access to communication media performed well than who did not have access. Access to radio had no significant influence on basic competency among the learners of NFPE in Rural areas. But among the learners of NFPE in Urban areas, access to radio had significant positive influence on basic competency ( $p < 0.01$ ). On the other hand, access to television significantly influenced the basic competency of all respondents.

#### 4.2 Discussion

The non-formal primary education program of PROSHIKA is designed to eradicate illiteracy from among rural Bangladeshi children. The most vulnerable cohort of Bangladesh society, the girls is the prime target of this program. More than 70% of the current learners of this education program are girls.

A very important consideration of any education program is the quality of education given to its learners. The Jomtien Conference on Education for All declared to equip the people of the developing countries with basic education (WCEFA, 1990). PROSHIKA's education program provides basic learning needs to its learners. This program wants to ensure improved quality of education with active participation of the community. In fact, 73.8% of a recent cohort of its learners satisfied all four criteria of basic education and more than one-fourth possesses partial basic competency. This performance is far better compared to the national performance level (Chowdhury et al, 1992). This may be due to better quality of education provided through PROSHIKA's education program. Till now PROSHIKA's education program could not meet the goal of world conference on education. But this performance is very near to that goal to ensure basic education to at least 80% of school-age children by the year 2006.

The study observed no significant difference in performance among the learners of different school category. Though the girls performed slightly better than the boys (74.3% and 72.6%, respectively), but no significant gender difference was found. This implies that PROSHIKA's education program has provided good basic education to its learners irrespective of school category or sex. National estimates show that girls are far behind than boys in basic competency (Chowdhury et al, 1992) as well as in literacy rate (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1994).

The learners of comparatively better-off households were more likely to have basic competency than the respondents of poor households. This study identified three socioeconomic factors as the determinants of basic competency of the learners of PROSHIKA NFPE schools. These were: father's education, cultivable land size of the household and respondents' exposure to television. This finding is also similar to that of the 'tracer study' (Nath et al, 1994). Access to television was the second most important variable in determining basic competency followed by father's education and land size.

Basic education is not an end itself. It is a process. Basic education is not quantitative phenomena. It is an organic element of self-development of individual. Therefore, it is a vain attempt to assess basic education competencies in terms of quantitative data. The process of basic education assessment should be conducted over along time period. The results on the basis of statistical data do not always express the real situation.

*Note: The present study was conducted for academic purpose. It was conducted in a short time frame and on small sample size. From the study no decision should not be drawn because of some limitations above mentioned. It must be kept in mind while taking the findings of the study into consideration.*

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<sup>1</sup> both of the researchers have contributed equally

<sup>2</sup> was the supervisor of the study in Bangladesh

<sup>3</sup> Bangladesh Education Sector Review, Volume II, The University Press Limited, 2000

<sup>4</sup> CAMPE(1995), *Directory of Education Programs of the NGOs*. Campaign for Popular Education, Dhaka.

<sup>5</sup> NFPE center means Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) center or school which is consisting of one room, one teacher with 33 students.

<sup>6</sup> Assessment of Basic Education methodology.

## 要 旨

基礎教育における社会経済的要因に関する考察  
 Bangladesh の NGO（プロシカ）に注目して

ハッピー・クマル・ダス（教育学研究科修士課程）

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国連ミレニアム開発目標に基づき、2015年までに世界中の全ての人々が基礎的な初等教育を受けられる環境の整備が進められている。Bangladesh は、1991年に初等教育を義務化したものの、基礎教育を受けられない者が依然として存在する。特に、都市部と農村部の識字率の格差は大きく、政府や NGO は「万人のための教育（EFA：Education for All）」活動に取り組んでいる。本稿では、同国においてノン・フォーマル教育の提供に重要な役割を担ってきた主要 NGO であるプロシカに注目する。プロシカは、1990年より初等一般教育のプログラムを実施してきた。

本稿では、プロシカの実践を対象とし、学習者の基礎教育の習得度を明らかにするとともに、社会経済的要因が学習者の基礎教育習得にどのような影響を与えているかについて考察する。調査は、ラジャヒ地区（農村部）とダカ地区（都市部）の第4学年以降の子どもを対象とし、「読み・書き・計算・生活上のスキルと知識」の4分野の習得度について実施された。調査の結果は、学校の類型別、性別、地区別ごとのクロス集計や多変量解析によって処理した。基礎教育習得度に対する社会経済的要因に関するおもな知見は次のとおりであった。

- ・両親の学校教育経験は、都市部では影響があったが農村部ではなかった。
- ・生活保護受給の程度は、都市部の女子においてのみ影響があった。
- ・土地所有面積が大きい方が、習得度が高い傾向が見られた。
- ・都市部では、世帯の月収による差が習得度に影響していた。
- ・テレビへのアクセスはすべての子どもの習得度に影響があり、ラジオへのアクセスは都市部でのみ正の影響を与えていた。

以上のような分析から、プロシカの学校における基礎教育の習得度には、社会経済的要因の影響があることが明らかとなった。こうした社会経済的要因に関する格差を踏まえて、「万人のための教育」の取り組みが行われる必要がある。