

Primary Education in Bangladesh: Viability of Achieving Millennium Development Goals

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Right education for the beginners can empower human beings to liberate individual mind from the curse of ignorance and darkness. It represents the cornerstone in the development process of any society and the key indicator of the people's progress and prosperity (Haq, 2004:12). In view of the importance of education to a country like Bangladesh the present thesis addresses primary education system, which is diversified and multifarious due to economic, socio-cultural, political, regional and religious factors. The access of primary education is maintained mainly by the government. More than 75% schools are controlled by the government and around 83% of the total children enrolled in the primary level educational institution go to these schools (Baseline Survey, 2005:3). Similarly, more than 70% primary teachers are working in the government controlled schools. Besides government run primary schools, nine other category of primary schools are administered, monitored and maintained by different authorities. Disparity and lack of coordination among these institutions constrains the attainment of universal primary education and in its effort to increase enrollments and quality education. Variations in teacher student ratio, the number of qualified and trained teachers between the categories, also pose a big challenge towards achieving the goals of universal primary education.

In the backdrop of the bleak scenario, Bangladesh became one of the signatories to the UN Millennium Declaration in 2000, and has committed to eight Millennium Development Goals that asserts a vision for the 21st century (Burns et al, 2003:23). Bangladesh also promised to implement the MDGs roadmap by 2015. The MDG-2 targets for 'Achieving Universal Primary Education' are claimed to be on track in Bangladesh, showing remarkable achievements in terms of net enrollment rate in primary education 73.7% in 1992 to 87% in 2005 and primary education completion 42.5% in 1992 to 83.3% in 2004 (Titumir, 2005:120). Bangladesh government itself had taken many initiatives, including *the Compulsory Primary Education Act 1993*, which made the five-year primary education program free in all primary school. The government adopted demand side intervention policies such as food for education program and stipend program for primary education. Of late, the government introduced primary education development program

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(PEDP-II), a six year program beginning in the year 2000, which aims to increase access, quality and efficiency across the board in the primary education sector. Despite existing socio-economic problems, Bangladesh by now has achieved a good progress in net enrollment rate and education completion rate in primary education. The current paper will examine the outcomes and challenges that have emerged as a result of Bangladesh being the signatory of MDG-2 for achieving universal primary education by 2015. It would further investigate whether the target of the second Millennium Development Goal is attainable within the stipulated time.

This research covers the quest for quantitative improvement of primary education in Bangladesh. In addition qualitative and strategic need has been identified through analysis of primary and secondary data collected from different sources. Before that, a good number of research publications on MDG have been consulted for better reasoning of the subject and to conceptualize the idea of universal primary education. For example, the present researcher exhaustively used the recent UNICEF, World Bank and ADB country wise MDG evaluation reports. Besides, MDG progress report published by Bangladesh government was also consulted. Moreover, diverse publications on primary education management, curriculum development, determinant of quantitative attainment and challenges of quality education have been consulted for conceptual analysis. Some publications on historical upbringing helped to inquire the deep rooted problem culminated in the divisions and diversity of primary education system. Various articles from journals and websites were reviewed to know the current activities and dimensions that influenced this research a lot.

As this research work is related to the quantitative analysis, enormous data were needed for analytical purposes. Some primary data were collected from Chittagong Kotwali thana education office and Dagonbhuiyan Upazila education office of Feni district to observe the ground reality and to develop separate case studies. To measure the internal efficiency, secondary data on gross enrollment rate, net enrollment rate, drop out rate, gender ratio, education completion rate and other indicators were gathered from the *Baseline Survey 2005 of Second Primary education development program (PEDP-II)*. To ensure reliability, credibility and further cross-checking, other sources of data collected from BANBEIS, HIES (2000 & 2005), DPE, were looked into. The researcher's own observation from about four year work experience as an Upazila Education Officer (UEO) at Zanjira Upazila of Shariatpur District, Hathazari Upazila of Chittagong District and Kaptai Upazila of Rangamati Hill District was also of great advantage to the project.

RESUMING HISTORY:

Bangladesh is a new state in an area of old civilization with a mixed educational and cultural heritage. This region had own indigenous system of education that had been in existence from time immemorial. Before the inception of any formal or non-formal educational system, it is assumed that basic education was provided informally by opinion leaders. In ancient times and in the middle ages the indigenous education system in Bengal was predominantly theological and philosophical by nature. Over the centuries, the learning system has been changed and transformed due to religio-political change and cultural shifting from caste based Hinduism to pragmatic Buddhism, and then going back to orthodox Hinduism and lastly to egalitarian Islamic values. In view of this transformation, in the present chapter, a chronological description of the history of primary education in Bangladesh has been provided. Various aspects of traditional primary education; including religious characteristics of, strengths and limitations to educational opportunities under the pre-colonial, colonial and Pakistani rulers are revealed in the discussion.

Pre-colonial learning:

The area now comprising Bangladesh developed a rich cultural heritage with a widespread system of elementary education that dates back from the Pala Dynasty and spreads up to the Muslim rule between 6th and mid-18th century. Early educational activities started centering Buddhist monasteries, temples, stupas and 'most probably other establishments erected on the crests, slopes and foots of the hills' (Alam & Miah, 1999:1). Led by Buddhist Monks the system of basic education was largely based on the teachings of Buddha on humanism and tolerance, and religious principles of 'Nirvana' as the ultimate destiny of human soul (Barua, 2004:13). Besides religion, the Buddhist teachers devoted themselves for devising and teaching signs of early Bengali alphabets to their knowledge hungry pupils (Vikkho, 1969:52). With the inception of the orthodox Sena rulers, however, the Buddhist education system disappeared and caste based Sanskrit education system took over during the 12th century.

Since the days of the Sena rulers there were indigenous elementary education schools called *pathsalas* scattered all over the countryside. Mostly led by *pandits* (knowledgeable persons) the vernacular elementary education was catered for in *pathsalas*, which existed in most of the larger villages at least; in them were taught basic reading, writing, arithmetic, accounts, and some

religious literature (Basu, 1941:xiii). In so far as the *pathsalas* had a religious character, it was predominantly caste-based; the majority of their pupils were Hindus, but there were a few Muslims. Due to socio-cultural barriers, there was hardly any access for the female students and the low caste people in the educational arena. The main purpose of the *pathsalas* was preparing boys from upper class families for jobs that required literacy. Since the education was not state run, fees were payable in the *pathsalas*. Contemporary British observer, William Ward had summed up the typical *pathsalas* as 'a mere shop, in which by a certain process, the human being is prepared to act as a copying machine, or as a lithographic process' (Laird, 1972:46). William Adam found teachers of the *pathsalas* to be simple minded 'poor and ignorant' (Basu, 1941:138). Teachers were poorly paid and had little aspirations to any major influence for qualitative over their pupils. The process of learning was very slow.

Before the introduction of British rule, another parallel elementary religious education was prevalent in Bengal. It was built around mosques, temples etc. and manifested through *Maktabas*, *Tols* etc. Guided by *Ulemas* *Mosques*, *Maktabas* and *Madrasahs* were the main Islamic educational institution during the Turkish and throughout the Mughal rule. As language of the rulers Persian, Arabic and Urdu were the three important languages were used as the medium of instruction (Sanaullah. 1995:191). The curricula of education were mainly centered on Islamic values and the whole system of education was directed towards the supremacy of *Allah*. Islamic morals and code of conduct were mainly taught to the students as guiding principles of the worldly life. The traditional society in medieval Bengal used to attach great value to Islamic education as a preparation for worldly as well as life hereafter.

Colonial indifference:

The primary education system suffered a set back during the colonial rule when an alien and elitist system was developed. In a 1872 study A. Howell mentioned that education in Indian subcontinent under the British government was first ignored, then violently and successfully opposed, then conducted on a system now universally admitted to be erroneous and finally placed on pre-independent footing (Cited in Basu. 1941:xiii). In line with the assertion made by Howell we can say that the greatest discontinuity in the history of education occurred in Bengal on June 23, 1757, when the East India Company- a mercantile company of England became the virtual ruler of this region through conspiracy. The East India Company was, in the early years of its

control over Bengal, largely indifferent to education. Between 1757 to 1800, the government was absolutely reluctant on the educational matter and tried to commercialize the power to fulfill its accumulation of wealth motive. Educational initiative was not regarded as being among the concerns of government.

Nonetheless, well before the end of the 18th century a group of missionaries had begun to press the government to introduce Western learning or even to replace the existing educational system. In certain cases when a proposal was made to the Company government to take up initiative for bringing in 'schoolmasters and missionaries' from England, it was firmly opposed by the Board of Directors (Basu, 1941:xiii). Some of them criticized the missionaries by saying that Indians have good system of faiths and morals, and that 'it would be madness' to try to convert them by providing anymore learning facilities. Despite such effort of such individual officers, the East India Company had not yet come to regard the promotion of learning as part of its duty; and there was much opposition to the establishment of any new system of instruction. The government opposition that prolonged during 1800-1854 ultimately affected the missionary attempts to introduce modern system of education in general and primary education in particular.

The *Charter Act of 1813* that authorized the East India Company to undertake the education and moral uplift of the Indian people, however, was the earliest attempt through which the concept of state education in the Indian Subcontinent came up. Article 43 of this Act defined the objectives of the company's education policy in India. The Article reads as follows:

It shall be lawful for the Governor General in Council to direct that.... A sum not less than one lakh of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of India (Cited in Laird, 1972:68).

As the allocation of the sum of one lakh rupees for education was not obligatory, the end result was that nothing substantial had happened for the improvement of primary education (Khatun, 1992:28)

Within 1835-38, British observer William Adam placed three reports to colonial government on the state of education in Bengal. Adam's first report dealt with the country's need for basic education, the second report focused on the nature of education in Rajshahi district, and the third report provided a complete statistics of several districts in Bengal and Bihar (Basu, 1941:xxix-xLix). His reports were the product of painstaking personal investigations in certain

districts and thanas of Bengal. In his reports Adam made some valuable recommendations i.e., collection of district-wise information on education, introducing textbooks in various mother tongues, placement of an inspector in every district to implement the education plan, establishment of the Normal school system, encouraging the teaching profession by allocation of land as incentive, introduction of scholarships through competitive examinations (Non-formal Education, 1999:6). The colonial government paid lip-service to the importance of vernacular education but refused to act on William Adam's plan to improve the indigenous schooling system. Despite the unwillingness of the government, some private individuals and societies; missionaries, chaplains, the Indian zamindars, and British officials; acting in their personal capacity, came forward for providing basic education to the youngsters. Sometimes individual officers of the company gave some encouragement to education here and there, and used public fund for the purpose. From the early years of the 19th century, private initiatives were taken to introduce a new type of education in Bengal. These attempts were made by the Christian missionaries and privileged individuals, both Indian and European.

Some educational institutions were established mainly by missionaries in different areas of Bengal. In 1800, a Bengali elementary school was opened with 40 boys at Serampore. By September 1804, there were three elementary schools in villages of Jessore and one at Dinajpur. In 1816, the Serampore missionaries sent Owen Leonard to Dhaka, where he founded a Persian school and 15 Bengali elementary schools by 1823 (Laird, 1972:77). The schools were supported financially by local committees. There were also few Bengali schools established in Chittagong, Dinajpur and Jessore districts during the same period. The missionaries emphasized that a sound education must start with teaching the pupils effectively to read and write their mother tongue (Laird, 1972:70-71). Besides some experiments with elementary education; attempts were also taken in regard to the medium of instruction, the curriculum, method of teaching, text books writing and beginning the education of girls. Bengali Muslims generally refrained from participating in the new education system that gradually led the entire community to be 'virtually caught in a quagmire' (Non-formal Education, 1999:1).

Subsequently, the colonial government perceived that they need the co-operation of a group of indigenous English educated people who would help them in their administrative and clerical functions. The ideological shifting from opposition to encouragement was first traced in Wood's Education Dispatch, which formed the basis of the education policy of the East India Company's

government in India since 1854. For creating a properly articulated system of education, the dispatch ordered that the attention of the government should be devoted more to primary than to higher education and that the active measures of government should be directed towards the education of the masses (Islam, et al, 2003:442). It also recommended for the establishment of a separate department of education, the creation of institutions for training of teachers for all types of schools, the foundation of new middle schools, with greater attention to vernacular and indigenous ones, for expansion of elementary education and the introduction of a system of grants-in-aid to help support a rising number of privately managed educational institutions. The dispatch drew special attention of the government 'to the importance of placing the means of acquiring useful and practical knowledge within reach of the great mass of the people (Islam et al, 2003:442). English was recommended as the medium of instruction in the higher branches and the vernacular language in the primary level.

Although *Wood's Education Dispatch* intended to provide elementary education all over the country regardless of religion, caste, race, color and region, but practically the elementary schools emerged as the preserver of the children of the upper classes of the society. The government's attempt served the rich and high class because most of the schools were established in cities, towns and important commercial places (Basu. 1941:xli). Moreover, a large number of indigenous elementary schools in the rural areas gradually withered away as a result of the neglect to which they were subjected on the plea that they were not efficient enough to serve a useful purpose. In principle, the government opposed any attempts to provide education for the whole community. In 1910, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a member of the Imperial Legislative Council, placed a bill in the Law Council to introduce the principle of compulsory schooling by local bodies. Two years later, after examination by the Viceroy's Council, Gokhale's motion was defeated by 38 voters to 13. Therefore a noble attempt to make primary education for the Indian people faced a setback (Primary Education, 2003:6). Later on, in 1919, a bill making primary education in the municipal areas was passed to serve the purpose of the rich and high class people.

The introduction of the elements of western learning in primary education was obviously a major landmark in the cultural history of Bengal, but the degree of success which these attempts achieved was conflicting. Before the introduction of British rule, there were mainly two types of elementary education system, *Pathshalas* and religious elementary education system built around Mosques and Temples. But instead of making uniform, different types of elementary educational

institution were introduced under British rule. In his reports William Adam provided a classification of elementary education that contained indigenous elementary schools, non-indigenous elementary schools, elementary Bengali schools, elementary Persian schools, elementary Arabic schools, elementary Persian and Bengali schools, native female schools and English schools. The placing of different types of education system ultimately destroyed social bondage, uniformity, social values and divided the society into different segments based on wealth, religion, caste, race and region (Laird. 1972:51). The differentiation of elementary education system introduced malice and spite within the mind of children. This flawed policy was successfully and deliberately introduced by the government to initiate the notorious divide and rule policy among the natives of this country.

Throughout the 19th century, primary education in Bengal suffered many handicaps and the available facilities fell short of the requirements for a number of reasons. The government policy was influenced by the so-called 'down-ward filtration theory', which assumed that by educating a select section through the medium of English; it would be possible to make education available to all other classes in due course (Sharafuddin, 1968:51). This holistic approach, however, did not come true. In England, compulsory elementary education was introduced in 1876 and this might have led the alien rulers of India to conclude that the provision of primary education on a universal scale in a subject country must wait longer on both financial and other grounds. In addition to these basic factors, there were a few other government policies accounting partially for the retarded growth of primary education in the country. The vast rural areas were neglected and a few cities and towns were built at their cost, primarily as seats of government. Even out of the limited funds available, the allocations for education and for primary education in particular, were meager and disappointing.

Besides adopting controversial policies, the government took various steps to develop an administrative system of education, educational infrastructure, necessary Acts and Rules. In 1910, a Department of Education was created under the Government of India but education remained entirely in the hands of Provincial Government. Prior to this, education was under Home Department of the Government of India. Government enacted *Bengal (Rural) Primary education Act in 1930*. Under this Act, District School Boards were set up to control, direct and manage the dissemination of education, to reach ultimately the goal of universal, compulsory and free education. Although primary education was controlled, directed and managed by the Director

of Public Instruction, and the schools were inspected by the District, Subdivision or Circle officers, the direct administration responsibility placed solely with the District School Boards. Later on, a central advisory board recommended by the *Hertz committee* of 1927, was established to co-ordinate all aspects of education policy. In 1945, a separate education department was established under the central government and its responsibility was entrusted to a member of Central Executive. After the Second World War, *the Sergeant Commission Report* for the first time recognized the need for pre-primary education, but as the British rule ended in 1947, the report remained unimplemented.

The Pakistani impasse:

In 1947, Bangladesh emerged as the eastern wing of Pakistan that showed in its education policy a tilt towards Islamic identity. Following independence the Government of Pakistan took some initiatives to formulate educational policies in line with the religious philosophy of the state. Evidences suggest that the educational policies formulated during the long 25 years of united Pakistan neither met the secular aspiration, nor equipped school kids to grow up with the modern outlook. The question of national identity, State Language debate, and imposition of Urdu as a medium of instruction created lots of controversies in the new born country.

In line with the central government, the government of the then East Bengal introduced compulsory primary education in the province in 1947; but the scheme was suspended in 1953 and finally abolished in 1957 (Khatun, 1992:ii). During the same year, the government announced the dissolution of the District School Boards and handed over the management, control and administration of the primary education to the District Primary Education Office. The former District Inspector of Schools was appointed as Chief Executive of the office under the guidance of the Deputy Commissioner. Such initiatives were not proved beneficial for the primary education of the province.

Despite the fact, the government initiated various experiments regarding primary schooling, and amended the *Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act* in 1951. In order to make primary education compulsory, the government selected 5000 primary schools in the rural areas to be run as 'Compulsory Primary Schools', and the rest were to operate as 'Non-compulsory Primary Schools'. As a result of split of the primary schools into 'compulsory primary schools' and 'non-compulsory primary schools', discontent spread amongst the teachers. The government, therefore,

in 1957 renamed the 5000 compulsory primary schools as 'Model Primary Schools', and the rest as 'Non-Model Primary Schools'. The Headmaster of the Model Primary Schools could inspect and supervise the Non-Model Primary Schools. But these initiatives were not proved sustainable due to non-co-operation of the teachers of Non-Model Primary Schools and refusal of the guardians (Primary Education, 2003:7). In 1965, the government renamed the Model and Non-Model Primary Schools as 'Managed Free Primary Schools' that were brought under one administration and the teachers received pay and allowances according to their qualifications.

Nevertheless, government gave emphasis on universal access to primary education in the First Five Year Plan. In an attempt to increase student's enrollment in the schools, the government enhanced educational facilities and increased allocations for the development of the primary education in the Second and Third Five Year Plans. Besides, government arranged national conferences and established various education commissions. First Education Conference took place in Karachi from 27th November to 1st December in 1947 and the Second Education Congress was also held in Karachi from 4th to 6th December in 1951. In the following year, primary education was made a 5-year program instead of its earlier 4 year term. The government simultaneously formed four Education Commissions that were named after Maulana Akram Khan, S M Sharif, Justice Hamidur Rahman and Air Matshal Noor Khan, and these were established in 1949, 1958, 1964 and 1969 respectively. *Maulana Akram Khan Commission* recommended that within the next 15 years, primary education should be an eight years course, and liberal promotion on the basis of age should be introduced. But various recommendations along with these recommendations were not implemented later on. But *Sharif Commission* (1959:177-178) set realistic aims for a five year course, emphasized on the proper learning of the national language at the primary education. *Hamoodur Rahman commission* (1966:24) appreciated the importance of religious and moral education.

Under the Pakistan government, the then East Pakistan faced serious inequality in all sphere of primary education. This disparity was due to poor allocation of funding, non-fulfillment of commitment and introducing policy against the secular aspirations of the Bengali people. Statistics from the Central Bureau of Education of Pakistan in 1969 showed the disparity of growth of the primary schools in two wings of Pakistan. In 1947-48, there were 29633 primary schools in East Bengal and 8413 schools in West Pakistan (Ahmed,n.d.:168-170). In 1960, there were 18000 primary schools in West Pakistan as against 26300 in East Pakistan. The second five

year plan proposed that 15200 new primary schools should be built in West Pakistan and the quality of 13300 primary schools in East Pakistan should be improved so that the percentage of children of that age group attending schools in both wings should be increased roughly 63% (Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report,1966:13). Due to discriminatory policy of Pakistan Government, the number of schools in East Bengal was decreased to 29000 and the number of schools in West Pakistan increased to 400000 i.e. about five times; whereas, East Bengal had 56% population of the total population of the country. In 1950, the East Bengal provincial authority introduced compulsory primary education scheme but due to lack of financial support from the central government it could not sustain (Primary Education, 2003:7). Moreover, the Pakistan government's policy about teaching Urdu as a compulsory language in schools raised serious controversy in East Bengal. The Language Movement of 1952 paved the way for the solution of the controversy over national language. Due to strong protest of the Bengali citizen, the policy of teaching Urdu in the primary schools changed in mid-1950s. Thereby, Pakistan government's non-committal attitude and indifferent behavior put the primary education of East Pakistan in great uncertainty until the region went for a civil strife in the late 1960s.

Having the history scrutinized, we can say that primary education that we find today is not shaped in a day or two. It had gone through changes in different time and under different regime. Bangladesh has had a faulty education system through its colonial bequest, though it had a glorious indigenous elementary education system. Subsequent colonial rules introduced not only exploitation, communalism, and dependence but also incorporate the seeds of then elements of their education. Exploitation remained as a source of conflict and was demonstrated in the enormous gaps between rich and poor. As a result of not having a goal oriented policy, our elementary education system thus became diverse instead of owing to the needs of the society. Various steps had been felt for shaping pro-people primary education but key essence of education was missing. For breaking away from the previous stagnant situation in primary education, a goal oriented national commitment became imperative for the post independent governments of Bangladesh.

POST INDEPENDENT REALITY

In the backdrop of historical experiences of the pre-colonial and colonial pasts, the present chapter analyzes the context of the socio-cultural admixture of the region and tries to trace out

how a diversified system of education has evolved in the post-independent Bangladesh. The chapter argues that constructing primary education has been a priority agenda in Bangladesh since her independence in 1971. The political thrust behind the functional relevance of primary schooling has been towards creation of access to basic education for the masses, with an emphasis on better opportunities for the rural poor and females. This philosophy and thought has been reflected in the first Constitution, adopted by Mujib government in 1972, wherein Article 17 pronounced providing primary education as a constitutional obligation of the government (Article 17, 1998:9-10). Subsequent governments tried to relate primary education to the needs of the society and emphasized producing properly trained and motivated citizens, and to remove illiteracy within reasonable time. Thereby basic measures to implement universal primary education were taken by numerous regimes from the outset of the post-independent Constitution as well as under recent international obligations.

Nationalized Primary Education (1972-'75):

The dawn of independence saw the recognition of primary education as a national responsibility of the government, and as the fundamental rights of the people. The first Constitution introduced by Mujib government in 1972 specified that the State should adopt effective measures for the purpose of establishing a uniform and universal mass education by extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law (Article 17, 1998:8-9). On 26 October 1973, the Mujib government passed an Ordinance for nationalizing a large number of primary schools. Later the *Jatiya Sangsad* introduced the *Primary Schools (Taking Over) bill, 1974* that imposed upon the government the responsibility of bringing the primary school system under a centralized administration from the previous district based management. Instead of providing good results, the policy had some set backs in the overall management of the primary education system.

Nonetheless, the Mujib government simultaneously adopted various programs and these were addressed in the first five year plan. The First five year plan (1973-78) proposed projects to reconstruct the schools, establishment of 5000 new schools, increase enrollment in the primary schools from 58% to 73%, reduction of drop out rate from 63% to 52%, development of PTIs, revision of curriculum, introduction of staggered system of existing schools etc (First Five Year Plan, 1973:451). Under the FFYP 18.8% of the education budget were allocated to primary

education but less than one half of total amount were actually utilized and funds were diverted to the higher levels (Gustavsson, 1990:13). Consequently, physical targets of the FFYP were not achieved, drop out rate were not reduced, and only 50% of primary schools to be constructed were completed.

In a major drive, however, the Mujib government in 1972 had formed *Kudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission* to recommend objectives, strategies and action plans for creating a modern education system suited to the needs of an independent nation and compatible with the systems of the neighboring countries. The report of the commission was published in 1974 and it outlined the objectives of primary education as follows:

To develop and nurture the child's moral, mental and social personality; to bring up the child as a patriotic, responsible, inquiring and law-abiding citizen, and develop in him/her love for justice, dignity, labor, proper conduct and uprightness; to learn to read and write in the mother tongue, and to be able to count and calculate; to be able to acquire the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for a future citizen; to prepare for next stage of higher education (Bangladesh Education Commission Report, 1974:23).

In view of above objectives, the Commission placed before the government different recommendations for the development of primary education e.g. introduction of universal primary education up to class VIII. To attract a greater number of female students, it recommended for the appointment of female teachers at the primary level, and if required to build girls school (Bangladesh Education Commission Report, 1974:24). The report stressed the need for implementation of compulsory primary education by 1980 and extension of primary education up to class VIII by 1983. It further slated the adoption of effective measures for prevention of dropouts, introduction of an attractive curriculum, and development of appropriate textbooks and creation of proper environment in schools. The report suggested introduction of a uniform system of education that would be scientific, realistic, and compatible with social conditions and environmental needs. Recommendations also lined up introduction of pre-primary education; expansion of teacher system, setting up of primary education academy and a national primary education board. At the end, these recommendations remained 'no more than pious wishes', and were largely frustrated in reality (Grieve, 1995:150). Despite the merits of these recommendations, neither the concurrent Mujib regime nor the successive governments implemented them later on.

Major Policy moves (1976-'81):

After coming to power, General Zia eventually adopted some major policy reforms in primary education. Under Two Year Plan (1978-80), the Zia government took a notable initiative, the significant aspect of which was the establishment of NAPE and development and reconstruction of 52 PTIs (Two Year Plan, 1978:230). Government decided universal primary education as a goal of education and there was no drop out in the official records (Sattar, 1982:117). The universal primary education along with eradication of illiteracy was included as the two basic goals of the government. It was emphasized that every child who enrolls in class-I passes through all classes and completed class-V.

The *Second Five-Year Plan* (SFYP) (1980-85) marked the beginning of prospective plan for Universal Primary Education (UPE) with a goal of enrolling 91% of the primary age group by 2000. The target required a compulsion of about 75% of the primary school age population enrollment by 1990, and subsequently increasing it to 91% by 2000 (Primary Education, 2003:7). These targets also raised the government obligation of hiring an additional 49000 teachers would have to be hired, 128000 classrooms constructed and about 45 million textbook produced and distributed by 1990. With financial and technical assistance from IDA, UNDP, UNESCO the government cautiously went ahead with the UPE project. The important achievements under SFYP were establishment of Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) in 1981, creation of 1834 posts of Assistant Upazila Education Officer (AUEO) to strength field level supervision, free supply of text books in phases and free distribution of textbooks among students by 1985, creation of 500 posts of female teachers, creation of infrastructural facilities for schools (Second Five Year Plan, 1983:291). The development outlays for primary education under the SFYP were not seen as feasible. The government therefore scaled down the ambitious program to fit more closely with resource availability and absorptive capacity.

The Second Five Year Plan acknowledged the need to decentralize the administration of education, especially for primary education. In one of the major policy drive, the government intended to decentralize the primary education structure with control and management of schools to vest almost entirely in local management committees, which were to be formed at the village level (Sattar, 1982:89). Zia government also passed the *Primary Education Act 1981* and made provisions for the establishment of local education authorities at the subdivisions (present district). In 1981, a separate Directorate of primary education was created with structures spread at Thana (sub-district) level. The Act also provided for school based management and the

formation of the school management committee (SMC). The Primary Education Act 1981, however, was promulgated as a decree by the then military ruler, but was not followed up with necessary administrative steps for implementation.

Universal Primary Education Strategy (1982-'90):

Under Ershad regime, the government's strategy for achieving UPE remains essentially the same, but emphasis was given to strengthening institutional capacities, increased community participation and low cost solutions to provide education opportunities. These policies were largely influenced by the Ninth Regional Consultation Meeting of Asia and the Pacific Program of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID) in 1984. UNESCO prepared the report for achieving equity of educational opportunity and proposed the development of specific program to promote the education of girls in countries whereby low female enrolment is perceived to be major obstacles to universal education. A panel selected by UNESCO, visited different countries of Asia-Pacific region including Bangladesh and discussed with different key persons on problems relating to the girls and on national policies and programs (UNESCO, 1985:37-38). They emphasized resource allocation based on demand and supply, utilization of education facilities, provision of incentives, separate schools for girls, feeder schools, non-formal education, support and training of women teachers, curriculum development, distant learning, early childhood education, community participation, use of mass media and the role of women's organizations. The Ershad government promised to reciprocate all these suggestions on a national scale during the third five year plan period.

The Third Five Year Plan (TFYP) (1985-90) is the second five year investment program of the prospective plan period. The aims of TFYP included raising student enrollment from 60% to 70%, ensuring retention of the enrolled students, reconstruction of 9285 schools, repair of 16257 schools, supplying limited quantity of furniture and educational materials, reviewing, restructuring and revising curricula and syllabuses and establishing management Information system (Third Five Year Plan, 1985:366). In this Plan emphasis has been laid on strengthening institutional capacities, increased community participation and evolving low cost solutions to provide educational opportunities (SAARC Countries Workshop, 1986:20). The objectives and targets of this plan were only partially achieved. Nevertheless, before its ouster the Ershad government passed the Compulsory Primary Education Act, 1990. Subsequently, a high priority

has been accorded by the government in the 1990s to the goal of achieving universal primary education.

The Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-95) gave importance to the primary and mass education and education was identified as a vehicle for the development of human resources. A significant policy undertaken in the fourth plan was to make primary education compulsory. The other important goals were as follows:

Ensuring efficient use of existing facilities and safeguarding regional parity while creating new opportunities in primary education, increasing participation of girls in primary education, Ensuring improved in-service training for primary school teachers, reforming primary education curriculum, introducing academic supervision and administrative inspection, filling up 60 % vacant teacher's position from among women and relaxation of qualification for women candidates (Fourth Five Year Plan, 1990:x12).

To improve the quality of primary education, three major projects were undertaken that included Development of primary education in Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna Divisions; ADB funded Development of primary education in Chittagong, Barisal, and Sylhet division. Under the General Education Project (GEP) and other projects taken up in the fourth Five Year Plan, 1134 low-cost schools were constructed, 7675 government primary schools were reconstructed, and 9335 government primary schools were repaired, 7812 registered non-government primary schools were developed and 77290000 text books were distributed free of costs to the students (Primary Education in Bangladesh, 2003:12). Especially, in the construction of low cost schools emphasis was given on community participation and in areas without a school.

Compliance of International Obligations (1991-'96):

In order to comply with the international obligations as well as implement the constitutional provision for free, universal and compulsory education, Khaleda regime launched the Universal Primary Education Program during the early 1990s. Since being in power in 1991, Khaleda government made primary education free for all children in government run schools. During 1990-2000, compulsory primary education for every child is being introduced with a full coverage by year 2000. Increasing donor support for primary education is reflected in the US \$310 million 'General Education Project (GEP) 1991-96' (Hossain, 1992:337). Important measures taken to expand and improve primary education in the early 1990s include: introduction of the law on free and compulsory primary education; free textbooks for all children in primary school; food-for education that provides a food ration to 20% of the poor primary school children in rural areas. It

was declared that no child be deprived of education for lack of teacher, learning materials and adequate space; no child be subject to disparities of access to primary education arising from gender, income, family, cultural or ethnic differences and geographic remoteness (EFA, 2000:2). The government further reiterated that there would be quality and relevance of primary education by intensifying efforts to improve learning content and materials and to carry out necessary reforms in the primary education system.

The government took legal and administrative measures to implement the compulsory primary education Act and the whole country was brought under compulsory primary education program by 1993. A new series of text books and teachers guidebooks was prepared and introduced in phases from 1992 to 1996. A competency based and life skills oriented curriculum was developed in 1999 based on the 53 competencies introduced at the primary level in Bangladesh in 1992 (Latif, 2004:7). But all these steps are not enough unless teacher properly follow the instructions depicted in the teacher's guidebooks. As part of this policy thrust, a separate Ministry-level division, the Primary Mass Education Division (PMED) was established in 1992. The PMED has been uplifted into the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) in 2003.

During the first tenure of Khaleda regime, international commitment and donor's contribution played an important role in primary education of Bangladesh. The donor funded educational development projects were in fact pipelined at the turn of the 1980s when the World Conference Education for All (WCEFA) emerged as a watershed event that changed the face of educational development in Bangladesh. In March 1990, Bangladesh became an enthusiastic signatory to the WCEFA framework at Jomtien, Thailand; where the world community has strongly backed the goal of "education for all" at global gatherings (Monzoor, 2008:16). The WCEFA conference was concerned about both the qualitative and the quantitative aspects. At Jomtien's Conference, it has become clear that, merely placing a child in school does not guarantee effective learning (Wahiduzzaman, 2001:191). Moreover, this conference marked the emergence of an international consensus that education is the single most vital element in combating poverty, empowering women, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and controlling the population growth (Bellamy, 1999:2). In 1989, *The Convention on the Rights of the Child*, endorsed by 191 governments, specifies primary education as a basic individual right (Johnson, 2003:2). Becoming one of the signatories of that convention,

Bangladesh reiterated its commitment in the World Summit for Children held in New York in September 1990, and the Nine High Population countries held in New Delhi in December 1993 for universal primary education. The same commitment was pronounced in the Education for All ministerial review meeting of Indonesia held in September 1995, Pakistan in September 1997, and China in August 2001. Bangladesh also participated in the World Educational Forum meeting held in Senegal in April 2000, where 182 UNESCO member countries attended. Thus, the international obligations raised by the donor communities were instrumental in bringing about major policy shifts in primary education in the early 1990s.

Compliance Continued (1996-2000):

After coming to power Hasina regime adopted various development works and these were extended up to the Fifth Five Year Plan (FFYP) during 1997-2002. The notable achievements, in 1996-97, were establishment of 1046 satellite schools, construction, reconstruction, repair, of schools and offices etc. In 1997, the government took a comprehensive Primary Education Development Program (PEDP) that required a total investment of US\$1600 million over a period of five years from 1997 to 2002 (Primary Education in Bangladesh, 2003:16). In the FFYP Bangladesh government took up a massive program for rapid expansion of primary education. The objectives of this period were to increase gross enrollment rate to around 110% with particular emphasis on girl enrollment, and increase primary education completion rate to at least 75% (Fifth Five Year Plan, 1998:415). To improve the quality of teachers training, supervision, management and monitoring system, revise and update curricula with a view to making them relevant to the needs were among other objectives. FFYP also targeted setting up of an information resource centre at the upazila level, undertaking innovative programs and conducting research and evaluation, strengthening capability of the NAPE, DPE and PMED, reducing gender gap and regional imbalances and inculcating social consciousness among the children about their duties and responsibilities as good citizens.

The strategies behind the FFYP were decentralization of the management of primary education, initiation of child centered teaching methods and introduction of appropriate education system for the disabled and retarded. PMED prepared a comprehensive Primary Education development Program (PEDP) in this regard. The achievements during the FFYP were construction of 354 schools in unschooled areas, construction, reconstruction and repair of 4420

satellite schools, providing C-in-Ed training for 30000 school teachers (Primary Education in Bangladesh, 2003:17). Moreover social mobilization activities were geared up to train the members of SMC and PTI to make them aware about their duties and responsibilities. Also supervision and monitoring activities has been strengthened, home visit program for teachers and AUEOs have been made compulsory as a part of social mobilization drive (Fifth Five Year Plan, 1998:416). These sort of social mobilization activities were incorporated from the NGO sector, but the outcomes were not as such as expected due to lack of seriousness of doing these activities. National Education Policy adopted by the government in 2000 recommended for the introduction of one year pre-primary schooling for children of 5 years and above to be available in all primary schools by 2005. It also suggested for the extension of present five year primary education to an 8 year long primary education by 2010. Introduction of a uniform curricula for all educational institutions at the primary level, implementation of universal, equitable and same quality education by using the mother tongue, reduction of existing disparities that exist among primary institution of various kind were also included in the recommendations (National Education Policy, 2000:2). In fact recommendation of the National Education Policy echoed the findings of the Bangladesh Education Commission of 1974, but faced similar consequence in the long run.

Millennium Development Goals (2001-'06):

The Government of Bangladesh has made commitment in the World Education Forum held at Dakar, Senegal in April 2000, towards achievement of Education for All goals and every citizen by the year 2015. The World Education Forum adopted six major goals for education, two of which also became Millennium Development Goals later in the same year. The Dakar goals covered the attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and gender equality, improving literacy and educational quality, and increasing life-skills and early childhood education programs, and were to be achieved within 15 years (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2005:28) However, the gender goal was judged to be particularly urgent – requiring the achievement of parity in enrolments for girls and boys at primary and secondary levels by 2005, and of full equality throughout education by 2015.

The Millennium declaration of the United Nations adopted on 8 September 2000 by all member states in the millennium Summit gave birth to eight goals to be achieved by 2015 (UN, 2005:3). Besides the eight goals, there are 18 targets and 48 indicators in the MDGs. All these

aspects are pertinent to combat poverty, hunger, illiteracy, diseases, inequality between man and woman, infant mortality, maternal mortality, environmental degradation and improving global partnership for development. The second Goal has designated universal primary education that emphasizes the implicit objective of equal education for boys and girls alike and to be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Bangladesh is committed to achieve the MDGs and the goals are included in the countries first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

By May 2005, the government developed *Unlocking the Potential: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction* (PRSP). It takes a rights-based approach and identifies four strategic objectives: creating opportunity towards realizing the full potential of children i.e. access to health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation; ensuring the best interests of children in national, social, family and personal situations i.e. empowerment of children; ensuring safety and security at home and in the public space i.e. protection against abuse, exploitation and violence and establishing and protecting children's rights i.e. social inclusion, decent work and livelihood. PRSP goal is to introduce and strengthen early childhood and pre-school education; introduce a unified and common primary education opportunity for all children; improve quality of primary education; 100% enrolment, and raise all other targets to achieve quality and completion in primary education; increase literacy rate to 80% and expand the scope of NFE beyond the literacy to reach out to the extreme poor and in remote areas (PRSP, 2005:50-51).

In summing up the discussion it can be said that Bangladesh has been improving in primary education significantly since independence. Though primary education has been given priority from the emergence of the country but some dramatic changes has been noticed in the 1990s. This decade saw a renewed dedication to the expansion of primary education, and consequently primary education experienced significant enhancement during the period. In 1990, in a major policy direction Bangladesh made commitment to international compliance and as a result WCEFA came into being. Similar major international initiatives were taken in 2000. World Education Forum at Dakar and the UN Millennium conference at New York, fixed various targets and goals, named as MDGs. As a signatory country, Bangladesh is now committed to attain these targets by 2015. Currently primary education in Bangladesh is undergoing the second MDGs phase and it is a matter of concern for the country to reach the target within stipulated time.

THE PRESENT STATE

In 2003, Bangladesh prepared a national action plan for 'Education for All' with a specific set of goals to be achieved by 2015 and took the *Dakar Framework of Action, 2000* as the basis of that work. The plan embraces all the goals of EFA for making education accessible to all and provided for all. The country has prepared 'Primary Education Development Program-II' (PEDP-II) on the basis of Dakar framework and national Plan of Action. The main objectives of PEDP-II are to increase primary school access, participation and completion in accordance with government policy related to EFA and other commitments and to improve the quality of student learning and performance outcomes. In view of the situation, Chapter 4 attempts to discuss the present state of affairs of primary education in Bangladesh. It focuses on the issues related to achieving the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs); with special reference to equitable access, quality education in the country.

Equitable Access:

The aspect of equitable access to primary education coincides with the perception of human rights across the gender identity and disadvantaged groups. Current conception of human rights includes a variety of attributes, such as economic rights, and cultural rights; all these aspects are related to equal access to education provision for all. Article 3 of the *World Declaration on Education for All* pointed out that:

Basic education should be provided to all children, youth, and adults. To this end, basic education services of quality should be expanded and consistent measures must be taken to reduce disparity (UNESCO, 1990:3).

The declaration further reiterated that for basic education to be equitable, all children, youth and adults must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning. The most urgent priority was given to ensure access to, and remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. An UNESCO study entitled *Salamanca Declaration and Salamanca Framework for Action* emphasized that,

Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions (UNESCO, 1994:Article 3:6).

In line with this roadmap Bangladesh pursued a comprehensive policy in the provision of access to quality education for primary school aged children including girls' through numerous

interventions. *The Primary Education Compulsory Act*, which was passed in Parliament in 1993, underlined that:

No child be deprived of education for lack of teacher, learning materials and adequate space and No child be subject to disparities of access to primary education arising from gender, income, family, cultural or ethnic differences and geographic remoteness (JS-Legislation, 1990:2).

As part of this policy thrust, a separate ministry for primary education has been established in 2003, and primary education became free for all children in government run schools. Textbooks at the primary level are free for students in all government and registered non government schools, stipend programs and incentives are given for the purpose of equitable access to primary education. The Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) is currently (2003-2008) implementing Primary Education Development Program-II (PEDP-II) with an overall investment cost US\$2.6 billion, which is a sector-wide effort undertaken by the government (Baseline Report, 2005:11). Fundamental to the PEDP II is the concept of a coordinated and integrated sub sector approach, assisted by multiple donors, but run by the GOB through Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) and the DPE, with the basic aim of improving the quality of the primary education provision for all children in Bangladesh (PEDP II, 2003:1). Due to these policies and programs, Bangladesh has achieved a phenomenal change in the past ten years; especially in terms of achieving MDGs and equitable access to primary education.

Gender-related equity:

Gender-related equity refers to the opportunity of the traditionally disadvantaged gender group, i.e. females, in their access to various levels of education, in their opportunities for success in education, and to make use of education as an asset for enhancing their life changes. The UNDP Human Development Report 1997 observes that ‘no society treats its women as well as its men’ (UNDP, 1997:39). Gender inequality is a persistent social issue that is difficult to resolve, despite general improvements in economic and social conditions (Lee, 2002:6). Like other developing countries, the perceived inferiority of women and girls is deeply embedded in Bangladesh (Hossain, 2002:1).

Despite prevailing gender disparity in society, however, Bangladesh has achieved gender parity in primary school enrollment. According to Kabeer, Girls have actually overtaken boys in rates of enrollment, completion, and attendance in primary schools (Cited in Ardt, 2005:3). The

ratio of girls to boy student rose from 45:55 in 1992 to 53:47 in 2005. *MDGs Mid-term Bangladesh Progress Report 2007* indicates that the ratio of girls to boys at primary level has crossed the gender parity and now shows a bias towards girls. This success does not mean that access to education is equal for girls. Although girls have been targeted for primary school enrollments in rural areas, their attendance rates are considerably lower than the rates of boys since girls are often kept at home to work and take care of younger siblings. This put them at an intermediate disadvantage in the learning process. The same holds true, although to a lesser degree in urban areas (Artd, 2005:7). In both urban and rural areas, the problem is worst for girls of poor families.

Income-related equity:

Income-related inequality often prevents financially disadvantaged groups i.e. the income poor, in their access to various levels of education and their opportunities to success in education. The poor students have less chance of completing any given education cycle than more affluent students. There are two fundamental economic reasons; first, the private costs of primary education (especially in view of opportunity costs of child labor to poor families) are higher for poor students than for more affluent students. Second, the expected benefits of primary education are lower for poor students. Together, the higher costs and lower expected benefits of education mean that a poor family's rate of return from investment in a child's education is lower than it is for other families (Lee, 2002:36). As a result, the poor are more likely to drop out during the early years of schooling.

The higher opportunity costs of a labor to poor families' means that even the first few years of education are free; they are not without cost to the family. Children of primary school age are typically needed to work on family farms, often in the same time as they are required to be at school. If children cannot work because they are at school, the families either suffer a loss of valuable subsistence output or are required to hire paid labor. In either case, there are real cost to a poor family of having an able-bodied child attend school when there is remunerative work to be done elsewhere. According to Todoro, as a result of these high opportunity costs, school attendance, and therefore school performance, tends to be much lower for the children from poor families than for those from higher-income backgrounds (cited in Lee, 2002:36). Even among those children that do have geographic access to primary schools and whose housing status

allows them to enroll in formal schools, incentives to attend are low due to the reliance of families on their children's labor.

CIA World Fact Book 2005 maintains that 45 % of the population in Bangladesh lives below the poverty line; this means that they don't make enough money to meet their basic needs. Children are thus needed to help meet basic needs. This problem is one of the biggest hindrances in the growth of primary school enrollment both in urban and rural areas. Urban child labor has received comparatively little attention, and it is growing at a much higher rate. Even though primary education is free and even if a school is nearby, many poor children cannot attend school because of the vital income their family would lose if they did.

Regional equity:

Regional equity refers to the education opportunities of the people living in disadvantaged regions. In most cases, the disadvantaged regions are rural, but they can also be economically backward region within the country, and also the income poor within urban areas. Regional disparity is of two major kinds: urban-rural disparity and regional disparity within countries. In Bangladesh, the first kind of disparity is more prevalent than the later (Artd, 2005:8-9). Access to better equipped schools and adequate learning resources was more likely in economically advantaged regions, private sectarian schools in urban communities, and children of upper class families.

In Bangladesh, primary school's student enrollment is higher in urban areas than it is in rural areas; this is largely because the majority of wealthy and middle-class Bangladeshis live in the cities. The enrollment rate is very low for the urban poor, in some cases even lower than that of rural populations. It is estimated that only 9.4% of slums have primary schools within their reach (cited in Artd 2005:8); the problem therefore is one of both financial and geographical access.

There is no notable regional disparity among the different regions of the country. But the enrollment and survival rate varies from district to district. In Primary education two types of students Enrollment Rates are taken into consideration to measure the inputs of the education system, Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) and Net Enrollment Rate (NER). GER is the total enrolment in the primary education regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official primary school age population in a given school year and NER is the enrolment in primary education of the official primary school age group expressed as percentage of the corresponding

population. Besides the Survival Rate which is the percentage of a pupil cohort who enrolled in the first grade of primary education in a given school-year and who eventually reach grade V; is of particular importance this indicator is related to the completion of the primary education (UNESCO, 2000:i). *The Baseline Survey of PEDP-II* conducted in 2005, shows that the highest GER for boys was found in Jhalokathi 115.1% and highest for girls in the same district 113.7%. The GER was the lowest for boys in Netrokona (70.8%) and the lowest for girls in the same district (74.8%). The NER was highest for boys in Chandpur (99.8%) and highest for girls in Chuadanga (99.9%), whereas it was the lowest for boys in Gazipur district (65.4%) and the lowest girls in Sherpur (70.2%). The overall survival rate was 52.9% (boys 49.0% and girls 56.9%) and it varies among districts between 69.5% and 27.4%. The highest survival rate of boys was 69.5% in Dhaka and lowest survival rate of girls was 27.1% in Sherpur district.

Socio-cultural equity:

The Socio-cultural equity refers to the education opportunity of socio-culturally disadvantaged groups. In most cases, they are ethnic minorities within the country, but sometimes women are also regarded as 'minorities' in certain respect, and their education opportunities are limited by socio-cultural perceptions of women that are unfavorable for them to receive education. For example, the school attendance of females may be hindered by socio-cultural perceptions that boys should receive priority in going to school. Ethnic equality is another example. The disadvantage of a minority group can be closely related to their socio-cultural identities as minority groups. Bangladesh has some advantages when it comes to providing education on the basis of socio-cultural equity. In Bangladesh, most of the tribal minority peoples lives in the three hill districts Rangamati, Khagrachri and Bandarban. The enrollment Indicators of primary education of these three hill districts are satisfactory. The GER and NER of Rangamati, Khagrachri and Bandarban were found 104.1%, 101.1% and 93.8% and 97.3%, 92.5% and 86.9% respectively, whereas the national average of GER and NER were found 96.2% and 90.1%.

Quality Education:

Quality education may imply the attaining of specified targets and objectives. Achieving education quality is a long term process and there is no ready-made solution concerning education quality. Immediate attention of policy-makers should be on designing and implementing policies,

programs and actions to improve education quality. In 1993, Adams included six elements of quality education i.e. reputation of the institution, resources and inputs, process, content, output and outcomes, and value added (Adam, 1993:45). The quality education output can be achieved only if quality is ensured at each level of the educational process from standard setting, learning environment, teacher training, teacher-learning process, assessment and monitoring. Other indicators of quality output are decreasing rates of dropout and increasing rates of stay-ins, number who complete the program cycle and, gender and social equality.

The quality of basic education is important not only for preparing individuals for the subsequent educational levels but to equip them with the requisite basic life skills. Quality education also ensures increased access and equality and it is mainly due to these reasons that various international Forums and Declarations have pledged improvements in quality of education. *The Dakar Framework of Action* (2000:4) defined quality of education in terms of recognized and measurable learning outcomes especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. Article 42 of the Expanded Commentary on the Dakar Framework of Action further elaborates that a quality education is one that satisfies basic learning needs, and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experience of living (Dakar Framework for Action, 2000:20-21). The biggest problem of Bangladesh seems to face, in the pursuit of its educational goals, in the lingering poor quality of primary education. Achievement and competency levels of the most children are very low (Artd, 2005:7). The reasons behind the lack of quality achievements are of two types: internal and external. The internal reasons are related to teaching and learning. The external problems need to address in the national level are linked with policy and strategies.

Teaching and learning:

The quality of education directly linked with teaching and learning process. Improvements in the quality thus depend on the nexus of teaching and learning. Teacher quality has a powerful influence on student achievement. The quality teaching depends on teacher status, recruitment, in-service and continuing training, incentives for teachers, teacher's role and teacher quality, effective curriculum, education governance, management and school organization. Besides healthy, well nourished and motivated students, adequate facilities and learning materials, school environment, clear perception and assessment of learning outcomes, participatory governance and management, engaging local communities can improve leaning environment.

In Bangladesh, large classes and poor physical facilities are common problem for teachers and students. Overcrowded classes negatively influence the efficiency of the education process. Such classes provide little chance for the teacher to follow up student's educational achievements and weaknesses. There is also little chance for students to participate actively in the teaching-learning process. In Bangladesh, student-teacher ratio in the 1990s exceeded 60:1 (Chapman, 2002:18). In 2005, this ratio was decreased to 58:1 in Government Primary Schools and 46:1 in Registered Non-government Primary Schools (Baseline Survey, 2005:43). Narayangonj district has the highest pupil teacher ratio in both GPS (87:1) and RNGPS (83:1), and in Rangamati district it was the lowest (33:1) for both GPS and RNGPS. Government targets to achieve a student-teacher ratio of 46:1 in all schools by 2009. This clearly shows the requirement of recruitment of more teachers for GPS.

Teacher's poor academic quality and low competency is a serious problem for student's educational attainment. Rahman attempted to establish a profile of the primary school teachers by interviewing some 500 teachers. He found that most of the teachers have only the SSC/HSC examination in the third division (Rahman, 1986:32). This poor quality of teacher's academic competencies results in ineffective teaching. Pedagogical training fails with teachers with poor academic background. Such teachers cannot teach children with confidence. But this statement is only true for the old teachers; because younger teachers have the masters or at least bachelor degree; appears to perform better than older teachers. As the older teachers have in general a poor academic background and lower competencies, they don't know their teaching subject sufficiently well.

Moreover the primary school teachers are poorly paid and their status is lowest among the Government employees. This badly situation incorporates low morale and non commitment among primary teachers irrespective of their educational qualification. Even the highly qualified primary school teachers are not exceptional due to the same reason. This vicious circle of low competence and non-commitment of the teachers is seen as a major cause to make the school environment less attractive to the children.

Strategies to improve teaching and learning are likely to include upgrading skills of teachers by upgrading in-service teacher training. Primary school teachers are supposed to have one year 'Certificate in Education' (C-in-Ed) training that prepares them in pedagogical discipline, before taking classes independently. *Baseline Survey 2005 of PEDP-II* revealed that 71.9% teachers had

received C-in-Ed training whereby 74.8% of male teachers were trained up as compared to 67.2% female teachers. These ratios are almost similar in case of both GPS and RNGPS. C in Ed training is provided in Primary Training Institutes (PTIs), which are under staffed and under-utilized and training focuses on theoretical curriculum and not on the needs of induction of new teachers. This one year training program is outdated; theory based and does not develop specific skills of instruction (Gustavsson, 1990:85). In true sense, potential of the organization like PTI was not fully explored. Therefore teachers of the primary schools cannot ensure quality education among the students because no amount of the educational inputs can replace teachers or compensate their failures.

Consequently, Bangladesh government established Upazila Resource Centers (URCs) at the upazila level for professional development of the teachers. At present URCs are organizing subject based training, especially in English and Mathematics for primary school teachers. Besides, Teachers of primary schools are trained on-the-job through bi-monthly 'sub-cluster' training programs. 20-30 primary schools make a cluster and a sub-cluster is made up of 4-5 primary schools. Assistant Upazila Education Officers (AUEOs) are responsible for conducting in service sub-cluster training. Sub-cluster training has been providing regular professional and technical support to teachers for quality teaching and learning practices. All these attempts are conducted in order to improve teaching and learning processes, but a significant and drastic improvement has not yet taken place.

Teacher's salaries are a perennial issue in Bangladesh as the salary rate is very low in both absolute and relative terms i.e. in comparison with other occupations of equivalent skills. The pay scales of the teachers of the GPS are the lowest among the government employees. The teachers of the RNGPS, community and other schools are paid much lower than government school teachers. Therefore the primary school teachers often lack motivation for their profession due to poor salary structure. Sometimes they take part-time jobs, including tutoring due to poor pay and poor chances of promotion. It is likely that these facts will make the serious teachers lose interest in the profession and try to find another job. This low working morale of the teachers does not seem to have improved after training, supervision, monitoring or other motivational activities. The morale of the teachers may be enhanced by adequate compensations, incentives or recognition. Curriculum and textbook are the most important part of quality primary education. Curriculum specifies the content, sequences, and acing of what should be taught at each class. The education

curriculum needs to pay attention to the social and cultural realities. Its content tends to be urban and middle-class in orientation. If the curriculum is not well developed, instructional activities in the school can move away from the curriculum; instruction becomes more ad hoc, driven by the textbook or teacher's personal beliefs about what should be taught or what they are most comfortable teaching. Consequently, this system will introduce disparity, inconsistency, discrepancy and will create ultimately a chaotic situation within the society. Therefore to establish homogeneity and discipline in the society, a well developed curriculum should be introduced at the early stage of education. If the teacher does not follow the lesson plan or not get prepared about every day's lesson, then quality teaching and learning must not be possible.

Thus, Teacher's role and teacher quality are the most important and dominant pre-conditions for quality education which include knowledge of substantive curriculum areas; pedagogic skills; familiarity with multiple instructional strategies for use with individual and group activities requiring problem solving; application of concepts and higher-order thinking; ability to be reflective and self-critical and motivation to students to learn (Chapman, 2002:23-24). These factors are in turn related to the relevance of teaching content, guided by the curriculum and textbooks, and class room climate. Due to various reasons described above the primary school teachers are non-committed and poorly motivated regarding their duties. Non-committed teachers and poor level of teaching are the major obstacles to raising the standard of primary schools in Bangladesh. Besides, community participation, proper guidance, frequent supervision and monitoring of the activities of teachers by supervising officials can enhance the performance of the teachers and make them enthusiastic in regards their activities.

Improving education quality:

Effective policies and strategies can be developed at all administrative and decision levels for the purposes of maintaining or improving education quality. A plan for the whole primary sector has been developed under the PEDP II macro plan for the period of 2003-2008. It has covered four components: (i) Quality improvement through organizational development and capacity building, (ii) Quality improvement in schools and classrooms, (iii) Quality improvement through infrastructure development, (iv) Improving and supporting equitable access to quality schooling (PEDP-II Progress Report, 2007:1). Government also undertook a gender plan for action under PEDP-II for 2005-2010. For example, government undertook initiatives for increasing the

recruitment of the number of female teachers toward the 60% target at the rate of 3%-5% per year (PEDP II, 2005-2010:8). The government adopted the second *National Plan for Action (NPA II)*, 2001-2015. NPA II is designed to narrow the gaps, sustain the achievements, and enhance NER to beyond 95% and effective literacy rate to 90% by 2015. It is made fully compatible to EFA DFA, MDGs and PRSP.

In the National Plan for Action-II, the Goal was set 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 targets of EFA National Plan for Action-II, 2003-2015 for primary education, relating the goals are summarized in the following table:

Table 1: Targets of EFA NPA II, 2003-2015 for primary education

Indicators of primary education	Benchmark 2000	Targets for the selected ye		
		2005	2010	2015
Gross Enrolment rate (Total)	96.5	103	108	110
Gross Enrolment rate (Boys)	96.0	102	108	110
Gross Enrolment rate (Girls)	97	104	108	110
Net Enrolment rate (Total)	81	83	92	95
Net Enrolment rate (Boys)	82	87	91	95
Net Enrolment rate (Girls)	85	89	93	95
Dropout rate	35	25	21	10
Completion rate	65	75	85	95
Quality achievement in Pry. Education	05	30	65	90

(Source: National Plan for Action-II, p-32)

Both Table 1 and Appendix 1 show the strategic framework with indicators, targets and timeframe for attaining Education for All. Considering 2000 as the benchmark year, a strategic planning has made for the next 15 years. The vision was to raise Gross enrollment rate from 96.5% to 110%, Net enrollment rate from 81% to 95%, Completion rate from 65% to 95% and to decrease dropout rate from 35% to 10%. These strategic goals were analogous to the second goal of the Millennium Development Goal.

The above review suggests that the access and equity continue to be a significant problem in primary education of Bangladesh. The major facets of inequality in terms of income, region is pervasive. Interestingly, the gender, socio-cultural and ethnicity related inequality are not persistent in primary education, which is in contrary to the trend of most of the developing country. Targeted social mobilization and advocacy, energizing the community, enhancing physical facilities at schools, provision of free textbooks, supportive measures like Food For Education and stipend programs to allay the burden of poverty and improved management system can accelerate access/enrollment and gender equity. To retain students through out the primary level in order to reduce drop out rate and increase student's completion rate, quality teaching and learning is the most important tool in this regard. The quality assurance such as effective leadership at the school level, adequately qualified/trained and fully functioning teachers, adequate physical facilities, availability of textbooks in time and other necessary reading materials in the school, necessary teaching aids, a well-maintained and clean and secure environment, reasonable teacher/student ratio, adequate contact hours, punctual attendance of teachers and pupils, proper academic supervision, community participation in the planning and management of school affairs, etc need careful review and coming together. The elements are there but not in the required proportion and thus not functioning adequately and coherently to produce the quality which is due to governance and management problems. To provide access and equity and quality education, it is utmost necessary to introduce various aspects of governance and management skills.

GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The major issues in governance and management of education are perception and practices regarding the role of the government in different levels and sub sectors of education, excessive centralization and bureaucratic control of the system, poor internal efficiency throughout the system. In Bangladesh, the government directly runs schools, which enroll over 75% of the primary school students, and pays 90% of staff costs and capital grants to the others. These public provisions represent a high level of government commitment to basic education. But in discharging the duties, the government machineries should be transparent, accountable, effective and efficient and there should be room for community participation and public-private partnership. The present chapter analyzes the management, costing and financing system in

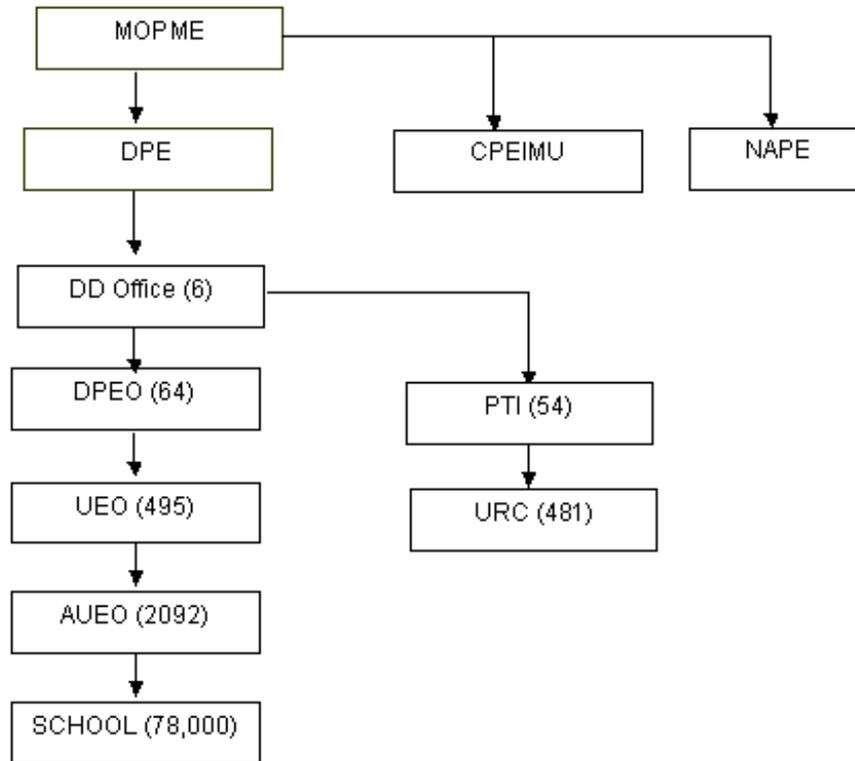
primary education and their ramification in the governance issues and the development of public-private partnership in this sector. In this chapter a brief discussion on educational management, its governance status, possibility of community participation, decentralization and public-private partnership, challenges for the next decade will be analyzed.

The Management system:

In education sector, management and administration are used synonymously to include such activities as planning, program, implementation, co-ordination, personnel supervision, monitoring and evaluation. A good administrator is both a competent manager and an effective leader, where leadership refers to an individual's ability to articulate a vision forward in ways that encourages others to participate and support the idea (Chapman & Adams, 2002:2). The overall education management depends on ministry level officers, intermediate level offices and at the grass root level school head teachers. Any change or reforms will require considerable leadership, not just management skills, both at the level of the school and systemically if the reforms are to be implemented smoothly and for them to endure beyond the first flush of enthusiasm.

In Bangladesh, Management of primary education remains centralized. Moreover, it is recognized that, a large majority “of the incumbents lacks the professional ability needed to perform their jobs efficiently and meaningfully” (NPA I, 1995:26). So, inefficiency, bureaucratic procedures, poor internal efficiency throughout the system, poor community involvement and ownership in primary education is *sin qua non* to the primary education management system which lacks the governance issues. According to Chief Adviser Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, Weaknesses in capacity and professional skills, structures and custom of centralized decision-making, culture and mindset that undermine transparency and accountability, are obstacles to reform in governance of education program (Conference on Governance in Education: Transparency, Accountability and Effectiveness, March,2, 2008). Nevertheless, In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) is responsible for policy formulation, planning, evaluation and execution of plans and initiating legislative measures related to primary and non-formal education. Headed by Secretary of the Government, the Ministry is liable for administrative management and overall supervision of Primary education and non-formal education.

Figure 1: Organizational structure of primary education.



Source: Primary Education in Bangladesh, 2003:33

The Directorate of Primary education (DPE) was set up in 1981 and was created in order to stream line universal primary education and strengthen the infrastructure. DPE has five divisions each headed by a Director. The divisions are Administrative division, Planning and Development division, Training division, Monitoring and Evaluation division, Policy and Operation division. There is a separate MIS cell in the Directorate for collection of data on selected primary education indicators. Under DPE, there are six Offices of the Divisional Directors at each divisional headquarters. The responsibilities of administrative, management and training of the DPE has been decentralized these offices through supervision and control schools, cluster, Upazila and districts, offices under the jurisdiction of division. There are 64 District Primary education offices in the country headed by District Primary Education Officer. The main tasks and responsibilities of DPEOs are to take decisions related to administration and supervision of all primary schools in the district.

There are 481 Upazila Education Officers throughout the country. The UEO has to discharge general responsibilities for management and monitoring of primary education in the upazila. The

primary schools located within the upazila are divided into clusters. A cluster comprises of 20-30 schools. One AUEO is in charge of each cluster. At present each cluster consists of 4-5 sub-clusters with 25-30 teachers in each sub-cluster. The AUEO is also responsible for the regular in-service training of all teachers of the sub-cluster. In fact, the AUEOs play the basic role in the development of the skills of teachers, in the implement of all kinds of innovative programs and in conducting of sub-cluster training programs for overall development of the quality primary education.

National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE) is the highest training institute for primary education. The responsibilities of the academy are: development of C-in-Ed curriculum and the academic supervision of Primary Teachers Institutes, organizing officer's training, research, workshops, seminars etc. The Primary Teachers Institutes (PTI) offers one-year formal course termed as Certificate in Education (C-in-Ed). This course is designed to train the teachers on pedagogical aspects and subject teaching methods. Upazila Resource Centre (URC) is new institution at the upazila level for professional development of teachers in order to improve the quality of primary education, organizing the subject based training for primary teachers.

Table 2: Number of primary schools by type, teachers in 2005

Sl. No	Type of School	Number of School	No. of Teachers		Number of Pupils	
			Total	Female	Total	Girls
1	ary Schools	37672	162084	71740	9483891	4848049
2		19682	76566	22833	3572686	1802605
3		946	3456	2200	158059	78186
4	tal Schools	54	223	84	9828	4762
5	y Schools	3027	8773	6368	425992	218939
6	en	2281	18937	10108	246286	105658
7	pls	289	1175	713	37690	18867
8	Madrasahs	6768	28294	2986	849755	401624
9	ctions of High Madrasahs	8329	32206	2218	1146138	499649
10	ctions of High Schools	1353	13075	5740	295333	156098
Total		80401	344789	124990	16225658	8134437

Source: Baseline Survey, 2005:17.

The primary schools are the main focal point of the primary education system. There are ten types of primary schools; the majority is the Government primary schools those do not charge tuition fees. The registered non-government primary schools, is managed and supervised by government bodies, who pay salary of the teachers. The non-registered primary schools are run by a

government body or managing committee. Apart from these schools, there are community schools, PTI attached experimental schools which are controlled and run by the Government. The religious schools, named Ebtadaee Madrasahs and Ebtadaee Section of High Madrasahs play a significant role in the education of primary school age children, those forms a parallel education system in the country and the curriculum is a combination of religious and secular subjects (Asadullah & Chawdhury, 2007:2). There are also primary sections of High schools are managed by their own administration. In the urban areas, Kindergarten system has been becoming popular among the rich and educated society. Besides, there are few formal NGO schools run by different NGOs.

In Bangladesh, the management of schools from teacher salary and textbook production and distribution to curriculum development has been the responsibility of the central government. This has been a particularly heavy responsibility given that Bangladesh has almost 19 million primary school aged children, 80,000 primary level institutions, 11 different kinds of primary schools, making it one of the largest centralized systems in the world (Latif, 2004:10). Moreover, Political interference and undue involvement of politicians, institutionalized by government regulations about managing committees, have been identified as a major contributor to corruption, mismanagement, waste and obstacle to good management practices in general (Education Watch Report, 2005:142). Therefore Government has recognized the need to devolve power to the local levels in order to make schools more responsive to local conditions (Latif, 2004:10). But this change needs to address the aspects of Governance and adequate funding.

GOVERNANCE MECHANISM:

Transparency & Accountability:

Transparency and accountability are of critical importance, if quality of management, of enrolment, of recording attendance (particularly for the incentive programs), data gathering and management, of textbooks distribution, of financial and management transactions, of children's achievement and overall quality of primary education are to improve (NPA-II, 2003:59). Much needs to be done in this area to improve the image of primary education management and trust in its ability to deliver quality education. Various local Committees set up at different levels of administrative structure do not yet function at the desired level of efficiency. The accountability of the GPS teachers, being state employees, remains limited to the Directorate of Primary Education;

SMC and the community have no say in their performance. Decentralization of DPE, devolving authority to division, district and upazila offices and empowering the SMCs can have positive impact on improving the management and quality of primary education. Some of these proposals were included in the NPA I but do not seem to have made much progress. The Registered non-government primary schools are managed by local school managing committees, but receive substantial subvention from the government. In principle, this represents an ideal form of *public-private partnership*.

In practice, the primary education system of Bangladesh is not well functional, manifested in high internal inefficiency indicated by low survival rate of primary students to the end of the cycle. The most serious obstacles relate to weak management and under-financing (Bangladesh Education Sector Overview, 2002:xiii). The role of the government thus needs to change vis-à-vis decentralization, the lower level of administrative authorities, in the direction of less direct administration and more policy planning, information analysis, standard setting and system evaluation.

Decentralization:

Decentralization is considered as one of the solution for organizational inefficiency and mismanagement. A. I. Gershberg compares Decentralization with the concepts of empowerment and sustainability (Gershberg, 1998:405). Another definition of Decentralisation is “the transfer of decision making authority, responsibility, and tasks from higher to lower organizational levels or between organizations” (Hanson, 1998:112). Devolution of authority, flat organizational structures and operational systems that enforce accountability are creeds of modern management in the public and private sectors. Planned reforms are directed at reducing the degree of control over decision making, in planning, and in policy formulation and monitoring (Chapman & Adams, 2002:23). It is often expressed in long delays in decision making, and inordinate difficulties in implementing new programs and services. In certain circumstances decentralisation can certainly help achieve the goal of EFA, and should be pursued (Bray & Mukundan, 2003:13). In Bangladesh, Primary education system is decentralized in case of Teacher’s appointment, disciplinary action, pension, leave, financial benefits, etc those are maintained in the district level; teacher’s posting, transfer, salary are maintained in the upazila level. School infrastructure, development needs are addressed through bottom up approach. But all these are not enough, if

the delegation of decision making authority to the field offices, as necessary Districts, Upazilas and Schools will not be given decision making responsibility for planning and implementing to make the effective use of human and physical resources.

Corruption-free management:

Corruption in the primary education sector is one of the underlying factors leading to the lack of quality basic education. Corruption in different levels and different capacities prevails in different ways in primary education. Lack of accountability and transparency mechanism in all levels of management spreads limitless corruption except few exceptions. Corruption in printing books, delay in supplying text books, forceful collection of subscriptions from teachers, transfer of teachers in exchange for money according to ones preference are now common practice (CPD, 2001:25). It has now become the norm rather than the exception. Corruption has become a major roadblock in the development and advancement of the primary education system. It is a major cause for teachers loosing their morale, confidence and principles (NDI, 2005:16). Notwithstanding the Government's commitments, flaws, irregularities and corruption continue to trouble many of programs regarding quality primary education (Action Aid Bangladesh, 2001:4). So, Government should take necessary steps to combat corruption.

Community participation:

Community and civil society support and involvement are also essential for meaningful local level planning and management, and building up an attractive and efficient primary education delivery system. School Management Committees (SMC) are working well in many places in local level planning for improving the operational aspects of the school; but in most cases participation of members remains limited to attending meetings only. NGOs have been involved in reviving some of the moribund community schools, otherwise not much in the promotion of primary education (NPA-II, 2003:60). They are involved in a big way in the government's NFE program. In light of their pro-active role and appreciable success in non-formal education and in community development activities, assisting the marginal population NGOs could and are willing to play a positive and effective role in primary education to improve its quality.

NGO involvement:

NGOs in Bangladesh are involved in many areas of public services, and are documented as being one of the most active in the world (Sukontamarn, 2003:2). In the area of primary education, NGOs in Bangladesh have been heavily involved in the provision of primary education, particularly to children from economically disadvantaged families. At present, about 1.4 million children, or 8% of the children enrolled in primary schools attend non-formal primary schools provided by NGOs. Non-formal primary education was initiated in the middle of 1980s because it was perceived that primary education provided by the government could not reach the poorest children in remote areas. Currently, more than 400 NGOs are involved in non-formal primary education. The largest NGO working in the field of education in Bangladesh is the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), which provides non-formal primary education to 1.2 million children out of 1.4 million children currently receiving non-formal education (Sharafudin, 1998:1). Though BRAC and other NGOs have been operating non-formal education since 1980s, but they have least notable efforts in the formal education system. They did not invest enough money for permanent schools, school infrastructures, and classroom development. In 2005 there were only 289 formal primary schools, where 37690 pupils were taught by 1175 teachers, i.e. only 0.23 % primary school students were enrolled in the NGO schools (Baseline Survey, 2005:17). This shows trivial participation of NGOs in the formal primary education in Bangladesh.

On April 23, 2008, the government decided to give BRAC the responsibility of monitoring all the primary schools, including government, private and community schools in 30 Upazilas across the country. Experience suggests that BRAC had launched its experimental Education Program with 22 one-room primary schools in 1985. The BRAC Education Program is now providing non-formal primary education to underprivileged children out of the formal education system. BRAC schools work to build the skills and confidence level of the children and motivate them to continue their education through the formal system. BRAC Education Program currently operates several types of primary schools such as BRAC Primary schools, BRAC Adolescent Primary Schools, Educational Support Programs Schools and Urban Cluster Schools and Education for Indigenous Children Schools. BRAC arranges monthly refreshers, year ending and subject –based training for its primary teachers. But all these programs are related to the non-formal education.

Nevertheless, a strong protest was enthused among the teachers of the primary schools and the leaders of the primary schools. They apprehended that country's primary educational system supervised by 'such inexperienced institution like BRAC' would bring about further

mismanagement in the rural areas. To pacify the situation Khondaker M Asaduzzaman, director general of the directorate of primary education said that the pilot program of BRAC will assist government's second phase of Primary Education Development Program (PEDP II) and monitoring of the government program on primary has not been given to BRAC or any other NGO (The New Nation, June 4, 2008). It is irrefutable that BRAC has least experience in the management of formal education management rather they have a vast experience in the training matters. Therefore, it would be better if the partnership in this regard continue only for training of the teachers, rather than in academic supervision or monitoring of the teacher's activities.

Education Management Information Systems (EMIS):

A necessary but not sufficient condition for the success of management reform is the existence of a comprehensive Education Management Information system (EMIS). A more satisfactory arrangement would be an integrated system designed to support day-to-day, routine operational financial and personnel management which at the same time collected the kind of data needed for planning and policy monitoring and evaluation. Modern computer and communications technology can be designed and implemented in a manner that will allow data needed for decision making to be stored and accessed at the level in the administrative hierarchy or network at which it is needed for decision making (Chapman & Adams, 2002:28). The design, development and implementation of EMIS, therefore, have been accorded very high priority in the strategic plans for education development. In Bangladesh, There is an EMIS at DPE which is not working well; for example, they even have no up-to-date data and regular publication. Such a poor EMIS never provide effective input in the policy and strategy formulation.

Costs and Financing:

Education is considered mainly to be a social welfare sector expecting no immediate return, but needs to consider various factors like cost-effectiveness, rate of return, etc. In Bangladesh, the education sector has come under serious criticism from many quarters due to the colossal wastage and poor return, due to poor Governance, mismanagement and corruption. Moreover, Bangladesh gives very low priority to education in terms of investment in comparison to other sectors and per capita investment in education in Bangladesh is one of the lowest among the

developing countries. The expenditure on education is much less in Bangladesh compared to its South Asian neighbors as shown in figure 3.

Table 3: The expenditure on education of three South Asian countries.

Country	As % of GNP (1993-94)	% of Expenditure (1993-94)
India	3.8	11.4
Pakistan	2.7	7.9
Bangladesh	2.3	8.7

Source: Mahbub ul Haq and Khadija Haq, 1998 cited in Islam, N.M. 2001:52

The primary instruments for financing education expenditures are the revenue and development allocations in the national budget. For the revenue budget allocations, the government draws from internal revenue sources. External aid finances more than 50 % of the government's development allocation on education. External aid in the 90s from all major donors amounted to \$1.14 billion, of which about 32 % consisted of grants from several bilateral. Bangladesh is now implementing second Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-II) over a period of six years with an overall investment of 2.6 billion US dollars which is being supported and assisted by a consortium of Development Partners (Baseline Survey, 2005:iii). The priority given to education in public resource allocation has also increased over time. Total Government expenditure on education increased from 0.9 % in 1973-74 to 2.2 % in 1997-98. The level of government financing in education is still inadequate relative to international norms. The share of education in revenue budget has declined from a high of 20 % in 1992-93 to 18.6 % in FY98 and to 17.7 % in FY99. This is inconsistent with the high priority given to education in all the policy and planning documents. Further, real public spending per student per annum in primary education declined from Tk.570 in 1993-94 and 1994-95 to Tk.525 in 1995-96. The share of primary education in total revenue expenditure declined steadily from over 48% in 1991-92 to about 40% in 1998-99 (Bangladesh education sector review, 2002:62-63). This indicates that the government has achieved the recent dramatic increase in primary student enrollments without proportional increases in the number of teachers and supply of textbooks.

Due to inadequate public resource allocation for non-salary expenses at the school level, the school managers are forced to seek resources from local communities to build essential facilities and do the essential repairs. Besides, the parents have to pay a significant proportion of their

income in paying for their concealed cost, such as subscriptions, private tutoring and stationery (Chowdhury et al, 2002:35). This will ultimately hamper the goals of Universal Primary Education. The expense for ensuring universal primary education is huge and not all of these can be provided by governments and so other sources will need to be found. This will require new kinds of partnerships to be forged between governments and local communities. It will also require greater coordination between governments and international, bilateral and other agencies so that projects can be designed and implemented that fit into larger programs which in turn are elements of a national strategy. In Bangladesh, education system managers have little experience of working with local communities in a truly collaborative manner. It is equally true that local communities have little experience of working with education managers. In these circumstances, forging of new partnerships, accommodation of diverse priorities, and integration of multiple projects within comprehensive and coherent programs will constitute a major challenge for education development. Therefore a mechanism should be developed to extract private resources, community contributions and need to mobilize these resources at the priority basis. Otherwise planned expansion of primary education system will be hard to sustain in the long run.

Future Governance issues:

In Bangladesh, management of the education sector has improved over the last decade, but the management problems have been becoming more difficult. Nine issues can be expected to dominate the education landscape over the next decade. They provide a backdrop against which to examine issues that education managers must be prepared to address. According to Chapman & Adams these issues are as follows:

- ❖ Quality improvement
- ❖ Increased pressure for efficiency
- ❖ A continued push toward decentralization,
- ❖ The evolution of a new balance between public and private responsibility for delivery of education
- ❖ The effective use of information systems in decision making,
- ❖ Teacher unionization
- ❖ Gender diversity in the leadership of the education system,
- ❖ Securing and allocating resources and
- ❖ The search for effective teacher incentives. (Chapman & Adams, 2002: 19).

The quality improvement requires staff who have considerable technical knowledge about the education process. This technical knowledge is necessarily the inputs that are likely to improve

student learning. Efficiency requires staff who have considerable knowledge to find effective ways of working cooperatively with teachers to ensure that new initiatives are implemented at the school level. In Bangladesh, Government always faces scarcity of funding for educational development. The essential task of education managers is to allocate resources in ways that move the organization towards its goals. Due to serious fiscal constraints, the ability to enhance the most direct incentive, salary is severely limited. This has to be considerable interest on the part of education policy makers and administrators in identifying non-monetary, low cost incentives that would allow them to improve education quality and efficiency with little or no additional monetary cost to government (Chapman & Adams, 2002:30).

Teacher unionization is an up growing issue in the education concern. In particular, unions may object to government initiatives to reform education. For example, teachers and their unions have often initiated movement to increase their salary, and often resisted efforts towards decentralization. It is also heard that teachers union at the local level acts as a collaborator of the corrupt official in taking and collecting bribe. Gender diversity is another burning issue as women are not well represented in administrative ranks. The under representation of women in administration is a waste of national resources at a time when talented administrators are desperately needed. Beside these humanistic approach; data collection and management is another important issue. The quality, availability, and timeliness of information for decision making often has been identified as a key constraint on effective level management. For this regard, we need more management and leadership training. Training tends only to impart technical skills in specific facets of management, e.g. budgeting, analyzing trend data and evaluation. Moreover, education decision making is a political process, therefore managers always have not always been able to implement new knowledge due to political constraint within which they work. So, Government appears to offer a solution by proffering training as well as committing to fix the underlying solution that beset education management.

Primary education sector of Bangladesh has been facing administrative irregularities and mismanagement as major obstacles to implement various programs. Mismanagement at every level has reduced the standard and quality of primary education. Governance problems including corruption and mismanagement related to all aspects of education management seriously undermined management of primary education for quality and equity. Therefore, management and administration of primary education needs to enhance by developing and institutionalizing

local and national management information and monitoring systems. The Directorate of Primary Education needs to strengthen along with the delegation of decision making authority to the field offices, as necessary Districts, Upazilas and Schools will be given more decision making responsibility for planning, budgeting and implementation to make the effective use of human, financial and physical resources. Moreover, community participation, involvement of local government and public-private partnership with entrepreneurs and NGOs will open the new avenues of development in Primary education. Through these initiatives, the target to achieve universal primary education and the Millennium Development Goals will be possible to attain.

UPAZILA EXPERIENCES

A study entitled *Attaining MDG on the Ground where it Really Matters: Some Preliminary Findings from Phulpur* by Asaduzzaman et al (n.d.) showed the progress achieved at the local level on the basic indicators of the MDG goals in an area of Mymansingh district. The researchers found that only a few boys and girls dropped out of primary education over the last five years. Non-affordability of cost of education has been a major factor for those dropping out. Their works have a limitation that their finding was only on completion rate of primary students, not other targets of MDG-2. In this chapter, however primary data congregated from one municipal area and one rural area analyzes the actual scenario of primary education in Bangladesh. Data from Primary education office of the *Chittagong Kotwali thana* and *Dagonbhuiyan Upazila* of Feni District provides an understanding whether MDG-2 is achievable in these two regions. As the *Baseline Survey 2005* ranked Chittagong division in the lowest position in terms of achieving MDGs; the present chapter would provide an understanding of the ground reality in some parts of the division.

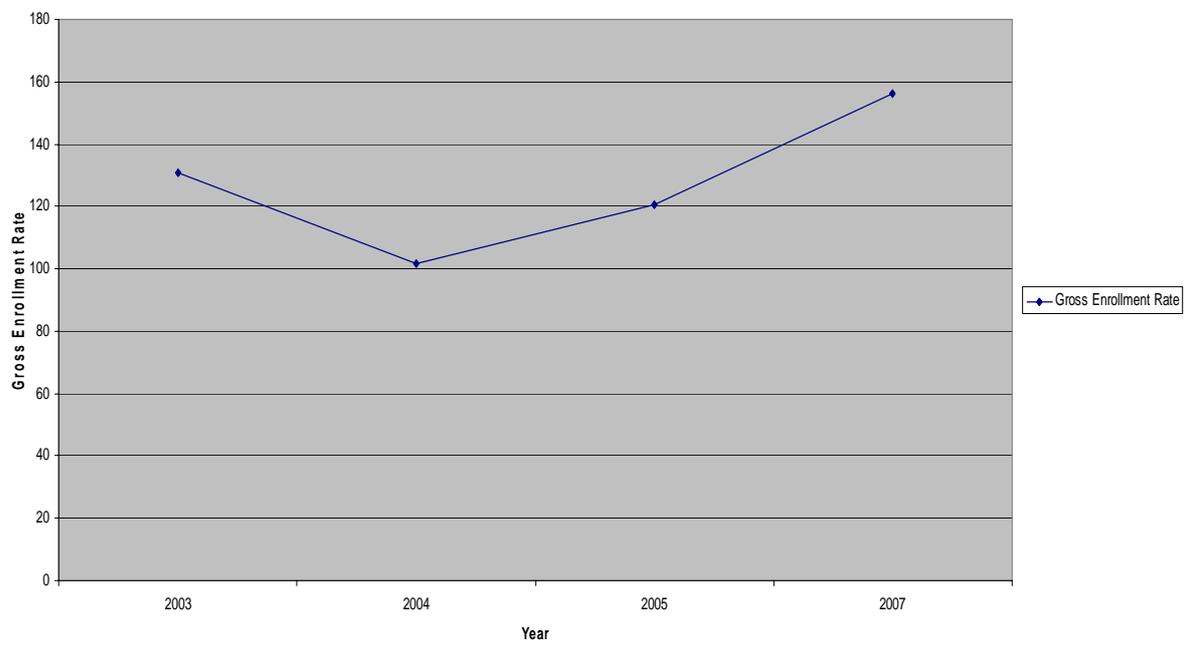
As the efficient data management system is quite absent at the thana/upazila education office, only gross enrollment rate and dropout rate is available in these field level offices. These data were taken form various registers and the inspection reports. The inspection reports are filled up in a prescribed form in which disseminated information's are provided by the TEO/UEO, and the data are cross checked by the superior inspecting officers. In the present study, these reports were considered as a reliable source of data.

Chittagong Kotwali Thana

Kotwali thana of Chittagong City comprises the older part of Municipal areas having 6.24 sq. km. area and a population of 2,46,893. There are 30 government primary schools, 19 high schools attached primary schools, 13 kindergartens, and 2 high madrasah attached ebtedayee madrasahs in this thana. Except government primary schools, other primary schools are not under the control of thana education officer. The Gross enrollment rate of these schools for the period 2003-2007 is shown in appendix 2.

Figure 1 demonstrates an upward trend in the gross enrollment rate that decreases from 130.94 in 2003 to 101.89 then gradually increases 120.54 in 2005 and 156.37 in 2007. This upward growing trend is highly appreciable but there is a question about the reliability of the data. In 2003, the number of school going children (6-10) was 16357, and then the number gradually increased up to 2005. In 2005 the number of school going children was 22587, but the number surprisingly declined to 15265 by 2007. As the population of Bangladesh increases with a rate of about 1.5% and in the municipal areas the population growth is much higher than the national average, therefore a sharp decline in the number of school going children resulted an overshoot in NER.

Figure 2: Gross Enrollment Rate in Primary Education Of Kotwali Thana of Chittagong District



Source: Self-compiled

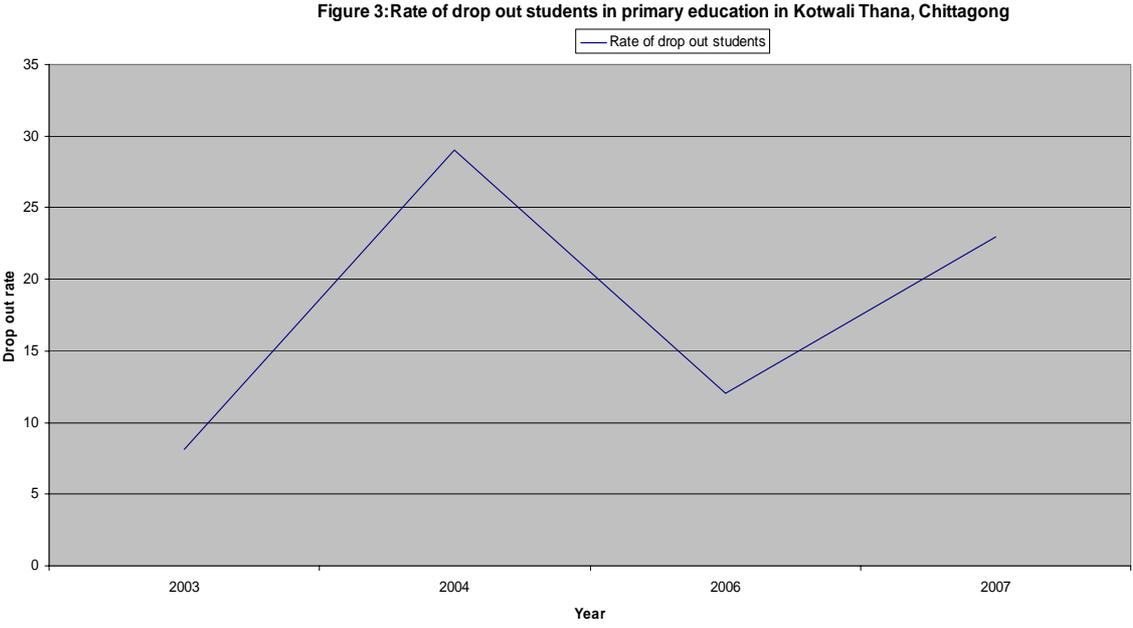
Another indicator of primary education which is available from the upazila education office is dropout rate which is usually is calculated using the following formula:

Drop out rate = (No of students enrolled in Grade-I 5 years ago – No of students attained in the final examination of Grade-V last year – No of repetition in the final examination of Grade –V last year)* 100/(No of students enrolled in Grade-I 5 years ago)

Though this equation includes both the attained and repeated students, but does not include the students transferred out side Thana/Upazila. Therefore there is a possibility to overrate the dropout rate than the actual value. Primary education completion rate can be calculated from the following equation:

$$\text{Primary education completion rate} = 100 - \text{dropout rate}$$

Figure 2 indicates that there is no conspicuous trend in dropout rate as the figure shows the crisscross path and the range of the dropout rate varies from 8.12% to 29%. In 2003, the drop out rate was 8.12%, then it increased to 29% in 2004, and later sharply decrease in 2006 and the drop out rate again sharply increased to 23% in 2007 (appendix 3).



Source: Self-compiled

As the data reveals contradictory pictures and there is lack of clarity in the increasing and decreasing trends of dropout rate, it is difficult to apprehend whether 100% MDGs are attainable in Bangladesh within 2015.

Dagonbhuiyan Upazila

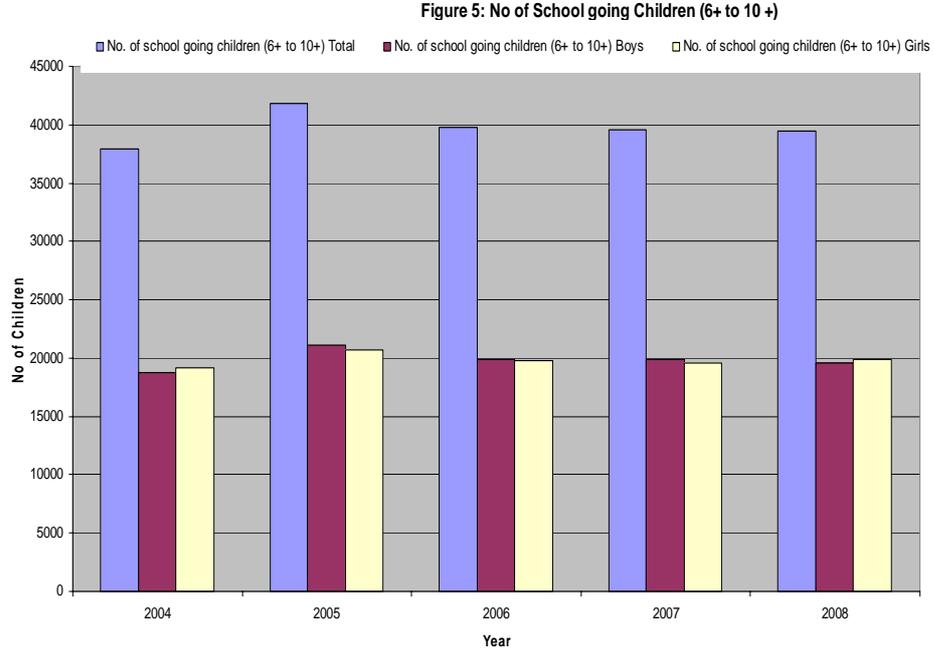
The total area of Dagonbhuiyan Upazila in Feni District is 165.85 sq. km. that contains about 204975 population of which 49.40% being male and 50.60% female members (Islam, et al, 2003:197). The upazila have mostly rural features. There are 94 government primary schools, 37 other category primary schools in this upazila. Maximum primary schools are managed and administered by the Upazila Education Officer. The Gross enrollment rate of these schools for the period 2004-2008 is shown in figure 4 and appendix 4.



Source: Self-compiled

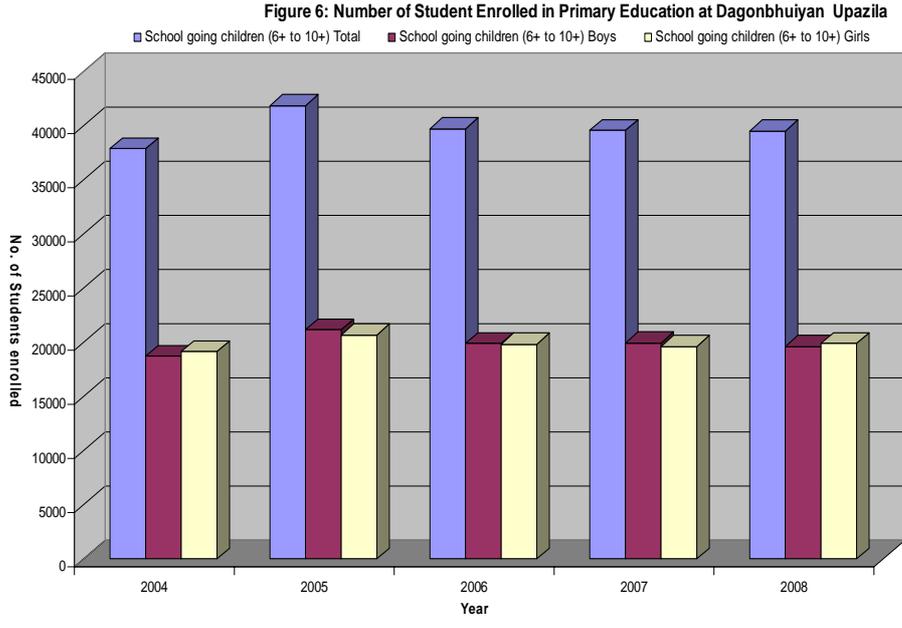
There is a bit zigzag trend in the overall Gross enrollment rate as the figures first increases from 94.97% in 2004 to 96.50% and 96.78% in 2005 and 2006 respectively. In this period, GER of boys decreased a bit from 93.57% in 2004 to 92.83% in increased sharply to 98.74% in 2006, whereas the Girls GER first increased piercingly from 96.34% in 2004 to 100.25% in 2005, and then decreased again sharply to 94.80% in 2006. In 2005 Boys GER decreased but the Girls GER increased and the overall GER was decreased to 95.80%. Similar trend was happened in each case in 2008. The trend of overall GER and GER in case of both Boys and Girls is shown in figure 3. Figure 4 shows some surprising indications that when the GER for Girls increased, at the same year the GER for the boys eventually decreased and similar precedent occurred as vice-versa. Another thing is very astonishing that the GER at the national level is increasing gradually; while the GER of this upazila is decreasing. This trend is very intriguing and that might happen in

many other upazilas. Figure 4 and 5 shows the Number of school going children and number of enrolled student in primary education in Dagonbhuiyan upazila respectively.



Source: Self-compiled

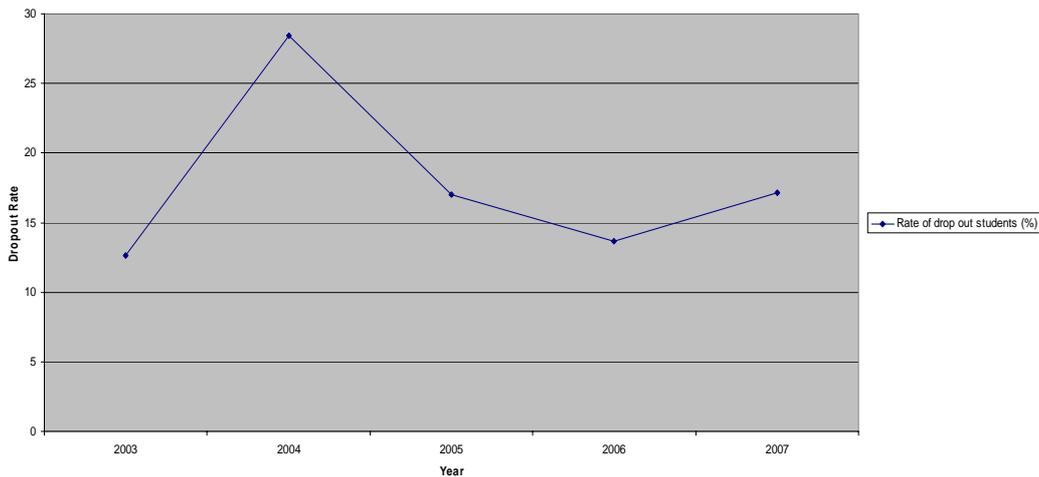
In both cases since 2005, the number of school going children and number of enrolled student in primary education gradually decreasing. If this trend is taken as a regular phenomenon, then the quantitative achievements in primary education in this upazila would be very much questionable.



Source: Self-compiled

In Dagonbhuiyan Upazila, the dropout rate for the past 2003-2007 is given in figure 6 and appendix 5. There is no conspicuous trend in drop out rate as the figure shows the crisscross path and the range of the drop out rate varies from 12.66% to 28.46%.

Figure 7: Rate of drop out students in primary education at Dagonbhuiyan Upazila



Source: Self-compiled

In 2003, the drop out rate was 12.66%, then the rate increased to 28.46% in 2004, later on again sharp decrease occurred in 2006 and the value was 17% and 13.66% in 2006 and lastly in 2007, the drop out rate again increased piercingly to 17.15%. As there is no clear indication in the increasing and decreasing trends of dropout rate,, therefore the target of achieving 100% completion rate within 2015 is very much questionable.

In view of the analysis it can be said that field level data collected from the Thana/Upazila Education office suggest that there is no conspicuous trends in the dropout rate in both the areas, and therefore the target of achieving 100% completion rate within 2015 would be doubtful. From the trend of GER of the Chittagong Kotwali Thana, the enrollment has reached at the saturation level, so the NER should be attainable within the stipulated time but obviously the NER for the Dagonbhuiyan Upazila is quite below than the expected level, and lot of intervention is gravely needed for the later upazila.

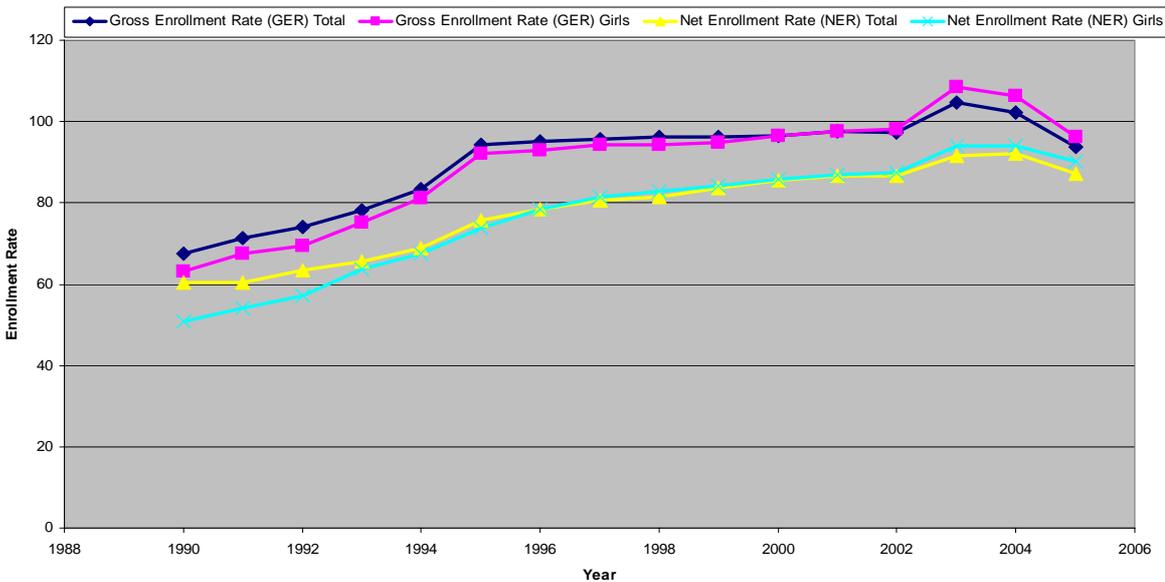
BANGLADESH ACHIEVING MDGS

The Second Millennium Development Goal (MDG-2) is to ensure that, by 2015, all children are in school, the net primary enrollment ratio is 100%, and that all the pupils entering grade 1 are

retained until grade 5. Bangladesh has committed to achieve the Universal primary enrollment is one of the main education-related MDGs, which has a single target and three indicators. The target is known as Target-3 and ensures that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. The three indicators relating to MDG-2 monitor the progress of target -3. These indicators are: Net Enrollment Rate in primary education, Primary school Completion Rate and Adult Literacy Rate. The first two indicators are directly associated with primary education. In order to examine different aspects of enrollment and participation in primary education, it is necessary to look at entry age, age-specific enrollment, grade-wise promotion, grade-wise repetition, dropout, and completion by pupils of the primary stage of education. Collectively, these measures indicate the internal efficiency of the primary sub-sector of education. In this chapter, an analytical discussion on these two indicators along with different aspects and various Governmental initiatives and interventions will be discussed through which an assessment would be made to find out how far Bangladesh to achieve MDG in primary education within the specified time.

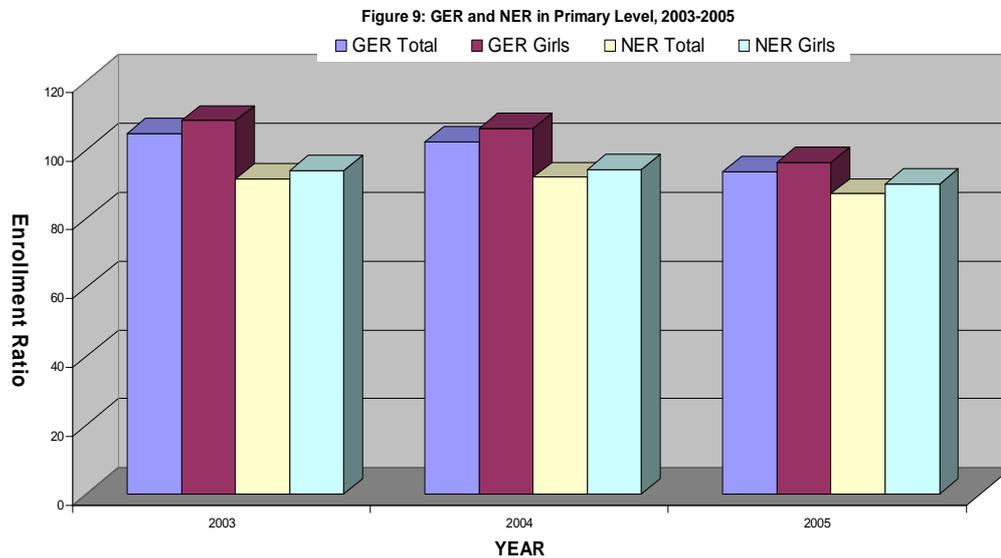
In Bangladesh, primary education is of five years' duration. The official entry age for grade 1 has been fixed at 6 years. Children of age 6-10 years are supposed to be the students of primary schools, but in reality, the age-range is much wider. Children of age 5, 11 and even 13 are found as students of primary schools. Eventually the gross enrollment rate is higher than the net enrollment rate. Figure 8 and appendix 6 shows the Gross Enrollment Rate and Net Enrollment Rate in Primary level (1990-2005).

Figure 8: GER and NER in Primary Education (1990-2005)



Source: Self-compiled

The overall gross and net enrollment rates in the primary education system in the baseline year 2005 were found to be 94% and 87% respectively (Baseline Survey, 2005:4).



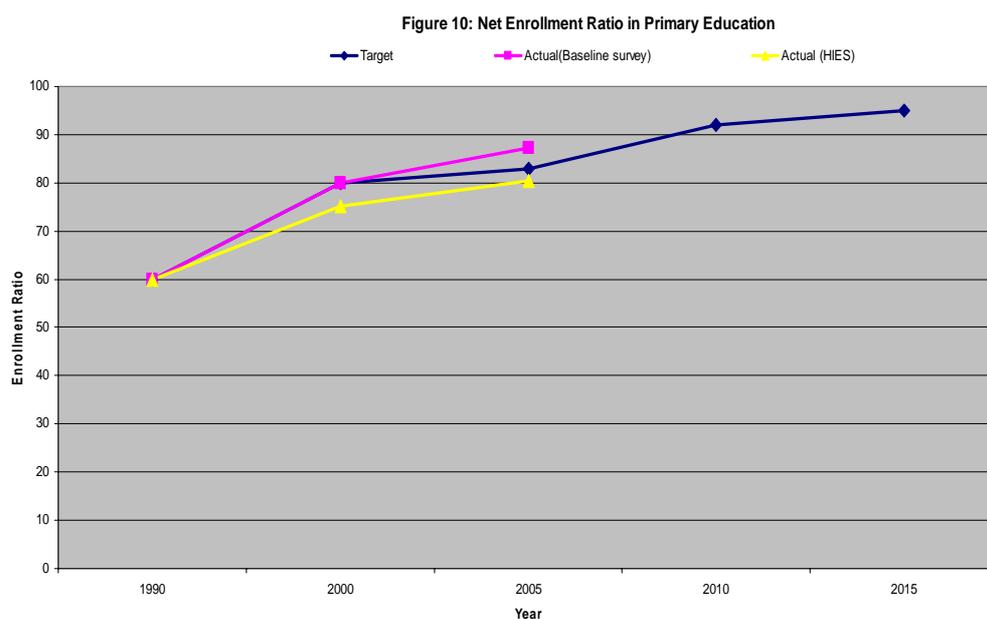
Source: Self-compiled

There is a declining tendency in the enrollment rate in comparison with the enrollment rates of the previous years. In 2003, the GER and NER was 104.77 and 91.61 respectively and in 2004, the GER and NER was 102.25 and 92.00 respectively. Thus there is a declining tendency in the GER and NER for 2003-2005 periods which is shown in figure-9.

The change of enrollment in 2005 is drastically decreasing. The reason of declining of GER and NER in 2005 was not to include the data from Kindergartens, NGO run primary schools, and Schools run by various other Government organizations (Baseline Survey, 2005:11). But according to the same survey, the number of NGO schools, Kindergarten schools and School run by various other Government organizations were 289, 2281 and 1353 respectively. So the Data on enrollment in 2005 from the Baseline survey does not showing the complete scenario of the primary education sector of Bangladesh. So in this reason GER and NER data from HIES, 2005 can be used to explore the same meadow from another point of view. According to HIES, 2005; The GER at the national level was seen 105.11, for boys 108.54 and for girls 106.24 in 2005 (HIES, 2005:89). At the national level, the NER was seen 80.42, for boys (79.55) were less compared with girls (81.98) (HIES, 2005:85).

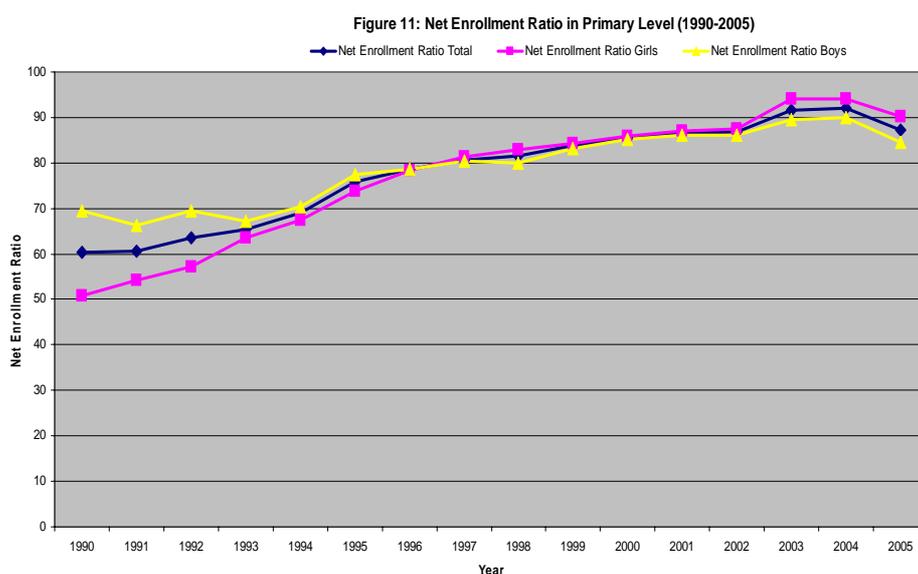
Considering only HIES data, it is clear that there was a notable change in enrollment rate in 2000-2005 period. Appendix 7 shows that enrollment rates are substantially increased within 2000-2005. The GER increased at 0.6% rate which is quite satisfactory. If the growth rate in GER will remain same till 2015, the probable GER at 2015 will be 111.75, which is a bit higher than the target fixed at National Plan of Action-II. But regarding NER, the scenario is opposite. At the same period of time NER increased at 0.7% rate. If the growth rate will be same till 2015, the probable NER at 2015 will be 85.47, which are far below than the National target (95.0). It is obvious that the growth rate of GER and NER will decrease with the course of time as we are gradually reaching closer to the saturation stage.

It is usually considered that, HIES surveys typically obtain information on whether a child is attending school at the time of the survey, while administrative data refer to students enrolled in the registers of the school at the beginning of the school year. The latter may be greater than the former if students enroll in school at the start of the school year but then do not attend it during the remainder of the year. Gross enrollment rates from administrative records are very sensitive to incorrect estimates of the population of school-aged children. Moreover, there are incentives for school administrators and district officials to overstate the number of enrolled students, since many types of government education expenditure allocations to districts and schools are often based on the number of enrolled students (World Bank, 2005:51). Therefore, though the GER from Baseline survey-2005 (93.71) was found lower than the HIES-2005 data (105.11) due to proper cause, but the NER from Baseline survey-2005 (87.20) was found much higher than the HIES-2005 data (80.42). If all types of schools were considered in the Baseline survey-2005, then the difference in case of NER could be far higher. But both the GER from the Baseline survey (93.71) and NER from the HIES-2005 data (80.42) are below than the Goal-2005 of the National Plan of action-II (GER-103, NER-83).



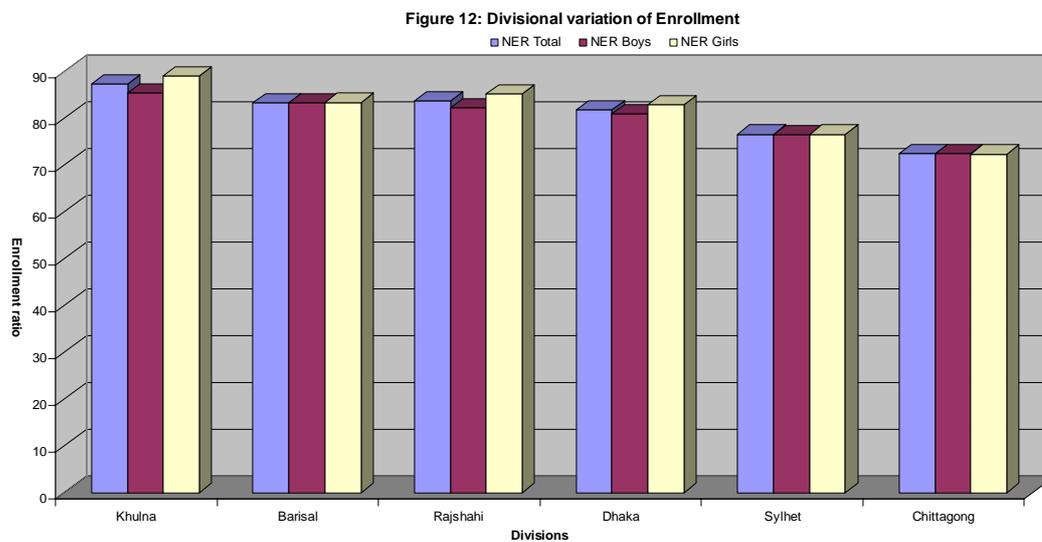
Source: Self-compiled

Figure 10 shows the trend of targeted and actual net enrollment rate according to the Administrative data and HIES data. The Administrative shows that Bangladesh is towards the way of achieving MDG target, but HIES data shows that Bangladesh is lagging behind the target. Both the Baseline survey-2005 and HIES-2005 data reveals that the enrollment rate of the girl students are ahead than the enrollment of the boys. Figure 11 shows the Net Enrollment rate in primary level (1990-2005) for boys and girls. In 1990, NER of boys was much higher than that of girls and the ratio was higher till 1996. First in 1997, Bangladesh attained the gender parity in primary education and at present the girl's enrollment rate is higher than that of boys.



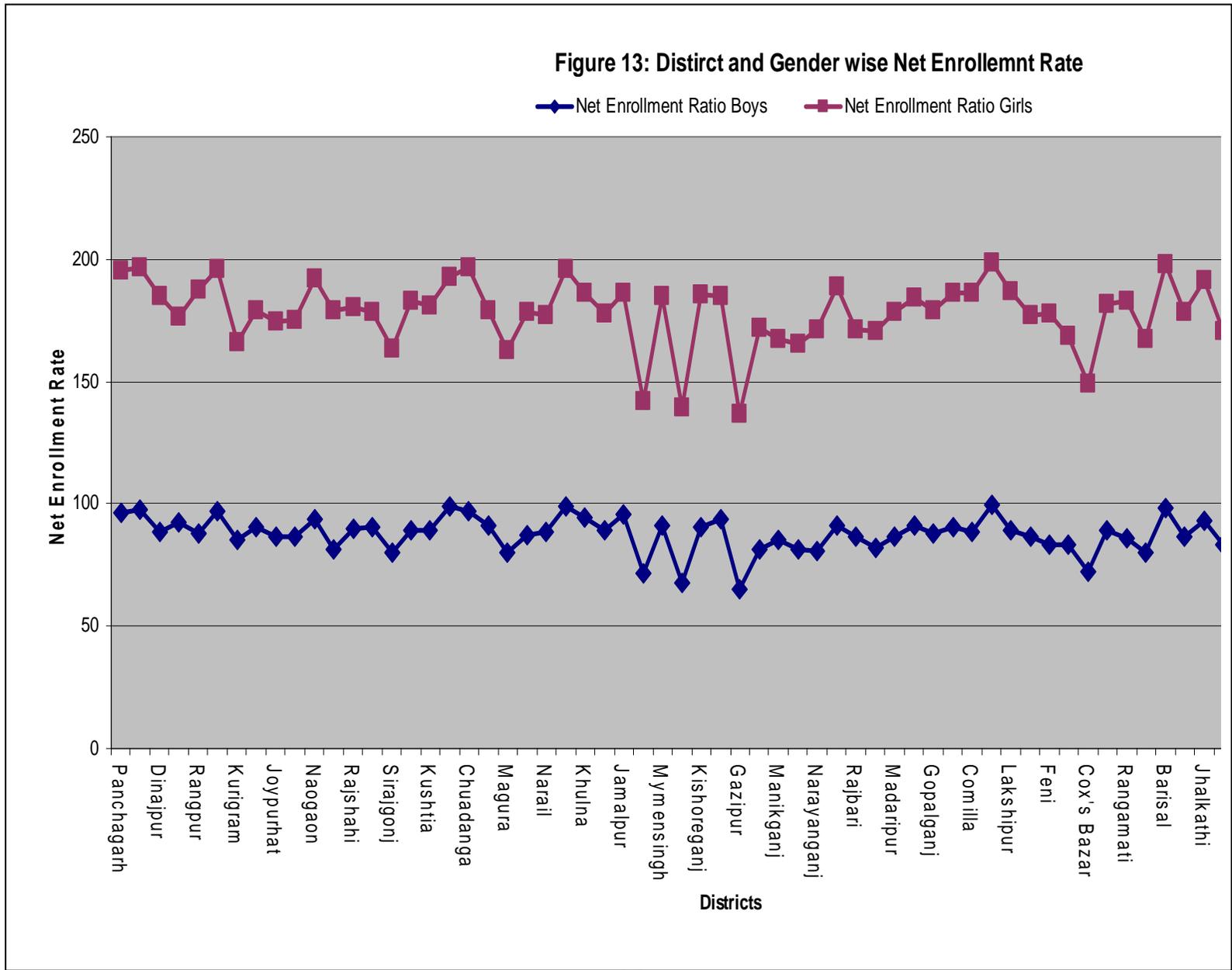
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There are large variations in the net primary enrollment rate across regions. At the aggregate level the highest NER was observed in the Khulna division followed by Rajshahi division and Barisal division. This trend was same in case of both boys and girls. Figure 12 and appendix 8 shows the divisional variation of NER. The enrollment rate was seen satisfactory in Khulna and Barisal divisions, but the enrollment rate was observed disappointing in both Chittagong and Sylhet divisions. So, special activities like strengthening monitoring and performance evaluation should be conducted to keep these regions in the same pace.



Source: Self-compiled

The analysis of Baseline data showed that, The Highest GER for boys was found in Jhalokathi (115.1%) followed by Satkhira (114.1%), Panchagarh (113.8%) and Lalmonirhat (109.3%) and the highest GER for girls was in Jhalokathi (113.7%) followed by Panchagarh (111.9%), and Satkhira (107.1%). The GER was the lowest for boys in Netrokona (70.8%) followed by Cox's Bazar (74.1%) and Gazipur (80.0%) districts and it was the lowest for girls in Netrokona (74.8%) followed by Gazipur (82.9%) and Sirajgonj (85.0%). The Figure-13 on the following page provides a comparison of GER for boys and girls by district. The NER was the highest for boys in Chandpur (99.8%) and the highest for girls in Chuadanga (99.9%), whereas it was the lowest for boys in Gazipur district (65.4%) and the lowest for girls in Sherpur (70.2%). The variation in GER and NER shows the district wise discrepancy in access and equity in primary education. Districts like Sherpur, Gazipur, Netrokona, Cox'sbazar and Sirajgonj are truly lagging behind the national average of enrollment and ultimately will hamper to achieve the Goal.

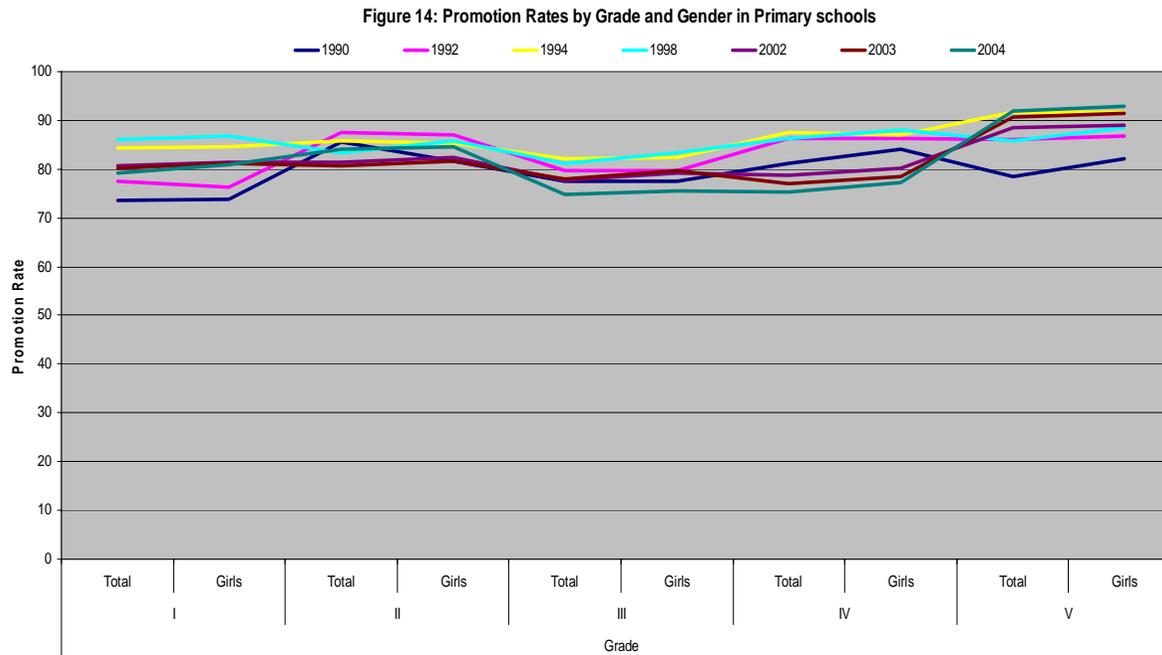


Like Universal primary enrollment, another education-related millennium development goal is Primary education completion. Primary completion means retention of students–viz., to ensure that the entire cohort of children who begins grade-1 remains in school until grade 5. School completion is an indicator–albeit imperfect–of the quality of schooling. It is possible that in the rush to expand access to schooling, policy makers might compromise the quality of schooling. The compromise in quality would likely show up in lower rates of student retention and primary school completion.

Calculating the true primary completion rate requires longitudinal data on children, but in the absence of such data, one can use household survey data on children’s ever-schooled, currently-in-school, and current grade status. The HIES 2005 data reports whether a child ever went to school, whether he/she was currently attending school at the time of the survey, the grade currently attending, and the grade last completed. This information can be used to calculate the primary completion rate for children aged 12 years. Obviously, 12-year olds who never attended school are excluded from the calculation of the primary completion rate. A child is considered to have completed primary school if he/she reported having completed Grade V at the time of the survey and if he/she was not reported as never having attended school. In 2005, the primary completion rate thus calculated was 76.81%, where as in 2000, the completion rate was 66.3 %.

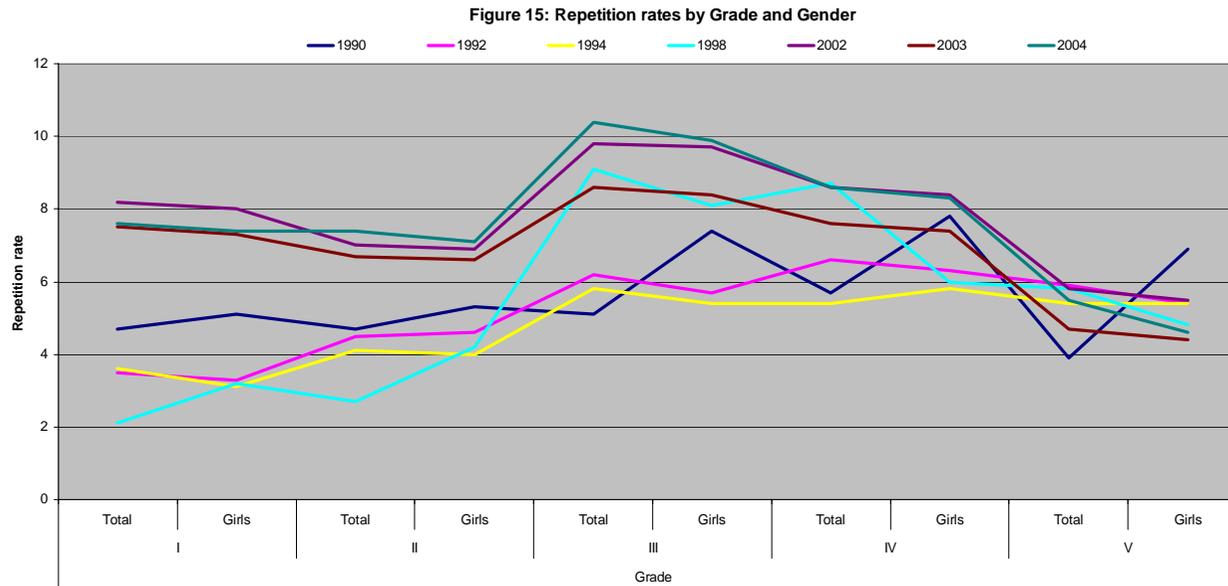
Primary education completion rate is associated with the promotion, repetition and drop out rate. Grade-wise promotion, dropout and completion of the whole circle of primary education are important indicators of efficiency of the system.

Promotion rates by grade and gender show that the rates have not changed significantly over time. The promotion rates appear to have remained largely unchanged for almost 15 years—in other words, no change in wastage and inefficiency in the system. The trend is almost flat, is shown in figure 14 and appendix 9. In 1990 the promotion rates varied from 73.9% to 85.6%; the highest was for Class II and the lowest for Class I students. In 2004 the range was 75 – 91%; the highest was for class V and the lowest was for class III students.



Source: Self-compiled

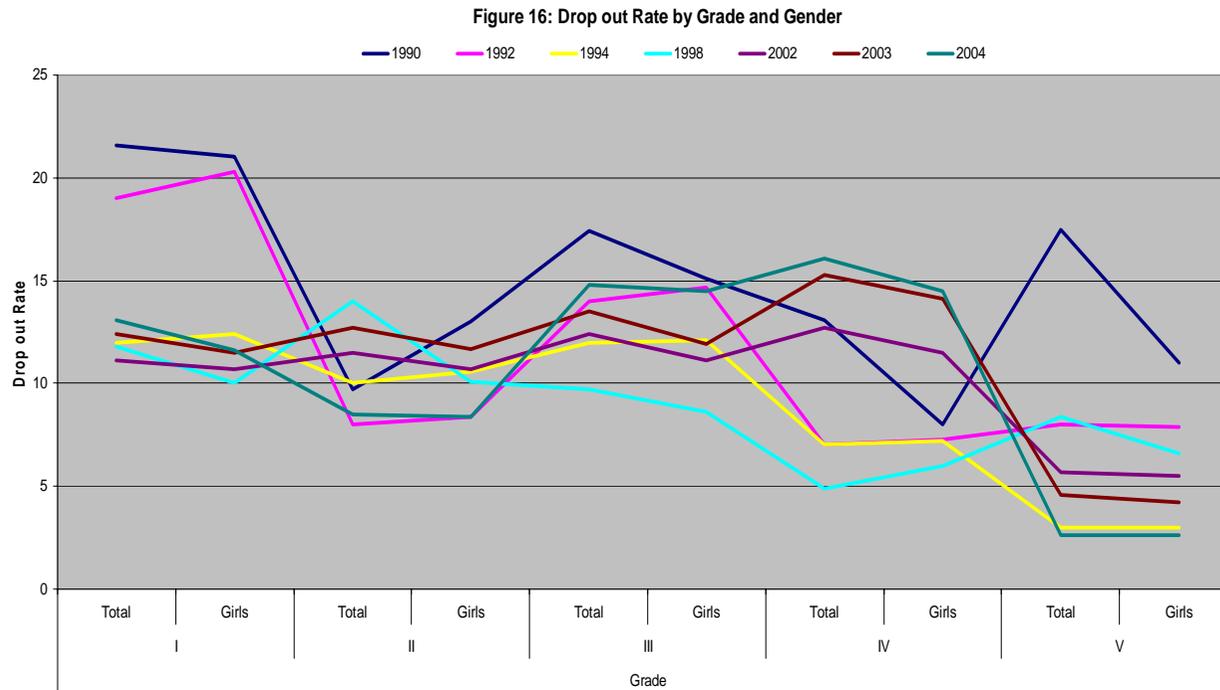
Repetition rate should ideally zero %. High repetition rates indicate problems of internal efficiency. Figure 15 and appendix 10 show the Repetition rates by grade and gender in primary education for the period 1990-2004.



Source: Self-compiled

Comparing class wise repetition rates of 2004 with those of 1990 we find that there has been no significant change over the period, as shown in figure 15. The situation worsened somewhat in Grades I, II, III, IV while it improved slightly for girls in V. The trend of dropouts in primary education over the period 1990- 2004 is shown in figure 16 and appendix 11. In 1990, class wise

variation in drop out was quite conspicuous. The average dropout rate was about 15% in each grade. Since 1990 the dropout rate started decreasing.



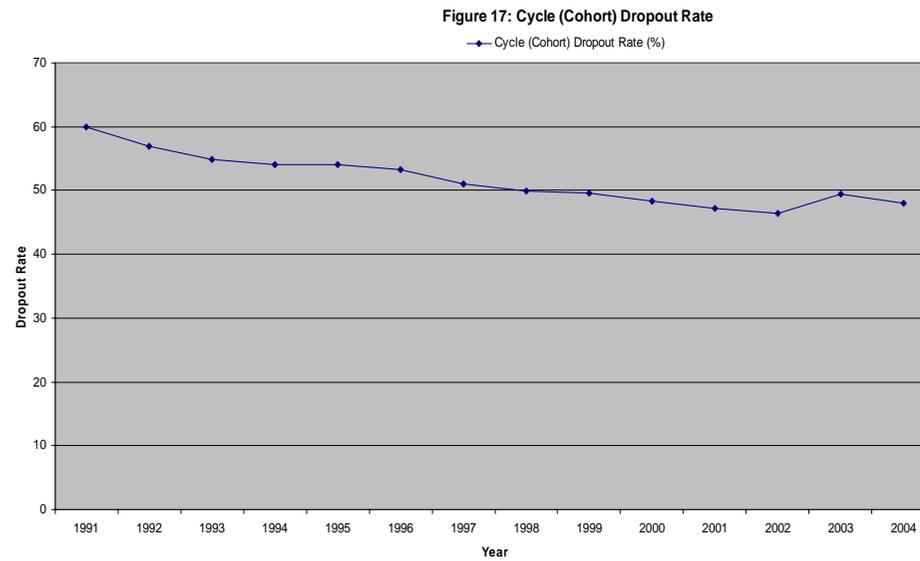
Source: Self-compiled

There was a sharp reduction in dropout rate in 1998 and since then it showed an upward trend. In 2004, the average grade-wise dropout was 12%. In the initial grades drop out rate is much higher than the final grade. So, more emphasis is needed to introduce attractive educational environment in the earlier classes. Promotion, repetition and drop out percentage should add up

to 100. Eventually, the Primary education completion rate can be calculated by adding Promotion rate and Repetition rate of Grade-V and then subtracting Drop out rate from the summation, we can obtain the completion rate. As Promotion rate and Repetition rate has remained unchanged and the Drop out rate trivially decreases, therefore completion rate is increasing with a slow progress which is not sufficient to achieve 100% within 2015. Because, in 2005 our completion rate was 78.81%, and to achieve 100% primary education completion rate, we need 2.1% progress in completion rate in every year. Undoubtedly our augmentation is below than desired level.

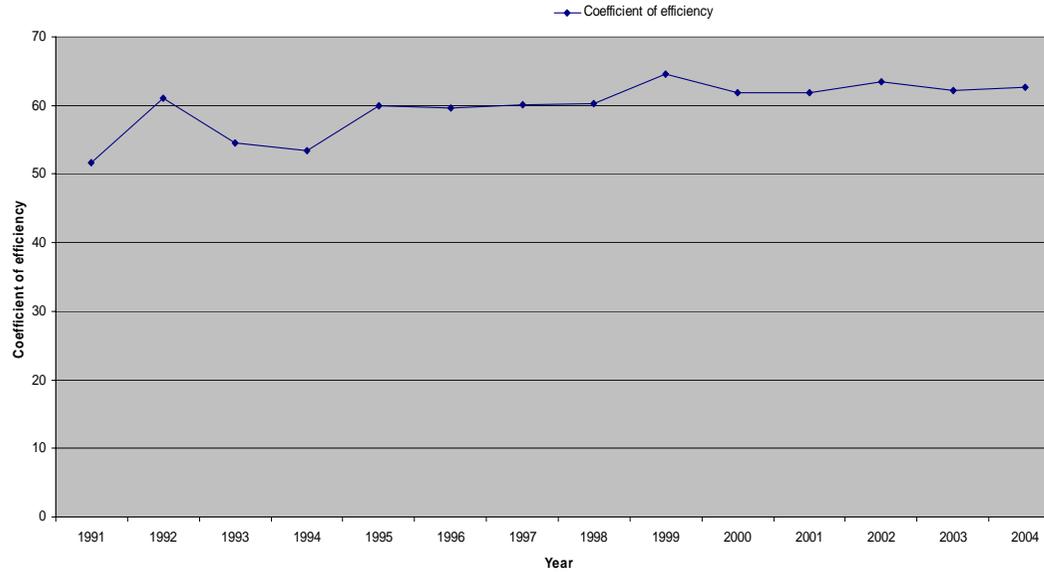
Cohort dropout rates provided a better picture of how effectively the system works. It is seen that in 1991, out of 100 students admitted in Grade I, 60 dropped out before completion of Grade V. The data from DPE management information system (MIS), shows that the cohort dropout rate has decreased steadily from 60% in 1991 to 54% in 1994 and further to 48% in 2004 (Appendix 12). The cohort dropout rate was constructed by using the 'reconstructed cohort analysis technique' suggested by UNESCO², based on actual data for two consecutive years and assumptions, drawn from the actual data, applied to other years. Figure 17 shows a gradual improvement, but almost half of the students in primary education still dropped out. From this calculation, the primary education completion rate in 2004 is thus 52% which is even lower than the HIES-2005 data.

² For better understanding see, 'Use of cohort analysis models for assessing educational internal efficiency'
http://www.uis.unesco.org/i_pages/indspec/cohorte.htm

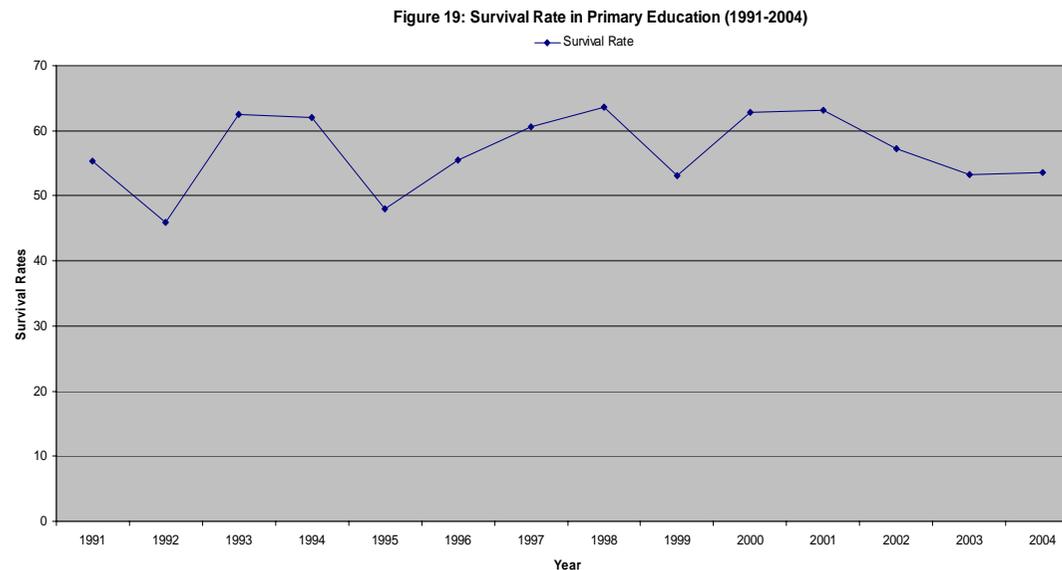


Coefficient of efficiency is the rate of expected number of pupil years for completion of a stage of education and total pupil years actually taken counting dropout and repetition. It is related to survival of pupils from grade-I of primary education to grade-V.

Figure 18: Coefficient of efficiency in primary education (1991-2004)



The percentage of a cohort of pupils who enrolled in the Grade-I of primary education in a given school year and who eventually reaches Grade-V is the survival rate. Without a public examination at the end of the primary stage in Bangladesh, completion rate is approximately the same as the rate of survival to grade-V



The trend in coefficient of efficiency shows a slow improvement, but survival rates have been fluctuating without showing any sustained improvement (Figures 18 and 19 and appendix 13).

In general, to increase the enrollment rate and completion rate, it is needed to make primary school more attractive to the children. To do so, it is necessary to ensure equity and access, need the quality schools, efficient management, good governance, better monitoring and evaluation system and incentives to the students, teachers and other stakeholders. Various governmental initiatives like establishment of new schools, appointment of new teachers and supervising officers, more emphasis on the appointment of new female teachers, introducing up-to-date training system for teachers and officials, infrastructure development were taken to bring all

eligible children to primary school. Besides income assistance program viz., food-for-education program, stipend programs are directly linked to the enrollment and attendance of primary school-aged children. Moreover, social mobilization program like home visit, school managing committee, parent-teacher association, mothers gathering creating awareness among the guardians to send their children to school. In addition, NGO run non-formal education especially pre-primary education enhanced enrollment of students in primary schools significantly. Consequently, since 1990 Bangladesh has been achieving a substantial increase in GER, NER and completion rate in Primary schools.

Notwithstanding, government program and huge investment, Bangladesh will not be able to achieve the MDG-2, because poor governance is pervasive in the educational sector of Bangladesh. Corruption, poor quality of teaching-learning process, teacher absenteeism, lack of motivation of teachers, lack of monitoring and supervision, Teacher's involvement in non-teaching activities, poor salary structure and lack of incentives of teachers and lack of community involvement are the most imperative blockade in the development of primary education. A recent investigation found that the much hyped free-primary education is not so free in practice and allocated the TK.3312 crores stipend money has failed to achieve it's basic objective as most of the students from poor and hence deserving families don't get the stipend due to nepotism and corruption by members of the School managing committees (The New Age, 19 March 2008). Moreover, corruption is frequent in teachers transfer, posting, and for every financial benefits of the teachers. Teacher absenteeism is rampant, with teachers placing much greater emphasis on

private tutoring than on teaching at schools. There have been numerous textbook production and procurement scandals over the years, with books that are supposed to be distributed for free showing up for sale in markets. Corruption in procurement has also resulted in poor quality of school construction. Membership of school management committees is rife with politics, and teacher recruitment is often subject to personal influence. These types of governance problems contribute to the poor quality of education in Bangladesh, and undermine the tremendous gains made in expanding access. Reducing teacher absenteeism and making schools accountable to students and the community is no simple task. It requires broad-ranging institutional reform, incorporating, among other things, empowerment of citizens and communities who can hold the state accountable for performance, devolution of administrative and financial powers to communities, greater autonomy to schools, involvement of parents in school management, and ensuring the motivation of front-line workers. Otherwise the goal of achieving MDG-2 will remain dream forever.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summing up the whole discussion we can say that the attributes of the primary education in Bangladesh can be characterized as traditional, government controlled, centralized, mixed, donor driven with least purpose oriented. The *strength* of this system, however, lies in the combination of traditional heritage with the large network of institutions created by government, private sector and non-government initiatives. There also exists a high level of social mobilization for

participation in primary education. In the absence of unified curricula the *weakness* remains, on the other hand, effectively creating a minimum level of competency, quality, and consistent system. As a result, the percentage of completers is below the expected level and competencies vary widely. There also exist great variations in resource availability, allocation and utilization. The non-uniform standards of facilities, low intensity of teachers' commitment and capacity, and absence of community support also create dysfunctional disparity.

Evidence suggests that Bangladesh is making significant progress in increasing gross enrollment rate in primary education in recent years. The progress in net enrollment rate, however, does not necessarily mean successful completion of primary education by all the enrolled students. Enrollment rate needs to be supplemented by the completion rate of enrolled students. For Bangladesh the dropout rate from the stream of primary education is alarmingly high. This means that only one out of two students completes primary education. The majority of the dropout takes place in the first two years. Those who fail to continue beyond second year remain for all practical purposes illiterate. The completion opportunity greatly lies in the continuity of commitment of resources to primary education and a scope for rationalizing the school locations and facilities.

Nevertheless, every individual, regardless of personal socio-economic status and cultural background, has the right to basic education. As primary education forms an important component of the nation's educational development, government has given high priority to this sector. Under the directives of the MDGs, however, Bangladesh is obligated to achieve 100% net

enrollment and 100% completion rate within 2015. Achieving this target is considered to be the biggest challenge and newest frontier in country's struggle for quality education. From the discussion of the previous chapters it has been depicted that the present state of attaining MDG in primary education has following shortcomings:

The Net Enrollment rate has remained stagnant for the recent few years and the completion rate of primary education is increasing very slowly; which is not enough to achieve the MDG within the specified time. Enrollment as recorded in the primary schools of Bangladesh does not imply actual learning. Since primary education is free and promotion to the next higher class is automatic, a name listed in the student register may in some cases be more imaginary than real. Very high dropout makes high gross and net enrolment rates virtually meaningless as indicators of access and participation of children in primary schools suggests. The slowing down of growth of the primary school age-cohort also offers the opportunity to concentrate on quality of education rather than expansion of access. The *threat* is bureaucratic inertia, control of curricular design by interest groups of 'experts', desire for extreme 'uniformity'; lack of competent and creative management at institutional and system level; and politicization of management at institutional and other levels.

Evidence also suggests that there is lot of discrepancy in EMIS data of DPE and HIES data of BBS and the gap between these two data poses a serious question mark on their reliability and credibility. The discrepancy occurs due to the lack of efficiency of data management system, lack of co-ordination and sincerity in data collection and dissemination. DPE official data of *Baseline*

Survey, 2005 did not include the data from Kindergartens, NGO run primary schools, and schools run by various other government organizations. Despite the fact that the Baseline Survey was incomplete by itself, by default this data has been taken as the basis for planning major interventions, such as PEDP II, and setting targets, such as those for the MDGs. This suggests a systemic problem with collecting, analyzing and reporting relevant data and using these for planning and policy-making. Moreover, DPE does not publish the primary education data every year. The websites of the MOPME and DPE don't provide updated data. The unavailability of data of primary education will hamper to take policy and need based strategy for the development of primary education in Bangladesh. Besides the DPE, there is no data management and utilization system in the Upazila Education Office. But for the proper implementation of the sub-sector program like PEDP-II, there should be strategy to achieve the final goal and incremental progress of every year.

There is no particular regional disparity in access and equity in the primary education in Bangladesh, but in some districts the GER, NER and completion rate is extremely low. Focus should be given on both quality and access, child centered approach to education. If the school is not attractive to the children, then the access will be meaning less. The sub-sector program (PEDP II), although labeled as a sector-wide approach, is confined to formal primary education in the public sector. It does not deal with the *madrassa* stream, which is also supported by the government, non-formal approaches of NGOs, and private sector provisions. Although, the mainstream public sector caters to 85% of the children enrolled in primary education, the non-

government providers and the *madrassas* attempt to reach the groups who are at the margin and the most difficult to reach. These are most critical from the point of view of widening access and participation. NGOs are doing a very negligible contribution in formal education; they should have to invest more for formal education as government has to create room for the NGOs in formal primary education.

Primary education in its present form doesn't inspire innovation, adaptation or any kind of economic or social enterprises; neither the teacher nor the taught find much pleasure in it. Coordinated, integrated and comprehensive sub-sector strategy is necessary for the development of primary education. Catchments area of a school should be well defined so that every eligible child can be enrolled in the respective schools and the outsider of the catchments area should not enroll in that school. The teachers would be responsible for the non-enrollment of the eligible student and enrollment of outcast students. Teacher-student ratio should be decreased 1:60 to 1:30. In order to do that the government expenditure on education should be increased from 2.3% of GDP to 3.5% of GDP as more primary teachers are needed to reduce teacher student ratio. Side by side, infrastructure development, increase of teacher's salary to attract meritorious people in this job is also important.

Social mobilization programs, like home visit of absentee students, parents day, mother gathering, informal discussion with students, *uthan boithok* (sitting at the enclosure of a house) and various community involvement program like, School Managing Committee, Parents Teacher Association should be expanded so that every eligible student can be enrolled in the primary

schools. Community involvement with strong grass root link has played, and continues to play a major role in increasing enrollment. Through social mobilization and community involvement program, accountability and transparency of the primary school teachers can be ensured.

To achieve universal primary education by ensuring access to all, would require measures to be taken at the specified age. Mandatory *birth registration*, provisions for school facilities of acceptable quality within easy access for young children, and awareness raising about primary education age regulations are necessary measures for increasing participation of children in primary education within the designated age-range.

It is necessary to implement systematic reform, capacity building and organizational reform at all level, especially at the Upazila, school and community level. Upazila level should be focused as the key unit of every administrative, monitoring, supervision, training and capacity building program. Therefore, decentralization and development of power and decision making to the Upazila, school and community levels wherever appropriate, is essential. Besides, development of the URCs as key outreach and support training institute has similar importance. There is no efficient data management system in the Upazila and District level offices. There are weaknesses in the system of data collection, analysis and reporting, which have provided unreliable estimates for one of the key indicators of performance of the system. A sustained effort as well as a commitment is needed to improve analysis and reporting of data for critical indicators and their use for planning and management. Moreover, weak data management system leads to formulation of weak strategy and policy program. There should be data base and efficient data

management system in each Upazila education office and District primary education office. District Primary Education office and PTIs should be connected to the DPE through online. Additional resources are also required if the MDG targets are to be achieved by Bangladesh within the stipulated time, as government expenditure in education is currently lowest in South Asia (2.3 of GNP, compared to 3.5 regional average). Besides low efficiency, mismanagement and poor governance are the important obstacles to reach the ultimate destination. To achieve 100% net enrollment rate, 100% education completion rate, 0% dropout rate in primary education, Bangladesh will desperately need international assistance both in terms of finance and governance experience.

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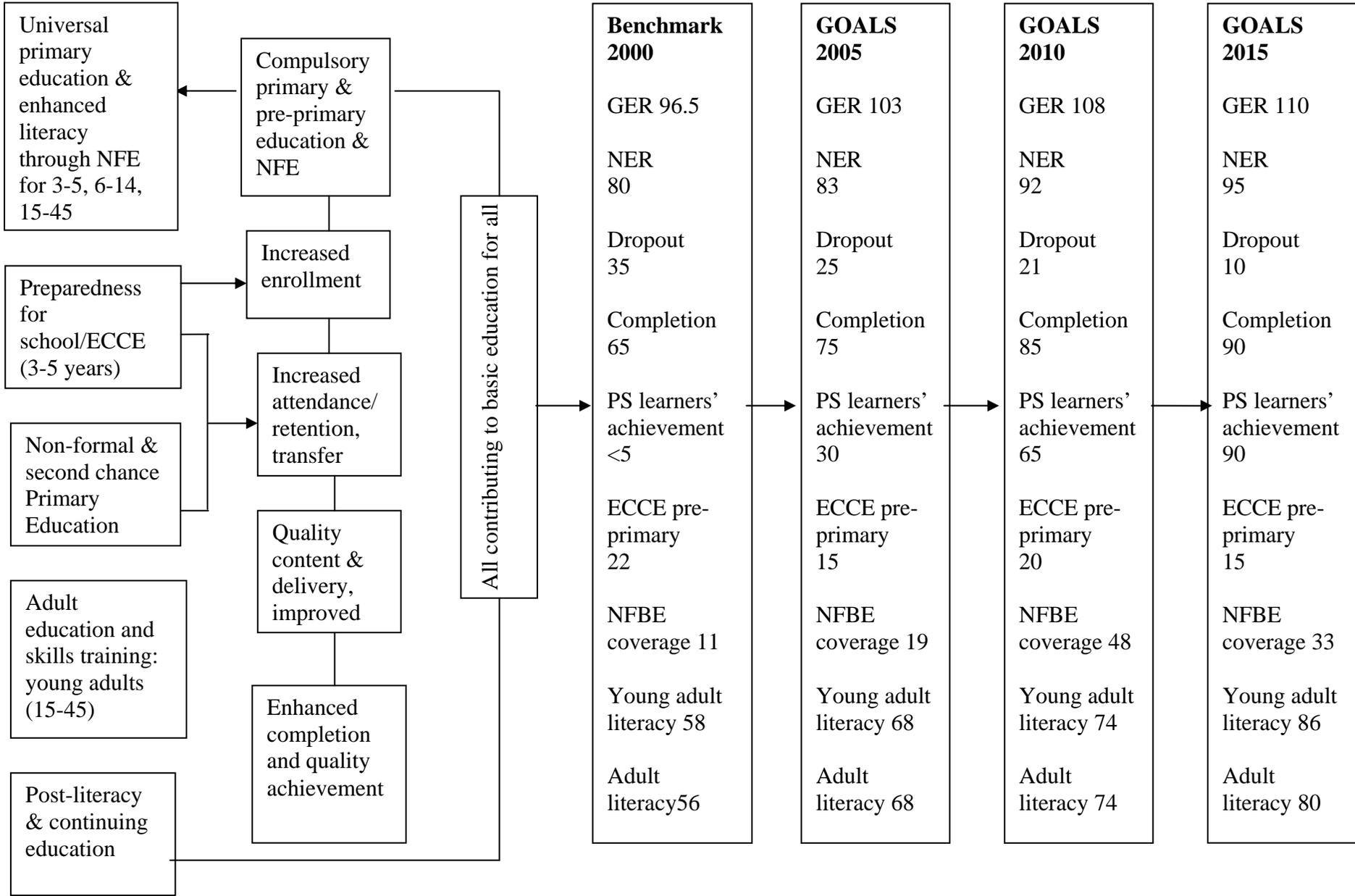
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Appendix 1: Strategic Framework for EFA Targets, 2000-2015
(All figures are in percent) (Source: NPA II)



Appendix 2: Gross enrollment rate in Kotwali Thana, Chittagong

Year	School going children (6+ to 10+)	Students enrolled	Gross Enrollment Rate
2003	16357	21419	130.94
2004	21120	21521	101.89
2005	22587	27228	120.54
2007	15265	24027	156.37

Source: Upazila Education Office, Chittagong Kotwali Thana

Appendix 3: Dropout rate in primary education in Kotwali Thana, Chittagong

Year	Students enrolled in Grade-I-V	Students attained final examination of Grade V	Repetition in final examination of Grade V	Total dropout student	Rate of dropout students (%)
2003	5123	4707	427	416	8.12
2004	5122	4368	780	1534	29
2006	3947	3582	467	549	12
2007	2415	1357	67	554	23

Source: Upazila Education Office, Chittagong Kotwali Thana

Appendix 4: Gross Enrollment Rate in Dagonbhuiyan Upazila

Year	School going children (6+ to 10+)			Students Enrolled			Gross Enrollment Rate (%)		
	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls
2004	37889	18727	19162	35986	17524	18462	94.97	93.57	96.34
2005	41843	21151	20692	40379	19635	20744	96.50	92.83	100.25
2006	39734	19916	19818	38456	19667	18789	96.78	98.74	94.80
2007	39549	19921	19628	37888	19101	18787	95.80	95.88	95.71
2008	39502	19618	19884	37303	18460	18843	94.43	94.09	94.76

Source: Upazila Education Office, Dagonbhuiyan

Appendix 5: Dropout rate in primary education in Dagonbhuiyan Upazila

Year	Rate of dropout students (%)
2003	12.66
2004	28.46
2005	17.00
2006	13.66
2007	17.15

Source : Upazila Education Office, Dagonbhuiyan

Appendix 6: Gross enrollment rate and Net enrollment rate in Primary level (1990-2005)

Year	Primary age group population (6-10 yrs)		Enrollment (All ages)		Population in official age group		Enrollment Rate		Net Enrollment Rate	
	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls
1990	17685462	8481196	11939949	5365316	10696167	4305277	67.51	63.26	60.47	50.76
1991	17689482	8484136	12635419	5725327	10698599	4594160	71.43	67.48	60.48	54.15
1992	17802225	8586794	13166981	5968725	11309754	4901342	73.96	69.51	63.53	57.08
1993	18016465	8690694	14067332	6541470	11795380	5525543	78.08	75.27	65.47	63.58
1994	18182217	8795852	15180680	7132563	12547548	5930163	83.49	81.09	69.01	67.42
1995	18349493	8902281	17280416	8189668	13899741	6575225	94.17	92.00	75.75	73.86
1996	18505701	8998926	17580416	8361058	14525125	7047959	95.00	92.91	78.49	78.32
1997	18861583	9185591	18031673	8666774	15251478	7474315	95.60	94.35	80.63	81.37
1998	19079888	9319338	18360642	8783700	15538661	7730391	96.23	94.25	81.44	82.95
1999	18307265	9012439	17261713	8556712	15328286	7594761	96.23	94.94	83.73	84.27
2000	18296312	8945250	17667985	8635287	1564738	7678103	96.56	96.53	85.52	85.83
2001	18114198	8877769	17659220	8669425	15680666	7719957	97.49	97.65	86.57	86.96
2002	18040023	8885177	17561828	8720181	15637110	7763477	97.35	98.14	86.68	87.38
2003	17592292	8370262	18431320	9072527	16116934	7857578	104.77	108.39	91.61	93.97
2004	17557820	8383470	17953300	8906867	16153194	7892198	102.25	106.24	92.00	94.14
2005	17315296	8446486	16225658	8134437	15098938	7610284	93.71	96.31	87.20	90.10

Source: Bangladesh Education Statistics. BANBEIS. 2006: 21

Appendix 7: Gross enrollment rate and Net enrollment rate from Household Income and Expenditure Survey

Year	GER			NER		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2000	99.7	104.4	102.0	74.0	76.4	75.1
2005	104.51	105.75	105.11	79.42	81.35	80.42

Source: Report of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2000 & 2005

Appendix 8: Divisional variation of Net enrollment rate

	Net Enrollment Ratio		
	87.15	85.28	88.89
	83.13	83.09	83.23
	83.48	82.12	85.1
	81.7	80.7	82.72
	76.4	76.37	76.41
	72.29	72.21	72.19

Source: Report of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2005:85

Appendix 9: Promotion rates by grade and gender in primary education

	Grade									
	I		II		III		IV		V	
	Total	Girls								
1990	73.7	73.9	85.6	81.7	77.5	77.5	81.2	84.2	78.6	82.1
1992	77.5	76.4	87.5	87.0	79.8	79.6	86.4	86.4	86.1	86.7
1994	84.4	84.5	85.9	85.4	82.2	82.5	87.6	87.0	91.6	91.6
1998	86.1	86.8	83.3	85.7	81.2	83.3	86.4	88.0	85.7	88.6
2002	80.7	81.3	81.5	82.4	77.8	79.2	78.7	80.1	88.5	89.0
2003	80.1	81.2	80.6	81.7	77.9	79.7	77.1	78.5	90.7	91.4
2004	79.3	81.0	84.1	84.5	74.8	75.6	75.3	77.2	91.9	92.8

Source: Ahmed, M et al. 2007 : 12.

Appendix 10: Repetition rates by grade and gender in primary education

	Grade									
	I		II		III		IV		V	
	Total	Girls								
1990	4.7	5.1	4.7	5.3	5.1	7.4	5.7	7.8	3.9	6.9
1992	3.5	3.3	4.5	4.6	6.2	5.7	6.6	6.3	5.9	5.4
1994	3.6	3.1	4.1	4.0	5.8	5.4	5.4	5.8	5.4	5.4
1998	2.1	3.2	2.7	4.2	9.1	8.1	8.7	6.0	5.8	4.8
2002	8.2	8.0	7.0	6.9	9.8	9.7	8.6	8.4	5.8	5.5
2003	7.5	7.3	6.7	6.6	8.6	8.4	7.6	7.4	4.7	4.4
2004	7.6	7.4	7.4	7.1	10.4	9.9	8.6	8.3	5.5	4.6

Source: Ahmed, M et al. 2007 : 12.

Appendix 11: Dropout rates by grade and gender in primary education

	Grade									
	I		II		III		IV		V	
	Total	Girls								
1990	21.6	21.0	9.7	13.0	17.4	15.1	13.1	8.0	17.5	11.0
1992	19.0	20.3	8.0	8.4	14.0	14.7	7.0	7.3	8.0	7.9
1994	12.0	12.4	10.0	10.6	12.0	12.1	7.0	7.2	3.0	3.0
1998	11.8	10.0	14.0	10.1	9.7	8.6	4.9	6.0	8.4	6.6
2002	11.1	10.7	11.5	10.7	12.4	11.1	12.7	11.5	5.7	5.5
2003	12.4	11.5	12.7	11.7	13.5	11.9	15.3	14.1	4.6	4.2
2004	13.1	11.6	8.5	8.4	14.8	14.5	16.1	14.5	2.6	2.6

Source: Ahmed, M et al. 2007 : 12.

Appendix 12: Cycle (Cohort) Dropout rate

	ort) Dropout rate
	60.00
	57.00
	54.00
	54.00
	54.00
	53.30
	51.00
	49.90
	49.60
	48.30
	47.20
	46.40
	49.40
	48.00

Source: Ahmed, M et al. 2007 : 14.

Appendix 13: Co-efficient of efficiency and Survival rate in Primary education in Bangladesh.

	t of efficiency	Rate
	51.6	55.3
	61.1	46.0
	54.5	62.5
	53.4	62.0
	59.9	48.0
	59.7	55.5
	60.1	60.6
	60.3	63.6
	64.5	53.1
	61.9	62.8
	61.9	63.1
	63.5	57.2
	62.2	53.3
	62.6	53.5

Source: Ahmed, M et al. 2007 :15

