Bangladesh

Revised version, October 2006.

Principles and general objectives of education

Article 17 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, which relates to education, reads as follows: "The State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of: (a) establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law; (b) relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs; (c) removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law."

Since Bangladesh is yet to have an education policy document, there has been no official statement of the goals and objectives of secondary education in the country. The Bangladesh National Education Commission, however, in its report of February 1988 laid down the following as aims and objectives of secondary education:

- to extend and consolidate basic education at the primary level;
- to provide pupils with basic knowledge in a variety of subjects;
- to prepare pupils as part of the skilled manpower needed for the economic development of the country;
- to develop pupils as good citizens so that they become aware of their responsibilities, duties and rights;
- to develop among pupils a knowledge based on democratic beliefs and a sense of moral and spiritual values;
- to help develop fully the potential, abilities and possibilities of pupils;
- to prepare deserving pupils for higher studies in accordance with their merit and aptitude;
- to help pupils develop confidence in their own thoughts and reasoning and become respectful of the opinions of others;
- to give pupils an education which enables them to live better lives in their families, communities, and the world at large;
- to prepare pupils for suitable vocations by increasing their ability for work;
- to improve the pupils' physical and mental health.

Current educational priorities and concerns

The vast population of Bangladesh is one of its major resources. The problem lies in transforming the people into a more productive labour force and ensuring a dynamic environment for social, economic and political development. This has become difficult due to the prevalence of numerous problems like poverty, widespread illiteracy (65% according to the 1991 Population Census), low per capita income and rapid population growth. The Government's priority in human resource development is the eradication of illiteracy as a basic weapon to combat poverty and overall backwardness.

The Government expressed its commitment to the World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien (1990), the World Summit on Children in New York (1990) and the Education For All (EFA) Summit of Nine High Population Countries in Delhi (1993). As an expression of the firm determination of Bangladesh to improve the literacy situation of the country, a National Plan of Action has been prepared under the guidance of a National Committee, setting objectives to raise the gross enrolment rate to 95%, the completion rate to 70%, and the adult literacy rate to 62% by the year 2000.

To meet the target of education for all, the Compulsory Primary Education (CPE) Act was promulgated in 1990; it was implemented in 1992 on a limited scale and has been extended throughout the country since 1993. Along with the introduction of CPE, a strong social mobilization process has been initiated to create awareness and elicit participation of all. Such activities include the formation of village-level committees, organizing mother rallies, student brigades, and use of mass and electronic media. As a result, the people have become more conscious of the need for education, which translates into increasing school enrolments and improving completion rates. To achieve the targeted literacy rate of 62%, the following initiatives have been identified:

- literacy centres will be established in each village utilizing the premises of existing educational institutions;
- the Total Literacy Movement programme will continue with greater participation of local people;
- primers for illiterates and continuing education materials will be developed, printed and distributed on a continuous basis;
- training programmes for the teachers, supervisors and other personnel will continue;
- the Management Information System Unit of the Directorate of Non-Formal Education will be strengthened;
- the Social Mobilization programme will be strengthened for organizing intensive non-formal and adult literacy programmes and for encouraging

communities involvement in the planning and implementation of EFA programmes.

To serve the needs of an increased number of students in primary schools, various programmes are being implemented, such as: building new schools in unschooled areas, reconstructing and rehabilitating existing government and non-government primary schools, and creating additional classrooms. Another innovative programme is the Food for Education Programme, which is aimed at increasing enrolment and attendance and reducing drop-out in primary schools, particularly for the children of very poor and distressed families. The programme was introduced in July 1993 in an economically and educationally disadvantaged "union" in each of the 460 *thanas* (small administrative unit, one step lower than the district, now called *upazila*). In 1994, 1,000 unions were brought within the boundaries of the Food for Education Programme. Under this programme, the poor parents of primary school children are entitled to receive 15 kg. of wheat or rice of equivalent price for sending one child, and 20 kg. for sending two children to school—if the child maintains 85% attendance every month. As a result, poor parents are now keen to send their children to school instead of employing them for income-earning activities. This programme has a salutary impact on preventing child labour. An early assessment made by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) revealed that over a one-year period in the project area enrolment increased by 20.4%, attendance increased by 14.7%, and the drop-out rate decreased by 7.6%. One-fourth of the country is covered and about 2 million children of poor families (40%) currently benefit from the programme.

School attractiveness programmes have also been introduced to increase school attendance. These experimental programmes are under implementation in ten *thanas* of five districts of the country. All these efforts have had a positive impact on enrolment. Primary education enrolment has steadily risen; from 12 million in 1990 to 16.8 million in 1995. The gross enrolment rate reached 92% in 1995.

However, problems and obstacles still persist. Amongst the impediments to creating a proper learning environment as well as ensuring quality primary education, are: poor management and administration, lack of adequate supervision, want of accountability and inadequate contact time. Another major impediment is the illiteracy and poverty of the parents, who are unable to contribute to the instructional needs of the children at home. Also, it is not possible for many parents to fund the indirect cost of primary education. Furthermore, there is a shortage of teachers and those who are in-service lack motivation and professional skills. In addition, there is an insufficient supply of teaching and learning materials in primary schools. Collectively, these factors contribute to non-attendance, drop-out, and low achievement of children.

The following activities have been identified to meet the objectives set forth for primary education:

- Additional classrooms will be provided with the necessary furniture, depending on enrolment. The aim is to have a minimum of five classrooms in each school. The programme for the reconstruction/renovation of government primary schools and registered non-government primary schools will continue.

- Additional teachers will be recruited for additional classes.

- An effective information system will be established to get reliable and dependable data on various activities in primary education.

- Teacher training programmes and teaching-learning materials will be improved; the training of teachers will be reviewed; *thana* resource centres will be established to conduct in-service/refresher training programmes.

- The National Academy for Primary Education will be strengthened with greater functional autonomy as a centre of excellence.

- One primary school in each *thana* will be developed as a model school for demonstrating innovative teaching-learning practices and for facilitating refresher training for teachers in localized school sub-clusters.

- Participatory and interactive ways of teaching and learning will continue to be developed in order to enhance the quality of learning at the primary school level.

- The Primary and Mass Education Division will be strengthened and the Directorate of Primary Education will be reorganized to facilitate the improvement of quality in the management of the primary education system.

The strategies and modes of planning are currently being reformed. Bangladesh is trying to switch over from the short-term Plan, to the medium or long-term Perspective Plan. In this context, a draft Perspective Plan for 1995-2010 was prepared and the objectives of the Perspective Plan for secondary and higher education have been identified. The objectives include:

- attain universal secondary education with particular emphasis on work-oriented education;

- accelerate the expansion of female education at all levels;

- emphasize vocational education at the secondary level to boost the employment of secondary graduates at home and abroad;

- make technical and vocational education more job-oriented through linkages with the market;

- reduce the rural-urban gap in educational facilities;

- expand facilities at the secondary and higher secondary levels to accommodate additional enrolment;

- encourage private initiatives in establishing higher educational institutions.

The means towards the attainment of the above objectives include:

- the consolidation and optimum utilization of existing physical infrastructure;
- introduction of double shifts in all educational institutions;
- reduction of the gender gap through extensive stipend and scholarship programmes for female students;
- improvement of the standard and quality of education in addition to revising the curricula to suit the technological base of modern societies;
- continued emphasis on science education at the secondary and higher secondary stages;
- enhancement of the proportion of enrolment in agriculture, engineering, science and medicine;
- introduction of computer science and engineering in all technical institutes and agriculture as a subject in all secondary and pre-vocational schools;
- upgrading the technical institutes to university status and establishing new institutes at the old district headquarters level;
- accelerated production of skilled workers through formal and non-formal vocational training;
- establishment of a university/college in all district headquarters;
- encouraging the private sector to participate in the provision of college and university-level education and involvement of the community in the maintenance and establishment of secondary schools;
- introduction of teacher training and periodic re-orientation for university teachers, and incentive compensation to quality teachers.

The implementation of the public sector objective of increasing support to education has worked remarkably well in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This approach will be continued and further strengthened. The joint operation also aims at evolving an effective management system for schools, particularly by involving local-level institutions in school management. The problem of urban slums also needs to be addressed. Schooling for poor children in the urban slums will be supported with the collaboration of NGOs.

In light of the vision, the goals and strategies set in the Dakar Framework for Action, the state of basic education in the country in 2000/01, the lessons learned from the implementation of the first EFA National Plan of Action (NPA I), the overall goal of the EFA NPA II 2003–2015 is: to establish a knowledge-based and technologically-oriented learning society by enhancing and sustaining access, retention and provision of quality basic education to meet the learning needs of all children, young persons and adults in a competitive world, both in the formal and

non-formal sub-sectors of basic education without any discrimination. The objectives of the EFA NPA II are to:

- Institute a well organized and coordinated program of early childhood care and education for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, using both formal and non-formal approaches, with emphasis on family and community-based programs.

- Bring all primary school-age children, particularly girls, the disabled, those in difficult circumstances and belonging to ethnic minorities, and enable them to complete primary education (already free and compulsory) of good quality.

- Establish programmes of appropriate learning and life-skills to meet the learning needs of all young people and adults, and ensure their access, participation and successful completion of relevant courses.

- Increase the adult literacy rate (among persons of 15 to 45 years of age) from 56% in 2000 to 80% by 2015 (reducing adult illiteracy by half, following the millennium development goal), especially for women, through equitable access to quality basic and continuing education for all adults.

- Sustain and enhance the present near gender-parity in primary and above parity for girls in secondary education to achieve gender equity in education by 2005 and gender equality in 2015 by ensuring full and equal access of boys and girls to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

- Improve the quality and excellence of basic education in all respects and ensure achievement of recognized and measurable learning outcomes by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

- Institute an agreed core of equivalence between formal and non-formal basic education sub-sectors and between/among different streams of formal sub-sector and between public and NGO and private programs to ensure standard quality of education across the board and transferability from non-formal to formal and between streams to enable those who want to join the main stream and continue further education or switch from one to another stream. (MPME, 2003).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Constitution** of the Republic of Bangladesh provides for establishing a uniform, mass-oriented, universal system of education, and extending free and compulsory education to all children. It also provides for relating education to the needs of society, producing trained and motivated citizens to serve the needs of society and removing illiteracy.

The **Non-Government Universities Act No. 34** of 1992 regulates the establishment of private universities. The Open University was created under the **Act No. 38** of 1992.

Primary education has been made compulsory for children aged 6-10 years by the **Compulsory Primary Education Act** of 1990, which states that "unless there is a valid ground, the guardian of each child living in an area where primary education has been made compulsory shall [...] have his/her child admitted to the nearest primary education institution located in that area."

Administration and management of the education system

The principal management institutions in the education sector are: the Primary and Mass Education Division under the Prime Minister; the Ministry of Education; the Directorate of Primary Education; the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education; the Directorate of Technical Education; the Directorate of Inspection and Audit; the National Curriculum and Textbook Board; the Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education; the Madrasah Education Board; the Technical Education Board, the National Academy for Primary Education; the National Academy for Educational Management; the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics; the Facilities Department; and the University Grants Commission.

The **Ministry of Education** (MOE) has overall responsibility for planning, guiding and controlling the development of education. There is a growing feeling among educators that, as the principal policy-making body in education, the MOE should focus its efforts on developing policies and programmes rather than routine matters. While post-primary and post-secondary education continue under the MOE, the **Primary and Mass Education Division** was established in August 1992 and upgraded as a Ministry in 2003. It is responsible for policy formulation, planning, evaluation and execution of plans and initiating legislative measures relating to primary and mass education, as well as non-formal education. Mass education in Bangladesh refers to non-formal education for out-of-school children, youth and adults in basic literacy, simple numeracy and life skills.

At the central level, the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), headed by a director-general, executes the policy decisions and controls, co-ordinates and regulates the field administration of primary education. Under the DPE there are five divisional offices headed by deputy directors, sixty-four **District Offices** headed by district primary education officers, and 481 ***Thana (Upazila)* Education Offices** headed by *thana (upazila)* education officers. The Directorate of Non-Formal Education, headed by a director-general, executes the programmes of non-formal education. It controls and regulates the field level administration of non-formal education.

The **Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education** (DSHE) is the principal agency for implementing government policies in secondary education. It has under its control secondary schools (including junior high schools and colleges—intermediate, degree and madrashas). In addition, there are *ebtedayee* or primary-level madrashas under its administrative jurisdiction. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of educational institutions. The increasing number of institutions not only creates pressure on the public exchequer but also brings in its wake administrative and management problems and increased workload. In addition, problems have resulted from the nationalization of a number of secondary schools and colleges in the recent years. The DSHE is headed by a Director General who is

assisted by four Directors and a number of other officials at the center, zone and district levels. The country has been divided into 9 educational zones for effective management of secondary education at the field level. Under these zones there are 64 District Education Officers (DEOs) and an equal number of Assistant District Education Officers (ADEOs) to monitor and supervise the secondary schools. One of the most difficult tasks of DSHE is the central administration of salary subsidy payment to nearly 250,000 teachers and employees of non-government secondary schools, colleges and madrashas.

The **National Academy for Primary Education** (NAPE) is the principal institution of primary teacher education, conducting training and research in the field of primary education. NAPE also looks after the academic programmes of the Primary Training Institutes (PTIs) and conducts the final examination for the one-year certificate in education course. There are fifty-three Primary Training Institutes spread over the country. The annual intake capacity of the PTIs is around 10,000. The PTIs offer a certificate in education course for primary school teachers. The PTIs also conduct action research. The **National Academy for Educational Management** (NAEM) is responsible for in-service training of senior administrators and teachers at the secondary and higher secondary levels.

The **National Curriculum and Textbook Board** (NCTB) is responsible for curriculum development, printing and supply of all textbooks for the primary, secondary and higher secondary levels. The **Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics** (BANBEIS) is responsible for the collection, compilation, publication and dissemination of information and education statistics at all levels.

The seven **Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education** (BISE) independently administer the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and the Higher School Certificate (HSC) Examinations in their own regions. The **Madrasah Education Board** administers the Madrasah system of education (see the chapter 'private education' below).

The **Technical Education Board** has full academic control over the technical and vocational institutions. The Institute of Marine Technology and eleven Technical Training Centres, run by the Ministry of Manpower, are affiliated to the Board for academic purposes. Public examinations are held for various types of courses under the auspices of the Board. The Ministry of Agriculture operates eleven Agricultural Training Institutes affiliated to the Board.

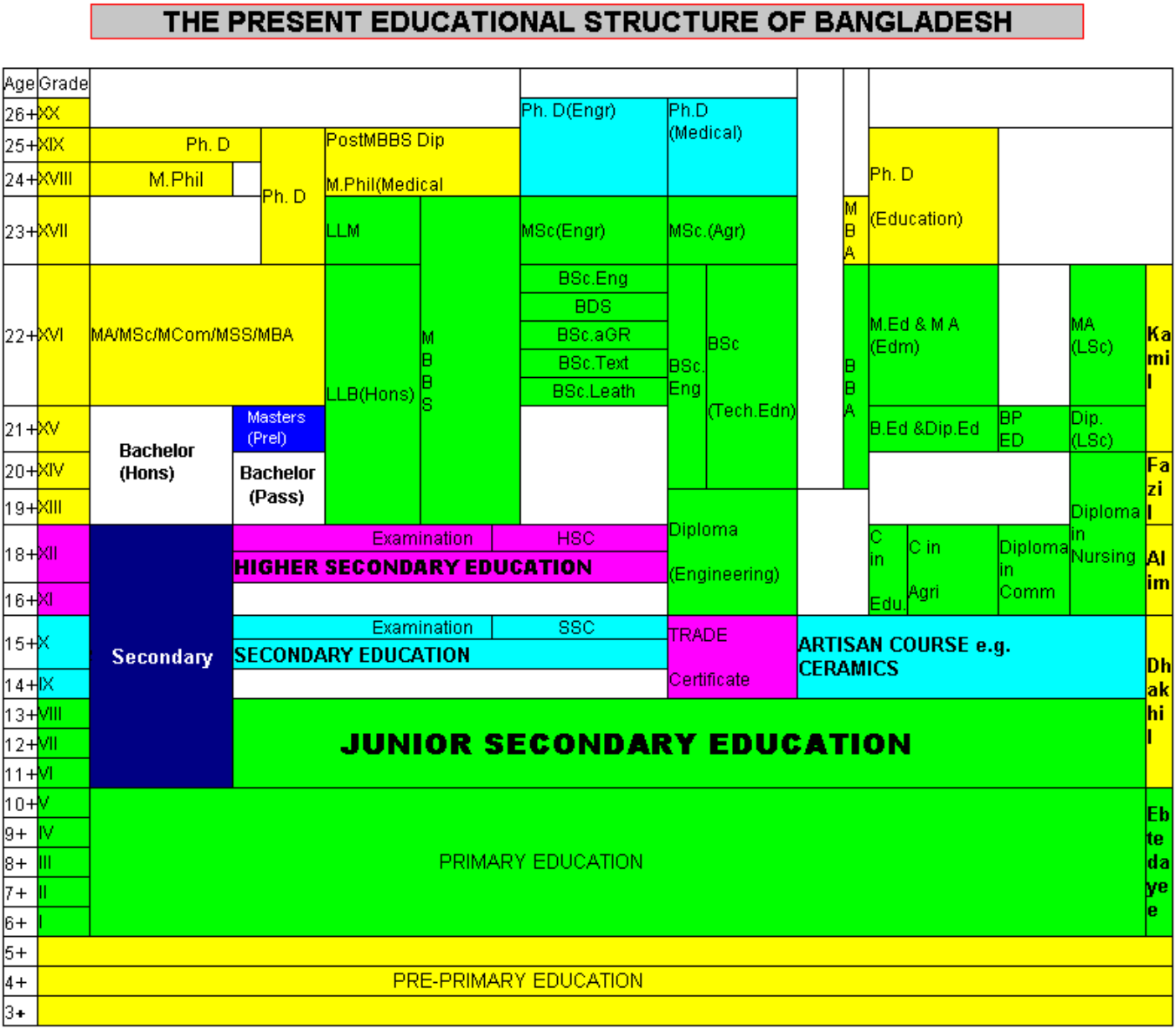
Traditionally, the management role in education has been performed exclusively by the public sector. However, since 97% of the secondary schools are privately-managed non-governmental institutions, their involvement in planning, execution and management has to be secured, in order to ensure their participation in the development efforts.

"Bangladesh is fortunate to have a large, diverse, and dynamic community of NGOs engaged in economic and social development as well as disaster relief. These organizations provide a testing ground for alternative approaches to development and relief and attract additional international funding. Of the 13,000 voluntary social

welfare and development agencies in Bangladesh, some 500 are directly involved in developmental and poverty alleviation activities. Some 12 to 15 percent of total external assistance to Bangladesh flows through NGOs." (Prather, 1993, p. 16).

Structure and organization of the education system

Bangladesh: structure of the education system



Pre-school education

Pre-school education is available mostly in the cities and some of the district headquarters. Pre-school education caters to children aged 4-5 and is not part of the formal education system.

Primary education

Primary education extends over a five-year period (Grades I-V) and caters to children in the age group 6-11. Primary education is compulsory (as of 1992) and tuition-free. No certificate is awarded upon completion of the primary education programme.

Secondary education

Secondary education consists of three stages: junior secondary (Grades VI-VIII), secondary (Grades IX and X) and higher secondary (Grades XI and XII). Secondary education (Grades VI-X) is offered in junior secondary schools and high schools; higher secondary (Grades XI and XII) is offered in intermediate colleges and intermediate sections of degree colleges. The first public examination at the end of Grade X (the Secondary School Certificate Examination–SSC) must be passed by all candidates seeking to move to the two-year higher secondary level. At the end of Grade XII there is another public examination. The Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) is required for admission to first-degree courses and appointment to secretarial positions in government services.

There is a separate stream for imparting technical-vocational education and training. After completing the junior secondary level (Grade VIII), students may enter into vocational training institutes for 2-year SSC (vocational/science) courses; holders of SSC vocational/SSC (science) may enter into vocational training institutes (VTI) and polytechnic institutes for 2-year HSC (vocational) or 3-year Dip-in-Engineering courses.

Higher education institutions include universities (both public and private), institutes of technology, and various colleges (arts, medicine, agriculture, textile, leather, teacher training, etc.). Degree colleges, professional colleges and universities offer the following programmes: two-year ordinary first degree; three-year specialized degree in arts, science and commerce (honours degree); four- to five-year professional first degree in engineering, architecture, medicine, etc.; one-year master's degree courses for holders of a bachelor's degree (honours), and of two years' duration for holders of a bachelor's degree; two-year M.Phil. degree (after a master's degree); and three-year (minimum) Ph.D. (after a master's degree).

The Madrasah education system functions parallel to the government system, with similar core courses as in the general stream (primary, secondary and post-secondary) but with additional emphasis on religious studies.

The school year consists of thirty-seven working weeks.

The financing of education

As a share of GDP, government expenditure on education averaged 1.2% during the First Five-year Plan (FYP, 1973-78); 1.3% during the Second (1980-85); 1.8% during the Third (1985-90); and 2.2% during the Fourth FYP (1990-95). In 1994/95, the share of GDP rose to nearly 3%. Despite this steady pattern of growth in allocations, Bangladesh's public investment in education as a share of GDP is among the lowest

in South Asia. Educational expenditure as a share of total government expenditure averaged 9.4% during the First FYP (1973-78). It rose to 13.6% during the Fourth FYP (1990-95), a level of allocation that compares favourably with that of most South Asian countries.

The government's recognition of the importance of primary and mass education is reflected in the share of development expenditure allocated to this education sub-sector, which was 58% of the education sector budget in 1996. The government committed itself to develop and improve the quality of primary education. Subsequent increases in allocation to the sub-sector will ensure that gains already made are sustained, the quality of schooling improved, and basic and mass education are provided nationwide.

The proportion allocated to the primary and mass education sub-sectors from the combined revenue and development budgets remained more or less constant—an average of about 51% during the period from 1990/91 to 1995/96.

External resources (loans and grants) supported about 16% of the total educational expenditure during the 1990-95 period. Over 75% of these resources were spent on primary and non-formal education, reflecting both the government and its development partners' priorities in the sub-sector.

Generally, teachers' salaries and allowances constitute a major part of the total public expenditure on education. In Bangladesh, classified expenditure data on education are not available. The available data, however, suggest that per-student public expenditure in government institutions (secondary schools, colleges and madrashas) is significantly higher than in non-government institutions. Per-pupil recurrent expenditure in urban secondary schools greatly exceeds per-pupil expenditure in rural secondary schools. The average annual per-pupil private cost of education at the secondary level comes to around 3,000 *taka* (Tk).

Although non-government secondary schools are managed by their respective managing committees, the main source of their expenditure is the government salary subsidies for teachers and non-teaching employees (49.2%). The next important sources are tuition fees (24.3%) and other student charges (18.5%). Tuition fees for girls in grades 6-8 in the rural areas have been abolished since January 1990. Consequently, a subsidy for tuition fee exemption for girls is paid by the Government to the concerned non-government secondary schools.

The total public expenditure on education has tended to more than double every five years. Perhaps sustaining this trend will be a difficult task. However, to achieve Universal Primary Education by the year 2000, increase the literacy rate and enhance the quality of education at all levels, additional resources must be created. Based on the present socio-economic scenario, rough estimates of public expenditures on education are on the order of Tk34,523 million by the year 2000-01 and Tk89,542 million by the year 2010-11.

In recent years, a number of educational finance issues have been raised. One of these is the nationalization of non-government secondary schools and colleges. Nationalization benefits two groups—the teachers and the students. The government-

teachers and employees have a higher salary and retirement benefits, which are not currently available to teachers and employees of non-government institutions. The students' benefit comes in the form of the lower tuition fees paid in government institutions. While successive governments have nationalized a number of institutions, there has been no debate on the issue and the Parliament did not have the opportunity to discuss it. The Planning Commission, however, has boldly raised the issue. Even if the nationalization policy is not abandoned, it can be linked with quality-enhancement measures. An alternative to the nationalization policy would be to develop selected existing schools, government or non-government, as institutions which would develop and disseminate sound educational practices and innovations and serve as resource centres for other schools in the *thana*.

Another important issue in the financing of education is the recovery of costs. Tuition fees in the universities have remained at the 1960 level. In the government schools and colleges, tuition fees are substantially lower than those in the non-government institutions. Mobilizing additional resources for education, however, is unavoidable. In this process, the possibility of enhancing user fees and allowing the setting up of institutions of higher learning in the private sector can be considered.

As a percentage of GNP, expenditure on education during the period 2000-2004 is estimated at about 2.2%, which compares favorably with an average allocation of less than 1% during 1973-1980. The current trend in public expenditure is consistent with the government's commitments for giving highest priority to the education sector. Allocations for education sector over the last ten years (1997-2004) were around 18% and 12% of the revenue and development budgets respectively. Within the education sector, primary and mass as well as secondary and higher education have been given priority over post-higher secondary university education. The budget for the fiscal year 2002/03 allocated 37% of total revenue budget for primary and mass education while 51% was allocated for secondary and higher education. Development budget however gave higher allocations to primary and mass education (59%) while 34% was allocated to secondary and higher education. Universities normally receive about 8% of total public sector allocations. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

The educational process

Pre-primary education

Pre-school education (baby class, playgroup, KG-1, KG-2) caters to children aged 3-5. The government is committed to improving child health care, nutrition, living environment, etc. Most of these activities in this regard are carried out under the supervision of the government agencies through various ministries; non-government and community service organizations are also involved in the delivery of these services.

In Bangladesh, the concept of Early Childhood Development (ECD) and the need for Early Childhood Education (ECE) as well as other supportive activities for the development of the child has not been well established. There are many primary schools that have 'baby' (or pre-school) classes and many privately-owned

kindergartens that have playgroup/nursery group sections, but their impact on the children's development has not been studied in details. The 'baby class' is a pre-primary education arrangement attached to primary school. Although this arrangement is recognized by the government, this type of education is not properly administered, nor is systematically supervised. Teaching-learning materials are not designed through any scientific process. This is a sort of loose form of education arrangement, helping children become school-oriented. The child development focus is not obvious in this arrangement.

Thus, the existence of the 'baby class' as a form of pre-primary education is the weakest part of the education system. At its best, it is an activity for familiarizing children with schooling; but its weakness is that it is not carefully managed. Moreover, in its nature it is not oriented toward child development in the true sense of the term. (Government of Bangladesh, 1999).

ECE/ECD is identified as one of the major intervention in the National Plan of Action (NPA) III approved by the government in June 2005. There are four ministries that provide early childhood services: the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (baby class in primary schools and playgroups); the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (day care centers and pre-primary education); the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (immunization and nutrition); and the Ministry of Social Welfare (Orphanage and children's home). There is no national mechanism set up specifically to coordinate the different sectors for early childhood. No major initiatives have yet been taken to promote sectoral coordination. Recently, however, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has made an effort to mobilize actors across different sectors in the government as well as actors in the field to implement the Shishu Academy, which runs integrated pre-primary education for 4-5-year-old children.

According to a study conducted by UNESCO Dhaka, pre-primary teachers are younger than primary teachers. The teacher who had any kind of ECCE training is below 20%. Only about 13-4% of teachers have clear concept and objectives of ECCE though more than 62% of them are having positive attitude towards ECCE.

Primary education

There are three types of primary schools: government primary school, registered non-government primary schools and community schools. In addition, there are satellite schools for Grades I-II children in un-served and remote areas. Government primary schools are fully financed by the government and managed by the local School Management Committee (SMC), while registered non-government primary schools receive only salary subvention at a maximum rate of 80% of the basic salary of a primary school teacher. Community schools also receive a partial salary subvention to the teachers. Satellite schools are housed in rented houses in the villages, the teachers having a fixed honorarium from the government.

Primary schools are run in two shifts: the first for the larger enrolment of Grades I and II for two hours; the second shift of three and a half to four hours, for Grades III-V. The medium of instruction at the different grades of the primary level is Bangla (mother tongue). Textbooks are supplied to the students free of cost.

The primary school curriculum has been revised in recent years to make it need-based and life-oriented. By 1995, textbooks had been reviewed, revised, tested and introduced up to Grade IV. Revised textbooks for Grade V were introduced in 1996. The textbooks for Grades I-II include Bangla (mother tongue), mathematics and English. Textbooks for Grades III-V include Bangla, mathematics, English, science, social studies and religious education (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity). There are no prescribed textbooks for environmental studies in Grades I-II or for music, art and crafts, and physical education for Grades I-V. All these subjects are compulsory. The average amount of weekly teaching hours in each grade is three hours for Bangla; three hours for mathematics; thirty minutes for music, art and crafts, and physical education; and two and a half hours for all the other subjects. Religious education has an important place in the school curriculum. It is a compulsory subject of study up to Grade VIII and can be studied as an elective subject at higher levels.

Grades I-II pupils should receive twenty-four periods of instruction per week, each of thirty minutes' duration, for a total of 444 intended contact hours per school year (raised to 595 hours in 2000) of thirty-seven working weeks. Grades III-V pupils should receive thirty-four periods (thirty-five minutes long) per week, for a total of 734 intended contact hours per year (raised to 863 hours in 2000). But the actual contact hours are far less due to many unforeseen interruptions, such as rains, floods, festivities, sports, illnesses, etc. (Government of Bangladesh, 1999). Some reports say that effective contact time does not exceed 15 minutes of the 35-minute period. (MPME, 2003).

The newly introduced curriculum is competency-based. To facilitate teaching and learning, fifty-three learning competencies have been identified for primary education. Teaching materials such as teacher's manuals and the annual lesson plan have been developed on the basis of the new learning objectives. Teaching aids and instructional materials have also been prepared. Because the effective use of these materials depends on the teachers' understanding and competencies, a nationwide curriculum dissemination programme has been implemented. Government and non-government primary school teachers receive an orientation that provides adequate exposure to the materials, thereby permitting them to translate curriculum objectives into reality.

In the present curriculum, the summative assessment (in the form of an annual examination in each grade) has been abandoned. Instead, a system of continuous pupil assessment has been introduced. The system requires teachers to assess students regularly for every competency acquired in a particular lesson (through observation, oral/written assessment) and to record achievement on a monthly basis using three scales (namely grades A, B and C). There is a policy of automatic promotion in Grades I-II. In Grades III-V pupils are promoted on the basis of their achievement in the annual examinations. At the end of the primary cycle (Grade V) there are school-leaving examinations and successful students are awarded school-leaving certificates by the concerned school There is no public examination at the end of the primary cycle, but a scholarship examination is held annually for 20% of Grade V pupils—on the basis of which a scholarship is awarded to successful pupils. The Primary Scholarship Examinations are conducted and managed by the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE).

The introduction of free education for girls up to Grade X and the provision of financial aids for girls in rural areas have accelerated enrolment and improved the completion rate of girls, both at the primary and secondary levels of education. Private primary schools are also providing education that varies in duration and curriculum. In 2002, nearly 38% of the primary school teachers were women, compared to 6% in 1980, 21% in 1990 and 30% in 2000. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

In 1991, the drop-out rate at the primary level was about 57%. According national estimations, in 2004 the net enrolment ratio at the primary level was 94%. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2004 the gross enrolment ratio was 109%. According to data made available by the Ministry of Education, in 2002 there were 37,671 government primary schools (with 10,669,819 pupils enrolled and 157,236 teachers) and 40,692 non-government and other primary-level institutions (with 17,561,828 pupils enrolled and 157,819 teachers). (Ministry of Education, 2004).

In 1998 the average repetition rate at the primary education level was estimated at 6.5%. Repetition rates vary between regions from 5 to 6.5%, with the highest repetition rate of 13.7% in Sylhet. The drop-out rate was estimated at 35%. (Government of Bangladesh, 1999).

Secondary education

The main objectives of secondary education are to: extend and consolidate primary education; provide students with knowledge of various subjects and develop their potentials and abilities; prepare skilled manpower for the country's economic development; and enable the students to take an active part in society as good and responsible citizens. The subjects taught at the secondary level include: language, mathematics, science, religion, history, geography, economics, civics, home economics, environment, art and crafts, etc. Post-primary education in the general stream is imparted by junior secondary schools (Grades VI-VIII), senior secondary schools (Grades VI-X) and higher secondary schools, known as intermediate colleges (Grades XI-XII). Many higher secondary schools also offer courses leading to degrees in liberal arts and sciences. Institutions offering Grades I-XII (primary to higher secondary) are few in number. Post-primary level madrashas are known as *Dakhil madrasha* (grades 6-10) and *Alim madrasha* (grades11-12).

There is a separate stream for imparting technical-vocational education and training. After completing the junior secondary level, students may enter into vocational training institutes for 2-year SSC (vocational/science) courses; holders of SSC vocational/SSC (science) may enter into vocational training institutes (VTI) and polytechnic institutes for 2-year HSC (Vocational)/ 3-year Dip-in-Engineering courses. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

In terms of ownership and management of secondary schools, there are two major types: government and non-government secondary schools (including *Dakhil* madrashas). Nearly 98% of the post-primary (secondary and higher secondary) institutions are owned and managed by private sector. However, these institutions are private only in name because 90% of their salaries and wages, and the costs of their

physical infrastructure development, durable educational supplies and equipment are provided by the government.

The secondary curricula and guidelines for preparing textbooks were formulated in 1977. The corresponding textbooks for Grades VI-VIII were produced during 1980-82 and those for Grades IX-X in 1983. Science is compulsory at the junior secondary level and the integrated science curriculum is followed. At the secondary level (Grades IX and X), science education is optional and the general science curriculum is followed. Curriculum specialists, teachers' educators and planners have strongly advocated making both general science and social science required subjects in Grades IX and X. Practical work in general science has been identified as a weak area. Secondary school teachers are rarely involved in the process of curriculum development and textbook writing, and this may be one of the causes for the lack of interest in using the teaching guides. The curricula were reviewed in 1995-96.

It has been recommended that work-oriented education, as a practical subject, should be compulsory in Grades VI-X. A field survey of 170 secondary schools in five *thanas* revealed that 39% of the schools provided some form of work-oriented education at the junior secondary level. While 12% of the schools reported availability of work experience in Grades IX-X, 90% of the headteachers would be in favour of including productive work in Grades VI-X.

At the end of Grade VIII, there is no general public examination but a Junior Scholarship Examination is taken by about 10% of the students. The first public examination at the end of Grade X—known as the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Examination—must be passed by all candidates seeking to move to the two-year higher secondary level (Grades XI-XII). At the end of Grade XII there is another public examination. The Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) is required for admission to first-degree courses and appointment to secretarial positions in government services. There is heavy competition to enter into first-degree courses, especially for subjects like medicine and engineering. The scores obtained by the candidates in both of the public examinations play an important role in the selection process. Parents send their children to science teachers for private lessons and spend a considerable amount of money for the purpose of improving their children's performance on these public examinations. For Madrasha students, the parallel for SSC is known as *Dakhil*, and for HSC it is known *Alim* examination and certificate.

Secondary education is largely examination-oriented. Job chances depend on educational qualifications, because employers use educational qualifications in the recruitment and selection of personnel. Students and teachers follow strategies of learning and teaching which maximize students' chances of gaining the qualifications which will secure them a job. The majority of students who choose general science as an elective subject enrol for higher secondary classes in the science group (either pre-medical or pre-engineering) after passing the SSC Examination.

As mentioned, there are seven Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE), one Madrasha Education Board, and one Technical Education Board. These Boards are responsible for accreditation of non-government secondary education institutions, supervision for quality assurance and administration of public

examination at the secondary (SSC) and higher secondary (HSC) levels. These Boards are autonomous bodies.

One major weakness of the present examinations is that they do not adequately attempt to measure the wide range of learning outcomes. The syllabi of the public examinations made available to the secondary schools through the BISEs show that the topics included and the distribution of marks do not correspond to the course objectives or expected learning outcomes. The examinations mostly test knowledge or ability to recall facts and information. Hardly any attention is given to the higher abilities of reasoning, understanding, application, analysis and synthesis. In most cases, the affective and psychomotor domains are not addressed at all.

Traditionally, both public examinations and internal assessments use essay tests exclusively. Scores on essay tests, however, vary greatly from examiner to examiner and from subject to subject, and generally such tests have low validity and reliability. Consequently, efforts have been made to gradually introduce objective test items. The 1992 examination assigned 50% of the total marks of each paper to essay examination and the remaining 50% to multiple-choice test items. The present proportions of essay and objective tests are now being widely discussed. The wisdom of including, in each of the 1999 SSC papers, fifty objective items from among the 500 already supplied to schools has been seriously questioned. It has been argued that the introduction of objective tests will result in a larger percentage of passes with a concomitant larger number of students entering the higher secondary and first-degree levels. It has also been argued that the introduction of objective tests will further reduce the quality of secondary science education. Grades IX-X students may become less interested in classroom lessons, both in theoretical and practical sessions (though practical classes are not being conducted at all in some schools).

In 1999, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) at the lower and secondary levels was estimated at 41.2% and less than 20% at the higher secondary level. In the same year, the drop-out rates at the lower secondary and secondary levels were estimated at 21.3% and 52.1%, respectively. Repetition rates were 10.5% and 15.1%, respectively. Less than half of the students taking the SSC and HSC examinations during the period 1988-2000 passed the examinations. (JBIC, 2002). According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2003 the GER at the lower secondary level (all programmes) was 69% and at the upper secondary level it was 37%. The overall GER at the secondary level (all programmes) was 51% and the NER was 48%.

According to the Ministry of Education (2004), in 2002 the secondary education system consisted of the following: 16,562 secondary schools (with 8,162,134 students enrolled and 186,949 teachers); 5,536 madrashas (with 2,168,441 students enrolled and 70,247 teachers); and 1,562 technical/vocational institutions (with 134,016 students enrolled and 8,623 teachers).

"Technical education in Bangladesh is organized in three phases, namely, certificate, diploma, and degree. The certificate course prepares skilled workers in different vocations for one-two years, after eight years of schooling (Grade VIII), and the diploma courses, offered at the polytechnic institutes, are for the training of Diploma engineers. The Diploma course is of three years' duration, and its admission prerequisite is a minimum SSC. Vocational training institutes offer trade courses of

two years' duration […]. Diploma courses of three years' duration in the 18 polytechnics and three monotechnic institutes are offered in the following fields of technology: civil engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, electronics, architecture, chemistry and food technology, printing, ceramics, and surveying. In addition, the Institute of Marine Technology and 11 Technical Training Centres run by the Ministry of Manpower are affiliated to the Technical Education Board for academic purposes. Public examinations are held for various types of courses under the auspices of the Bangladesh Technical Education Board, and diploma and certificates are awarded by them. The Board has full academic control over the technical and vocational institutions. […] The Ministry of Agriculture operates 11 Agricultural Training Institutes where a three-year diploma course in agriculture is offered after SSC. They are affiliated to the Technical Education Board." (Ali, 1995, p. 72-3).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

Within the framework of the Education For All 2000 Assessment, a study has been carried out to measure learning achievement in three major areas: reading and writing (in Bangla), mathematics and life skills. Specially designed tests have been administered to pupils who have completed Grade IV. Defining the achievers—in overall terms considering the three areas under test—as those who scored at least 50% of the total marks, the study has found 51.3% of the pupils to be achievers in the continuum of competency. The percentage of male achievers is somewhat higher (53.2%) compared to female achievers (49.6%).

Variation by region ranges from 36.3% to 59.8% of achievers. There are no significant differences between urban and rural areas, the achievers being 50.2% in urban areas and 51.7% in rural areas. Female achievers are somewhat lower in proportion than their male counterparts. Considering the competency by subject area, the percentage of achievers is low in Bangla but considerably higher in life skills—the percentages being 30 and 75%, respectively. Competency in mathematics stands in between. (Government of Bangladesh, 1999).

Another assessment found the mean achievement of Grade V students of 150 schools was only 33%, with a standard deviation (SD) of 10%, in mathematics only 18% (SD 9%). Subject-wise performance was no better, only 18% (SD 9%) in mathematics. Findings of another study are still worse, where achievement was only 1.6% in the 27 objectively assessable of the 53 curriculum competencies. Subject-wise the highest score was only 36.5 in Bangla and English 9.4 (some 34% of the children did not answer any question). These findings reflect the very poor quality of primary education and consequent poor achievement of children. The teachers are stated to have preferences for the subjects, Bangla and mathematics. Intriguingly, the results of examinations do not reflect any effect of teachers' preferences in the test scores of the pupils. Their preferences do not seem to be based on mastery of knowledge of these subjects but for the ease of handling them in classes without preparation or using teaching aids. (MPME, 2003).

Higher education

The role of higher education is currently being discussed. The questions of access to and quality of higher education, as well as of the respective involvement of the public and private sectors, have produced divergent answers.

In Bangladesh, higher education enrolment per 100,000 inhabitants increased from 272 in 1980 to 382 in 1990. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) at this level during the period 1980-1990 rose from 3.2% to 3.4%. Less than 10% of the students completing higher secondary education have at present access to different types of university programmes. Approximately 50% of the rest can enter non-university tertiary education, mostly general degree colleges (JBIC, 2002). According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2003 the GER at the tertiary level was 7%.

In 1999, the major higher education institutions in the country included:

- 915 degree-level liberal arts colleges affiliated to the Bangladesh National University;
- nine publicly supported universities;
- sixteen private universities established under the Non-Government Universities Act;
- five autonomous institutes of technology;
- fifty-nine colleges of law;
- twenty-two medical colleges, as well as fifty-two medical institutions; and
- fifty-three secondary teacher training colleges.

In 2002, there were 21 public and 54 private universities, 2,600 degree colleges (pass, honors and master's) affiliated with the National University, five regional engineering universities, and 12 government and 14 private medical colleges. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

There is also an Open University established under the Act No. 38 of 1992. While each of the universities conducts its own examinations, the Bangladesh National University is responsible for conducting bachelor's and master's degree programme examinations of the affiliated degree colleges throughout the country.

Many of the problems in the sphere of higher education are due to the fact that a conscious higher education policy and a plan of action for its implementation have not been attempted. This has resulted in frustration among the graduates and less than optimum utilization of the available resources. In the present context, priority should be given to formulating a higher education policy and identifying, *inter alia*, the objectives and roles of higher education at different levels. A number of key issues have received public attention. These are often interlinked with the prevailing social,

political and economic situation. The following have been known to be some of the major concerns facing higher education:

- inadequate duration of the bachelor's and master's degree courses of general education;
- session jam in some of the institutions, resulting in the student taking a longer than normal period to complete the courses (at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, the students remain idle for about fifteen months after their admission, waiting for classes to commence);
- inadequate number of places in the institutions of science and technology, engineering, agriculture, and medicine;
- widespread student unrest resulting from the politicization of education and from understaffing of the institutions;
- large-scale unemployment among the graduates, particularly among those majoring in the liberal arts;
- low quality of education, in general, and lack of research in the institutions of higher learning;
- low efficiency reflected in large failure rates at the first degree level;
- absence of uniformity among the higher education institutions at the operational level (notably in matters relating to admissions, examinations, teacher-student ratios, etc.).

The place of English in the universities is a matter of great concern. Some 70% of the students of the general universities of Bangladesh answer their examination papers in Bangla, and the teachers also mostly use Bangla as the medium of instruction, although textbooks and reference materials in many subjects are hardly available in this language. Because of their weak command of the English language, many students fail to make use of reference materials in English and, in some cases, fail to pursue advanced courses at institutions of higher learning abroad. In 1988, the Bangladesh National Education Commission recommended that students who would go for higher studies in science, should have one paper in English at the bachelor's level (pass and honours). Currently, steps are being taken to make English a required subject at the first degree level. Furthermore, to improve the standard of English, particularly spoken English, native speakers of the language may be appointed, for a certain time, to the staff of university departments of English and teachers' training colleges. Simultaneously, selected Bangladeshi teachers of English may be sent abroad for higher studies in the subject.

One of the reasons for the craze for higher degrees is the belief that they can ensure white collar jobs. Very often university graduates in large numbers have been competing for clerical positions for which a degree is not required. The pressure on the universities can perhaps be reduced by de-linking degrees from jobs. An effort can

be made to identify jobs or positions for which specific skills, rather than higher degrees are required. Also, it is necessary to establish a link between higher education and manpower needs, and to give graduates appropriate guidance on employment opportunities.

In 1999, the total number of students enrolled in the nine public universities amounted to 70,355 (of whom 24% were females). The total enrolment in the 16 private universities was 12,521 students (20% females). About 1,250,000 students (of whom 35% were females) were enrolled in degree colleges, and approximately 69,000 students were enrolled in professional colleges. (JBIC, 2002).

Special education

Children with special needs (disabilities- mental, physical, hearing, vision and others), of ethnic/tribal minorities and those living in isolated areas have little access to general primary level institutions. Different estimates suggest some 10 percent of the children belong to this group. The EFA NPA I recognized the need but felt that that "normal primary schools" could not provide both "education and expensive arrangements required for treatment of the disability" and proposed that Ministry of Social Welfare should provide this service through the specialized institutions under normal Allocation of Business. It felt that "NGO activities also needed intensification and support". The Department of Social Services runs a number of activities for Special Education and Employment Rehabilitation programme for children and persons with disabilities. Some 113 NGOs are involved in activities for the disabled and are organized into the National Forum of Organizations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD), but the scope of their services remains very limited. (MPME, 2003).

Private education

The Madrasah system represents an alternative to government education. The origin of the Madrasah system can be traced back to 1780, when the Calcutta Madrasah (the first government college in the Indian sub-continent) was set up. The original purpose of establishing the Madrasah was to produce officials well-versed in Islamic laws. Over the years the number of madrashas operating as religious institutions increased, although the original purpose of establishing them has been lost.

Madrasah education, as a parallel system, has drawn considerable attention in recent years. The number of madrashas has grown as a result of increased government salary subsidies to non-government institutions. The Ministry of Education issued circulars equating the *Ebtedayee*, *Dhakil*, and *Alim* madrasah levels with the primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels, respectively. It is possible for a student passing the *Dakhil* Examination of the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board to be admitted to the HSC course in a college. Similarly, a student passing the *Alim* Examination with science subjects can pass an admission test to be admitted to an agricultural college, a medical college, or an institute of technology. The Madrasah system includes two additional stages: *Fazil* (two-year course, equivalent to bachelor's degree level) and *Kamil* (two-year course, equivalent to master's degree level).

In 1974, there were 1,518 post-primary-level madrashas (*Dhakil*: 651, *Alim*: 355; *Fazil*: 483; *Kamil*: 29). The number increased to 2,466 in 1980 and 5,959 in 1991. Only three madrashas were managed by the government. Furthermore, there were 15,986 *Ebtedayee* or primary-level madrasahs in 1991. The total enrolment of the madrashas of all categories is reported to be 2,758,624 (including 1,730,491 in the *Ebtedayee* or primary-level madrasahs). Of students who passed the 1993 *Dhakil* and *Alim* examinations, girls accounted for 12.6% and 5.9% of the total, respectively.

At present (1998), there are about 9,500 independent and 2,850 attached *Ebtadyee* madrashas under the administrative control of the Ministry of Education. The number of *Dakhil* madrashas is 4,487, that of *Alim* 949, that of *Fazil* 899 and that of *Kamil* is 120. Almost all of these have been established by the communities and operated by the Managing Committee recognized by the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board. The government provides salary subvention to the teachers of recognized madrashas as well as development supports at a limited scale. (Government of Bangladesh, 1999).

Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure

The factors which contribute to non-attendance, drop-out, and the low achievement of children and students include: the want of schools within accessible distances; shortage and overcrowding of classrooms; lack of proper teaching and learning aids; shortage of furniture and other supplies; unattractive teaching/learning environment; and lack of equipment and supplies for the students. Classes in the schools are overcrowded, and inadequate accommodation is putting serious strain on school contact time.

With community involvement, low-cost primary schools are being built in the areas where no schools exist. Since 1991, 1,458 new schools have been built, 1,786 new schools are in different stages of construction, 15,258 schools have been rebuilt and 10,483 schools repaired. Additional classrooms are being provided, depending on the number of students. Latrines have been constructed in each of the schools to provide a better sanitation system. In 1991, an unprecedented cyclone and tidal surge damaged many primary schools in the coastal areas and many people died. Now in these coastal areas, government primary schools are being constructed in a manner that assures cyclone shelter is provided.

Primary level institutions had an average of 2.94 classrooms per school in 1987 (129,880 classrooms in all). The situation had improved by 1999, the rural primary schools had an average of 3.5 rooms and urban schools, 5.5 rooms; 53% of schools had tolerably acceptable accommodation compared to 42.8% in 1990. The classrooms are constructed to accommodate 60 students, or 0.725 square meters per student, much less than standard size (a minimum of 8 square meters). All schools do not have equal number of classrooms or equal sizes of classrooms. Some 47% schools have less than the minimum space and all schools less than standard accommodation. Between 1990 and 2000 the government has reconstructed a total of 31,011 schools and repaired 14,570 to ensure minimum facilities and also to double as storm shelters in cyclone-prone areas. However, funds for minor repairs remain extremely limited and such work cannot be undertaken as and when required. More than 60% percent of

the primary schools have water and toilet facilities though inadequate, the gap of about 40% is still quite high. (MPME, 2003).

With a view to encouraging full participation of children in Grades I-II, some 200 experimental satellite schools have been established at their doorsteps, so that young children do not have to travel long distances to attend primary schools. Teachers are paid a monthly honorary of Tk500. These schools run for three hours. Two-class satellite schools are staffed by local female teachers and are specially managed by local school management committees. These schools have nearly 100% attendance and drop-out is virtually non-existent. Based on the satisfactory enrolment, a programme has been undertaken for establishing 4,000 satellite schools with community support. It has been planned to establish more satellite schools with community involvement, depending on the local needs.

Generally, curriculum reforms have been without a research base. Although the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is an autonomous body, the Ministry of Education has control over these matters. The textbook, being the principal instrument of curriculum implementation, is supposed to reflect instructional objectives as embodied in the curriculum. The need for designing content in keeping with the curriculum objectives is generally recognized and appreciated.

Adult and non-formal education

To reach the adult literacy rate target of 62% by the year 2000, two main actions have been implemented. One is the universalization of primary education and the other is the implementation of non-formal education for out-of-school children, adolescents and adult illiterates. The Non-Formal Education (NFE) Programme provides for out-of-school children aged 8-10, adolescent boys and girls aged 11-14, adults aged 15-35, and neo-literates. In order to stop neo-literates relapse into illiteracy, libraries have been put into operation to provide opportunities for lifelong continuing education. Centre supervisors and teachers have been trained. Primers, teachers' guides, teachers' training manuals and supervisors' training manuals have been printed. All these programmes are being implemented by NGOs, as well as by the Government. NGOs are also organizing non-formal education courses for about half a million out-of-school and drop-out children, youth and adults.

NFE is found highly effective in Bangladesh in addressing the problem of large-scale adult illiteracy. NFE is meant to reach large numbers of people where they live and work. Its objective is to impart useful knowledge and skill without removing people from their normal environment and responsibilities. It is sufficiently diverse and enjoys adequate flexibility in organization, funding and management; it emphasizes local initiative, self-help and innovation on the part of large number of people and their local institutions.

The Total Literacy Movement (TLM) was launched in 1994 in the district of Lalmonirhat with the active participation of the community. The District Administration provides the leadership for social mobilization. On the basis of the experience gained in Lalmonirhat, TLM is expanding wherever appropriate local initiatives have been taken.

In addition, an integrated non-formal education programme to cover two million out-of-school children, adolescents and adults is currently under implementation. New projects have been under preparation to meet the target set for 2000 in the EFA National Action Plan.

Mass communication and publicity media (radio and television) are used to create awareness regarding primary and mass education programmes. The programmes are also continuing through posters, short films, dramas and musical sessions organized by the Department of Mass Communication. The Primary Education Fortnight and International Literacy Day are observed every year in the months of January and September, respectively, when numerous awareness activities receive social emphasis.

Shishu Kallayan (child welfare) primary schools for working children are in operation throughout the country. In these schools there is provision for studying from Grade I to Grade V. Of these schools, six are in Dhaka and Narayangonj, and forty are in different districts of the country. These schools are being administered by Shishu Kallayan Trust. Trust-schools, particularly those in Dhaka and Narayangonj will be turned into specialized schools in phases. In the first phase, about 500 students will be selected under this programme. It is expected that the implementation of this programme will start in the year 2000. (Government of Bangladesh, 1999).

Teaching staff

The government policy requires that 60% of the new teachers recruited be female (for whom the education qualification has been relaxed). The entry qualification for a newly recruited teacher is the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) for females and the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) for males. The salary, status and opportunities for promotion of male and female teachers are the same. Teachers have a respectable position in the society and female teachers are widely revered in the family and society, which helps ensure greater enrolment and retention of girls. Only 20% of the teachers were female in 1990. This figure increased to 27% in 1995. Assistant teachers have opportunities for promotion to the post of headteacher on the basis of seniority, and a 20% quota has been established for recruitment of headteachers to the post of Assistant Thana Education Officers.

There are several institutions for imparting education and training leading to the award of certificates as well as degrees for teachers at different levels of the education system. There are 54 public-sector Primary Training Institutes (PTIs) which offer one-year certificate in education (C-in-Ed) courses for the teachers at the primary schools. There are 11 public and 54 private-sector Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) offering one-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) courses and one-year M.Ed Courses for secondary school teachers. The Bangladesh Open University also offers B.Ed. courses through distance education mode. The Institute of Education and Research (IER) of Dhaka University offers four-year courses leading to the bachelor's degree with honors in education, followed by one-year Master of Education course, as well post-graduate studies leading to M.Phil and Ph.D in education. Higher Secondary Teachers Training Institutes (HSTTIs) conduct in-service training for both the secondary school and college teachers. For the technical-vocational stream, there are Vocational Teacher Training Institutes (VTTIs) offering one-year courses for the

teachers of VTIs. There is also a Technical Teacher Training College (TTTC) which offers a one-year diploma in technical education and a two-year B.Ed. (Technology) course for teachers (technical diploma holders) employed in the polytechnic institutes. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

Like other government employees, teachers in government schools receive a monthly salary based on the national pay scale. Teacher salary subventions are provided to non-government registered primary schools and selected *Ebtedayee* madrasahs.

The total weekly teaching hours at the primary level is thirty-six hours. Also, seven and a half hours are spent for the teacher's preparation of the lesson plan, making contact with parents and community members and making the annual survey of the primary school-age population.

Inspection and supervision play an important role in improving the quality of education. Field level officers have been given inspection targets. An inspection cell has been set up in the Directorate of Primary Education for the regular monitoring of inspection and supervision functions of field officers. The inspection performances of field officers have been linked to their promotion. Increasing responsibilities are being devolved to the local level committees, such as the school management committee, *Thana* Education Committee, etc.

There is an acute shortage of teacher educators in the teacher training institutions. As of July-August 1992, out of a sanctioned teaching staff of 305 in TTC, 164 (or 53.7%) posts were vacant. The total number of teacher educators in the country was 235 (141 in TTCs, fifty-four in the SESDCs and forty in the IER of the University of Dhaka).

In-service training of teachers has been recognized as one of the important means to upgrade the quality of primary education in the country. With this objective, a mechanism has been established to run an effective, sustainable national in-service primary teacher training system and to raise the quality of instruction with a cluster of fifteen to twenty schools under the direct supervision and guidance of an Assistant Thana Education Officer (ATEO). The training programme at the cluster has been modified to make its operation more practical and effective and is held at sub-cluster level. Under this programme, about fifteen to twenty teachers from four to five schools assemble every two months in a particular school. The concerned ATEO conducts a one-day training session based on educational science modules. A long-term training programme of one year's duration—known as the Certificate in Education—is also ongoing in the Primary Training Institutes of the country. The course content has been revised along the lines of the newly introduced primary school curriculum.

The education sector is no longer able to attract qualified personnel in science teaching, due to the lack of incentives and the limited facilities available for teachers in general, and science teachers in particular. As teachers pursue private tuition as a means of supplementary income, the quality of service deteriorates and absenteeism rises.

Teacher education should be revised and reformed in order to improve the quality of education. The present B.Ed. diploma in the education programme has become obsolete. It is considered inadequate for meeting the content deficiency of the students in science subjects and providing them with adequate experience in educational theory and practice. The content component of the programme is particularly weak, especially in science and mathematics. As of August 1992, five TTCs were without a mathematics teacher. In some TTCs, the science teachers do not have a degree in a basic science subject (physics or chemistry). The proportion of science graduates among the B.Ed. students is also relatively low, accounting for approximately 33%.

The need for recruiting men and women of the highest abilities at all levels of the teaching profession has been recognized. It is also believed that the issue of salary, salary subsidies and service conditions of teachers needs in-depth examination by a high-level committee. Instead of a uniform pay scale for all teachers, without regard to their qualifications, a policy of higher salary corresponding to higher qualifications should be considered. By allowing them to qualify for the pay scales afforded to college lectures, in-service secondary teachers could be encouraged to pursue a higher degree in education (M.A./M.Ed.). Higher secondary level teachers having a professional diploma in education could be provided with advance increments in pay. To generate a sense of security among the teachers of non-government institutions, provisions need to be made for a provider fund and retirement benefits. A trust fund for teachers of non-government schools could be created. A system of registration/certification for all secondary-level teachers could also be operationalized.

A good academic background and subject relevance are two important factors in improving classroom teaching in secondary schools. It would, therefore, be desirable to recruit well-qualified persons, although they may not have a degree or diploma in education. Such teachers may be assigned to a TTC after one year's teaching experience. The responsibility for the recruitment of teachers of non-government secondary and higher secondary schools and madrasahs may be given to an Education Improvement Trust (functioning as an autonomous body), an Education Service Commission, or District Selection Committees to be comprised of the proposed District Education Boards. The implications of these alternatives need to be closely examined by the Government. The main purpose of an Education Improvement Trust, an Education Service Commission, or a District Selection Committee is to eliminate academically weak candidates, so that subsequent training becomes meaningful and leads to quality enhancement.

Data on the required academic qualifications and the certification of teachers are available from the Child Education and Literacy Survey (CELS) of 1999 of the Compulsory Primary Education Implementation Monitoring Unit (CPEIMU). It should be noted that the required qualifications has changed over time. Almost 68% of all teachers have the required qualifications. While all female teachers have the required academic qualifications, the rate of qualified male teachers is only 53%. Almost 70% of the teachers have certificates. All female teachers have certificates, while the rate of certified male teachers is 56%. (Government of Bangladesh, 1999).

Educational research and information

Information is not available.

References

Ali. M. M. Bangladesh. *In:* T.N. Postlethwaite, ed. *International encyclopaedia of national systems of education*, p. 70-77. Second edition, Oxford/New York/Tokyo, Elsevier Science, 1995.

Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO. *National report on the development of education*. International Conference on Education, 45th session, Geneva, 1996.

Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education. *The development of education (secondary and higher education sub-sector). National report of Bangladesh.* International Conference on Education, 45th session, Geneva, 1996.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Primary and Mass Education Division. *National report on education. Development of primary and mass education*. International Conference on Education, 45th session, Geneva, 1996.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Primary and Mass Education Division. *Education For All 2000 Assessment: country report of Bangladesh*. (Under the co-ordination of B.R. Khan). Dhaka, 1999.

Gustavsson, S. *Primary education in Bangladesh. Review, analysis and recommendations*. Stockholm, Swedish International Development Authority, January 1991. (Education Division documents no. 52).

Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). *Bangladesh education sector overview. Final report*. Tokyo, JBIC, March 2002.

Ministry of Education. *Brief report on the development of education in Bangladesh during 1990-1992*. International Conference on Education, 43rd session, Geneva, 1992.

Ministry of Education. *Development of education. National report of Bangladesh.* International Conference on Education, 47th session, Geneva, 2004.

Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. *Education for All: National Plan of Action II, 2003–2015*. Fourth Draft. Dhaka, May 2003.

Prather, C.J., ed. *Primary Education for All: learning from the BRAC experience. A case study*. Washington, Project ABEL, 1993.

Web resources

Ministry of Education: http://www.moedu.gov.bd/ [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Ministry of Primary and Mass Education: http://www.mopme.gov.bd/ [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics: http://www.banbeis.gov.bd/ [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Bangladesh Technical Education Board: http://www.bteb.gov.bd/ [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board: http://www.bmeb.gov.bd/ [In English and Bengali. Last checked: October 2007.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm