

1. Introduction

In Bangladesh, the key to achieving high rates of economic growth, and at the same time ensuring that the fruits of economic growth are equitably shared by her population lies in development and utilisation of her human resources, the only resource Bangladesh has in abundance. Education therefore has always been recognised as a priority sector by all governments that assumed office since her independence. With a view to providing the newly elected government with an agenda to work on, in 2001, under the auspices of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, a Task Force specifically convened for the said purpose, produced, through a participatory process involving presentation of draft reports at a Regional Workshop held at Comilla, and subsequently at a National Forum held in Dhaka, a Policy Brief on Education that put forward a set of policy recommendations for implementation during the five year term of the government on the basis of an analytical review of the education sector that not only identified the key issues confronting the education sector, but also suggested ways and means to address the same. The objective of the current exercise is to review what has happened since then, and what more needs to be done during the remaining term of the present government. Section 2 presents highlights of the analytical review. Section 3 presents the key issues that need to be addressed. Section 4 presents in a tabular form actions taken/proposed by the government against action points suggested by the Task Force. Concluding observations have been presented in the final section

2. Highlights of an Analytical Review of the Education Sector in Bangladesh

2.1 The Education Sector of Bangladesh: Structure, Management and Budgeting

2.1.1 Structure

The education system in Bangladesh is characterised by co-existence of three separate streams. The mainstream happens to be a vernacular based secular education system carried over from the colonial past. There also exists a separate religious system of education. Finally, based on use of English as the medium of instruction, another stream of education, modelled after the British education system, using the same curriculum, has rapidly grown in the metropolitan cities of Bangladesh.

However diverse the above streams may apparently look, they have certain common elements, and there exists scope for re-integration of graduates of one stream with the other at different levels.

2.1.2 Management

Pre-primary education, generally recognised as a useful stage of education to smoothen the transition from home to an institutional environment and thereby contributing to reduced drop out rates at primary level has so long remained outside the purview of official education policy of Bangladesh. Its management therefore lies at present exclusively in the hands of the schools imparting such education and some NGOs running such schools. The Education Policy 2000 did however recognise the need for pre-primary education and recommended its gradual introduction to 5+ children in primary schools with a view to universalising one-year pre-primary education by the year 2005.

As provision of universal compulsory primary education has been recognised by the Constitution of Bangladesh as a state responsibility, the government has assumed direct responsibility of the management of primary education in Bangladesh, particularly in the wake of enactment of Compulsory Primary Education Act in 1990.

The overall responsibility of management of primary education lies with the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (PMED) . While the Ministry is involved in formulation of policies, the responsibility of implementation of the same rests with the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) headed by a Director General. The different tiers of administration such as Divisions, Districts and Upazilas are manned by Deputy Directors, District Primary Education Officers (DPEO) and Upazila Education Officers (UEO) respectively. UEOs are assisted by a number of AUEOs each in charge of a cluster of primary schools. At the school level, there exist School Management Committees (SMC) formed as per government directives with certain well defined functions, and Parent Teachers Associations (PTA) playing a supportive role in building favourable teaching-learning environment in schools.

The Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) and its subordinate offices in the district and upazila are solely responsible for management and supervision of primary education. Their responsibilities include recruitment, posting, and transfer of teachers and other staff; arranging in-service training of teachers; and distribution of free text books, and supervision of schools.

The responsibility of school construction, repair and supply of school furniture lies with the Facilities Department (FD) of the Ministry of Education, and Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

The National Curriculum and Text Book Board (NCTB) is responsible for the development of curriculum and production of textbooks.

While the Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for formulation of policies, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) under the Ministry of Education is responsible for implementing the same at secondary and higher education levels.

The NCTB is responsible for developing curriculum, and publishing standard textbooks.

Six region based Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) are responsible for conducting the two public examinations, S.S.C.(Secondary School Certificate) and H.S.C.(Higher Secondary Certificate), in addition to granting recognition to non-government secondary schools.

DSHE is divided into eight zones, each in charge of a Deputy Director assisted by two Inspectors, and two Assistant Inspectors. District Offices are headed by the District Education Officers (DEO).

There exist three different levels of supervision. BISEs are responsible for accreditation of non-government secondary schools. However, because of lack of inspection capacity, the work is delegated to Zonal Inspectors and DEOs. The Directorate of Inspection and Audit of MOE with a small manpower of 24 Inspectors is responsible for periodic qualitative and quantitative evaluation of non-government schools. Each zone has two Inspectors and two Assistant Inspectors to inspect all schools covered by the zones.

At the school level, in case of non-government secondary schools, School Management Committees (SMC), and at the intermediate college level in case of non-government colleges, Governing Bodies (GB), formed as per government directives, are responsible for mobilising resources, approving budgets, controlling expenditures; and appointing and disciplining staff.

In government secondary schools there does not exist any SMC. The Head Master is solely responsible for running the school and is supervised by the Deputy Director of the respective zone. PTAs however exist essentially for ensuring a better teaching learning environment.

In NGO run schools also there does not exist any SMC. The style of management differs depending upon differences in policies pursued by different NGOs. Some are centrally managed within a highly bureaucratic set up while others enjoy considerable autonomy.

Teachers of non-government secondary schools, until May, 2003, were recruited by concerned SMCs observing certain government rules. According to a recent notification by the Ministry of Education, all teachers of non-government educational institutions, henceforth would have to be recruited from a panel prepared by a committee set up at the district level that is headed by the Deputy Commissioner with DEO serving as its Member Secretary. Teachers of government secondary schools are recruited centrally by the DSHE through a competitive examination. Different NGOs pursue different policies regarding recruitment of teachers. Some NGOs prepare a panel of prospective teachers on the basis of a rigorous test, and recruit teachers from the above panel, while some NGOs recruit teachers from the locally available interested persons, rather informally.

The Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) is responsible for planning, development and implementation of technical and vocational education in the country.

Universities in Bangladesh are autonomous bodies administered by statutory bodies such as Syndicate, Senate, Academic Council etc. in accordance with provisions laid down in their respective Acts.

2.1.3 Budgeting

Education in Bangladesh is basically state financed. Government allocations to the education sector out of its revenue and development budgets primarily finance educational expenditures. Given the low revenue / GDP ratio, the government however is heavily dependent on external sources for financing its development budget. External aid finances more than 50 percent of government development expenditures on education.

The full costs of government primary schools are borne by the government. The government also pays 90 percent of base teacher salaries of non-government registered primary schools. Besides, the non-government schools also receive grants from the government for repair of school building. The Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) decides which school to receive grant and disburses the money. Students in both government and non-government registered schools receive free textbooks.

Virtually, the full costs of government secondary schools are borne by the government as the students pay only a nominal fee. The non-government secondary schools also receive substantial support from the government. The government pays 90 percent of basic salaries, house rent and medical allowances to teachers appointed against sanctioned

posts of all recognised non-government secondary schools. In addition, the government provides occasional grants for construction and maintenance, teacher training at training institutes, and also stipend to female students of classes VI to X. Student fees and income from other sources meet the remaining resource needs.

Although the government virtually bears the full costs of government primary and secondary schools, and also provides free text books to primary school students, there still remain other costs such as uniforms, educational supplies, transportation, etc. Those still have to be borne by the parents. Moreover, in a country like Bangladesh, where nearly half the population live below poverty line, the opportunity cost of education in terms of foregone income that could be derived from child labour is not insignificant. The government therefore had to intervene with programmes like Primary Education Stipend Project and Stipend for Girl Students at secondary schools.

Public universities, which charge nominal tuition fees from the students, are almost entirely state financed. Private universities on the other hand receive no financial support from the government, and run their academic programmes charging high tuition fees from their students.

Total public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP steadily increased from 1973-80 average of 0.9% to 2.4% in 1994-95, but since then has been showing a downward trend, falling to 2.30% in 2000-01 and 2.21% in 2001-02. Trend in the allocation to education in the revenue budget also indicates a downward trend, its share falling from 19.5% of total revenue budget in 1994-95 to 15.9% in 2002-3. In case of development budget also, a similar trend may be noted. Education's share fell from 13.6% in 1994-95 to 12.9% in 2001-02. Allocation for education in the total government budget declined from 16.4% in 1994-95 to 15% in 2001-02. (PEDP II, 2002)

In 2001-02, the shares of primary & mass education, secondary & higher education, technical education, and university education were 38.2%, 50.3%, 1.2% and 7.8% respectively of the government revenue budget. The shares of primary education, secondary education, college(general) education, and madrasah education were 36.6%, 24.5%, 14.0% and 11.9% respectively. In the development budget, the shares of primary & mass education, secondary & higher education, technical education and university education were 57.2%, 33.8%, 4.3% and 4.5% respectively. (BANBEIS, Publication No.350)

In 200-2001, by type of educational institutions, per student recurring costs (in Taka) were as follows:-

Government Primary School	1090
Government Secondary School	4196
Non-government Secondary Schools	1057
Government Madrasah	5060
Non-government Madrasah	1329
Government College	4348
Non-government College	2998

Technical and Vocational	16390
University (public)	36368

(BANBEIS, Publication No.350)

It may be noted that per student allocation of revenue budget has generally been considerably higher for government educational institutions compared to non-government educational institutions; and madrasahs received relatively higher allocation per student.

A look into the composition of public current expenditures on education reveals that teacher salaries in government educational institutions, and grants for salary subvention for non-government educational institutions together accounted for the lion's share leaving hardly any amount for quality improvement measures.

Development expenditures on education are spent largely on building physical facilities including renovation of damaged institutions.

Reflected by the stable shares of different sub-sectors in the education budget for different years, revenue expenditures appear to be set by precedent rather than rational planning and tend to follow the previous year's pattern. Development expenditures however, show large variations in sub-sectoral shares, primarily due to varying commitments of donor and lending agencies (World Bank, 1999).

Budgetary allocations towards O & M for primary schools are a fixed small amount and bear no relationship to actual needs.

There exist well-defined guidelines for allocation of teacher subvention payments to non-government schools. Entitlement of a school for subvention payment is subject to satisfying certain conditions e.g. receipt of government recognition; recruitment of teachers as per specified rules; enrolment of a minimum number of students; use of government approved curriculum; acceptance of government approved accounts and audit system; satisfactory student performance in examinations; and the presence of a properly constituted School Management Committees. Every month all teachers of a school jointly submit a bill for their salary duly approved by the Chairman and Member-Secretary (the headmaster) and the salaries are paid directly to teachers' accounts in a designated nationalised commercial bank.

In case of government schools, DSHE places funds directly to the schools. The Head Master serves as the drawing and disbursing officer. The schools charge tuition fees at a nominal rate fixed by the government, which are deposited with the Government Treasury. For meeting other expenditures, the schools charge an annual fee, and a tiffin fee for supplying tiffin to students. The school authorities enjoy some degree of autonomy in charging the above fees.

2.2 Profiles of Different Components of the Education Sector in Bangladesh

2.2.1 Primary Education

Substantial progress has been made in improving the access of children to primary education. Enrolment increased from 12.5 million in 1990 to 17.7 million in 2001. Over this period, while the number of government primary schools remained unchanged at around 37700, the number of non-government primary schools including community

schools increased from around 9600 to around 40500. The sharp increase in non-government schools has been primarily in response to meeting unmet needs for primary education, in the wake of enactment of Compulsory Primary Education Act in 1990 as local communities organised their own schools. NGOs also played an active role in promoting education in poor villages without schools. Of total enrolment of 17.7 million in 2001, the government primary schools accounted for 10.8 million.

The Fifth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) that accorded highest priority to primary education set a target of achieving gross enrolment rate of 110 percent, and net enrolment rate of 95 percent by the year 2002 (Planning Commission, 1998). A nation wide survey conducted by CAMPE in 2000 revealed that although high level of gross enrolment rate had already been achieved (108 percent for both sexes, 107 percent for girls, and 108 percent for boys), net enrolment rate lagged much behind, at 79.8 percent only (79.9 percent for girls and 79.8 percent for boys). Thus, in 2000, about 20 percent children, 6-10 years of age, did not have access to primary education. Marked regional variation in net enrolment rate was observed. With 90.9 percent net enrolment rate (88.5 percent for boys and 93.5 percent for girls) Rural Khulna Division led while Rural Sylhet Division lagged behind with 75.7 percent (76.4 percent for boys and 74.9 percent for girls). (CAMPE-UPL, 2002).

Enrolment rates significantly varied by socio-economic groups as well. A sizeable number of children from very poor households were never enrolled in primary schools, and many of those enrolled dropped out before completing the full five year cycle as their families depended on child labour for survival. Although there has been some reduction in drop out rate, it still remained quite high, estimated by CAMPE at 24.3 percent in 1999-2000. Drop out rates for girls, boys, rural students and urban students were 23.8 percent, 26.5 percent, 26.2 percent and 21.2 percent respectively. Needless to mention that drop out rate was significantly higher amongst children from poorer households. Drop out rate significantly varied by school type- 17.4 percent in non-formal schools to 36.6 percent in madrasahs. Government primary schools had a drop out rate of 23.9 percent.

In order to improve the access of children of poorer households to primary education, and also for reducing the drop out rate amongst them, in 1993-94, an innovative scheme called the Food for Education Programme that provided up to 15 kilograms of wheat to land less very poor households for sending their children regularly to schools was introduced in 460 economically and educationally backward Unions . By 1999-2000, its coverage expanded to 17403 schools in 1247 Unions benefiting 2.3 million students belonging to 2.2 million households (GOB, 2001). In the remaining 3208 Unions a stipend programme for students from the poorer households was introduced in April, 2000. Under this programme, the poorest 40 percent students are provided with a stipend valued at Tk. 25 per month. In FY 2000-2001, the programme benefited 3.2 million students at a cost of Tk. 1420 million. The food for education programme has recently been replaced by a new project called Primary Education Stipend Project. At a cost of Tk. 6629.5 million, to be implemented over 2002/3—2006/7 period, this project will cover all primary students coming from poor households, and pay their parents @ Tk. 100 per child/ Tk. 125 for more than one child, for sending them regularly to schools.

Despite considerable improvement in drop out rate, from 38 percent in 1995 to 24.3 percent in 2000, repetition rate however remained quite high, at 39.9 percent, according to CAMPE. That means, on the average, a child needed 6.6 years to complete the 5-year primary education cycle. Repetition rate also markedly varied by school type, from 17.0 percent in non-formal schools to 46.8 percent in madrasahs, with government primary schools having a repetition rate of 37.5 percent. Girls had a lower repetition rate, 38.3 percent compared to boys with 41.4 percent. The urban students had a lower repetition rate, 32.7 percent compared to 41.4 percent in case of rural students.

Attendance rate at 57.8 percent could hardly be called satisfactory. Girls had a higher attendance rate of 59.7 percent compared to 57.1 percent for boys. Rural students, both boys and girls, had lower attendance rates compared to their urban counterparts.

Significant improvement in 'quantity' as indicated by increased enrolment rate, and reduced drop out rate were not however matched by improvement in 'quality'. The objective of primary education being development of basic competencies i.e. learning (language and numeracy) and life skills (including values and attitude) amongst children so as to enable them effectively pursue further education/active and productive life in society, in order to throw light on quality of education received by children passing through the primary education, they were assessed for basic competencies. The CAMPE Survey found that in 1998 only 29 percent of children could satisfy the minimum levels in all four competency areas, viz. reading, writing, numeracy, and life skills/knowledge. Compared to 27 percent in 1993, the above finding no doubt indicates to some improvement in the quality of primary education, but it still remained at a deplorably low level.

The CAMPE Survey found considerable regional variation in learning achievement, and also by gender, rural-urban residence, and type of schools. Boys performed better than girls. Children from urban areas did better than their rural counterparts. The level of basic education was the highest in Khulna, and lowest in Chittagong.. Students studying in the primary section of secondary schools showed the best performance. It was also observed that with increase in the level of education, and economic status of parents that allowed access to private coaching and different types of communication, students' performance improved.

The CAMPE Survey also found that although there has been some improvement in learning achievement of primary students over the period 1993-98, such improvement was confined to rural areas only as a declining trend was observed in the urban areas.

A more recent survey by CAMPE that focused particularly on quality of education at the primary level revealed that only 1.6 percent of all students completing primary education were able to acquire all the 27 competencies tested.(CAMPE, 2001)

Limited number of contact hours-daily school time of 120 minutes for classes I- II, and 240 minutes for classes III-V, and total class hours in a year being 3840 against an international average of 5367; high student-teacher ratios increasing over time due to surge in enrolment; over crowding of class rooms; and poor motivation of teachers burdened with many non-academic and non school responsibilities assigned to them encroaching upon their limited school hours are some of the recognised causes of poor quality of primary education in Bangladesh.

2.2.2 Secondary and Higher Secondary Education

The marked increase enrolment and completion rates at primary level during the nineties significantly increased the enrolment rates at the secondary level. Enrolment in secondary schools (including junior secondary schools) increased from 5.1 million in 1995 to 7.6 million in 2000 i.e. by 49.5 percent. Over the same period the number of schools also increased from 12012 to 15720, i.e. by 30.9 percent. In 2001, total enrolment at secondary level stood at 7.9 million in 16166 schools. Gross enrolment rate increased from 34.85 percent (33.33 percent for girls) in 1996 to 41.26 percent (44.57 percent for girls) in 1999, which clearly indicates to an improvement in access to secondary education particularly for girls, thanks to introduction of a Stipend Programme for Girls studying at secondary schools. In 2001, net enrolment rate at junior secondary level was 50.23 percent (54.28 percent for girls). At secondary level it dropped down to 32.33 percent (32.88 percent for girls), and at higher secondary level, net enrolment rate sharply dropped down to 14.04 percent (10.73 percent for girls).

One may notice significant regional variation in gross enrolment rate at secondary level - ranging from 57.40 percent in Barisal Division to only 28.69 percent in Sylhet Division. (BANBEIS, 2001).

The improvement in access to secondary education has however been shared inequitably as UNDP Human Development Report points out, " the bottom 20 percent (of families) receive only 6 percent of the benefits of secondary education; the top 20 percent receive 35 percent of the benefits." This has been because, non school costs for uniform, transportation, especially private coaching on top of tuition fees, raising cost of schooling significantly serve as effective barriers to access of children from poorer families to secondary education.

Another reason for relatively poorer access to secondary education by children from poor families is that the secondary schools mostly belonging to the private sector had not been set up on the basis of any school mapping exercise. Backward and poorer regions might not be served by any secondary school at all whereas in prosperous regions there might have been a proliferation of non-viable sub-standard schools.

In 2001, drop out rates at Junior Secondary, Secondary and Higher Secondary levels were 19.8 percent (17.2 percent for girls), 52.9 percent (54.8 percent for girls) and 42.7 (41.5 percent for girls) respectively. (BANBEIS, Publication No. 350). Repetition rates in 1999 were 10.5 percent at junior secondary (8.0 percent for girls), and 15.1 percent at secondary (14.3 percent) levels respectively.

Quality of secondary education defined as learning achievements during the secondary level may be ascertained at the exit point on the basis of results of the S.S.C. examination. Unfortunately however, for a variety of reasons e.g. (i) subvention payment to non-government schools depending on school's performance in the S.S.C. examination, quite often a sizeable number of students are not sent up lest they fare badly; (ii) for the same reason many teachers serving as Invigilators at different examination centres often facilitate and encourage copying by the examinees; (iii) the examination itself is fraught with problems -emphasises memorisation of factual information rather than testing analytical capability; (iv) heavy reliance on private

coaching prior to S.S.C. examination, the S.S.C. results hardly reflect the learning achievements of students.

Even if S.S.C. results are accepted as an indicator of quality of secondary education, the high rates of failures in S.S.C. examinations reflect poor quality of education imparted at the secondary level. In 2001, the percentage of pass was 35 only. Relatively higher failure rates in English and Mathematics indicate to gross deficiency in teaching of these subjects at secondary schools.

Introduction of a second shift in many government and non-government secondary schools, particularly in cities, led to reduction in contact hours to only four and a half per school day. Increasing student-teacher ratios in many schools due to fast growth of secondary enrolment; stringent government regulations relating to sanctioning of teaching posts (one post is sanctioned to a class of 60 students, and a second position is not sanctioned unless the class size reaches 120); inadequate physical infra-structural facilities; faulty recruitment (recruitment of teachers with expertise having little relevance to teaching at school level); too few inspections; and above all, generally poor academic qualifications, training and motivation of teachers are some of the recognised causes of poor quality of education at secondary level. The National Education Survey (Post-Primary) 1999 conducted by BANBEIS revealed that 61.24% of all teachers of secondary schools attained their highest academic certificate/degree in 3rd Division/Class, and only 2.51% attained their highest academic certificate/degree in first Division/Class. Only 37.3% of all teachers of secondary schools were trained.

Two-year higher secondary education is imparted in intermediate colleges and intermediate sections of degree colleges. In 1998-99, students enrolled for higher secondary education numbered 9,75,670 (2,68,584 in 1130 intermediate colleges, and 7,77,086 in 816 degree colleges). Only 284 colleges (including 255 degree colleges) belonged to the public sector while the rest were non-government colleges. The share of female enrolment in total enrolment at intermediate colleges increased from 42.37 percent in 1997 to 47.49 percent in 1999 indicating an improvement in the access of girls to higher secondary education.

The quality of education as reflected by the results of H.S.C. examinations seem rather ambiguous and raises serious doubts about the examination system. In 1996, the pass percentage was 24.77 only, whereas in 1999, it more than doubled reaching 53.45 percent for reasons not known.

2.2.3 Madrasah Education

In 2001, there operated 7651 Madrasahs offering post primary education in Bangladesh. Total enrolment was 1808586 of which 839184 were girls. 81,300 teachers taught at Madrasahs, of which 3,428 were females. Rural areas accounted for the lion's share in total Madrasah enrolment (91.49 percent in 1999). Compared to secondary schools, the Madrasahs seemed to have a relatively better qualified teaching staff. Of all teachers, majority, 50.58% attained their highest academic certificate/degree in second Division/Class. Majority teachers (61.24%) of secondary schools attained their highest academic qualification in 3rd. Division/Class. Only 7.3% of Madrasah teachers were however trained, compared to 37.3% in case of secondary school teachers. There existed only 3 Madrasahs in the public sector offering education upto "kamil" i.e. Masters level.

All other Madrasahs belonged to the private sector, of which 692 (9.72%) were exclusively for girls.

Over the period 1983-1999, at secondary level Madrasah education registered high rate of growth. Number of Dakhil Madrasahs registered an annual growth rate of 7.04% compared to 2%, and 3.95% in case of junior secondary and secondary schools respectively. Over the same period, annual growth rate of enrolment had been 14.1%, 5.25%, and 7.34% in case of Dakhil Madrasah, Junior Secondary, and Secondary schools respectively. Number of Madrasahs increased from 5790 in 1990 to 5974 in 1995 i.e. by 3.2 percent, but over 1995-2000 period the growth in number of Madrasahs had been to the extent of 21.8 percent as the number of Madrasahs increased to 7276 in 2000. Education imparted in the above Madrasah education sector is a blend of both secular education taught at the general stream, and religious education.

Madrasah Education Board is responsible for conducting all public examinations-Dakhil, Alim, Fazil, and Kamil Examinations, and the pass percentage at the above examinations in 1998 were 64.88, 52.94, 78.56, and 85.79 respectively. The same year the pass percentage at S.S.C. examination was 47.96. In 2001, pass percentages in Dakhil, Alim, Fazil and Kamil examinations were 48.00, 35.80, 41.31 and 82.60 respectively. The wide fluctuation observed in pass percentages indicates to deficiencies in the examination system.

Although equivalence of different levels of Madrasah and general education have already been established that allows movement of students from one stream to another, as Madrasah graduates are yet to be allowed to sit for the B.C.S Examination, the nation does not benefit from the services of the Madrasah graduates at certain levels, and there occurs a sharp drop in enrolment, particularly from Fazil to Kamil level. Enrolment at different levels of Madrasah education in 1998 were, 9,40,055 in Ebtedayee Madrasahs i.e. at primary level, 11,98,500 in Dakhil Madrasahs i.e. at Junior and Secondary level, 3,34,250 in Alim Madrasahs i.e. at Higher Secondary level, 2,94,900 in Fazil Madrasahs i.e. at under-graduate level, and 46,000 at Kamil Madrasahs i.e. at graduate level.

In addition to the above government recognized and state supported Madrasah education stream there also exists a separate stream known as Qawmi/Kharezi Madrasah stream which imparts only religious education, essentially in a non formal manner. About the size of this sector i.e. number of institutions and enrolment, and also about their activities and sources of finance very little however is known.

2.2.4 Education at Degree Colleges

In 2001, there operated in Bangladesh 868 (726 in the private sector) colleges offering degree (pass) courses, 75 colleges (20 in the private sector) offering honours courses and 83 colleges (40 in the private sector) offering Masters courses. Thus majority of colleges offering degree (pass) courses belonged to the private sector whereas majority of colleges offering honours and masters courses belonged to the public sector. Student enrollment at degree pass, honours and Masters levels in 2001 were 843121 (303678 females), 94747 (33260 females), and 266279 (93633 females) respectively

Colleges suffer from inadequate infra-structural facilities (libraries and laboratories), and lack of qualified teachers. Even at government colleges offering honours and Masters

courses there exist acute shortage of teachers as 4000 posts at government colleges remain vacant at present. Nationalization of private colleges resulted in absorption of many teachers with poor academic qualification in the education service. Obviously quality teaching is not expected from such teachers even at government colleges. With the exception of a few reputed private colleges, most private colleges particularly those operating in rural areas are poorly staffed. As a result, the vast majority of students passing HSC examination every year, who have no other opportunity but to study in these colleges, receive in most cases extremely poor quality education. The low pass percentage in degree (pass) courses, 35.46 percent in 2000 is a reflection of the above.

2.2.5 University Education

In 2001, in Bangladesh 13 public and 23 private universities were observed to be operating with a total enrolment of 92562 in public universities, and 27245 in private universities. Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna Universities accounted for the bulk of enrolment in public universities with 22616, 23568 and 12534 students respectively whereas leading universities in terms of enrolment in the private sector were Asian University, North South University, University of Asia Pacific and Independent University of Bangladesh, with 5824, 3213, 2176 and 2163 students respectively. Teacher-student ratios in public and private universities were 1:34, and 1:12 respectively.

Because of limited number of seats in public universities, and high tuition fees charged by the private universities, access to university education is rather limited in Bangladesh.

Private universities with a limited number of full time faculty members depend heavily on part-time teachers drawn primarily from public universities, which adversely affect quality of education in those universities. With a few notable exceptions, most private universities impart education of uncertain quality, and mentioned earlier, because of high tuition fees charged by such institutions, they cater to only the affluent sections in the society. Public universities, primarily dependent on limited government funding shrinking in real terms, unable to generate additional resources by raising tuition fees due to political constraints, are hardly in a position to improve their quality of education through greater investment in libraries and laboratories. Moreover, many democratic provisions of the University Acts such as those related to electing Deans, Vice Chancellors, Syndicate and Senate members, by keeping a large number of teachers always busy in active politics, and in election related activities, not only encroach upon the limited teaching time of the faculty members but also fail to ensure accountability of the teachers as those responsible for ensuring discipline have to depend on votes of the delinquent teachers for maintaining their positions, that contributes to lengthening of session jams - a unique feature of public universities in Bangladesh. Moreover, as it happens quite often, 'voters', not 'teachers' are recruited that adversely affect the quality of university education.

Another serious problem confronted in university education of Bangladesh is the tradition of active participation of students in national politics as members of student fronts of the major political parties. Inter and intra party feuds leading to violent clashes not only vitiate the academic environment in the campus, but also quite often result in significant loss of academic time that contributes to lengthening of session jams.

As there hardly exists any linkage between public universities on the one hand, and employers and the job market on the other, many university graduates, produced at considerable cost to the society, (public universities being almost entirely state financed with little sharing of costs by the beneficiaries), have to remain unemployed for a considerable period of time before they find employment often in areas outside their fields of study. Private universities on the other hand remain confined only to a few disciplines that have high market demand.

2.2.6 Technical Education

The need for technical and vocational education in enhancing productivity of labour through skill formation can hardly be over emphasised. Until mid nineties, vocational education in Bangladesh was imparted in 51 Vocational Training Institutes (VTI) operated by the Ministry of Education, and 11 Technical Training Centres (TTC) run by the Ministry of Labour and Employment. As indicated by different studies, vocational education imparted in these institutions could hardly play an effective role in producing adequate number of skilled workers for our industries. In addition to the above government institutions, several NGOs and private institutions are also engaged in producing skilled workers. Given the total needs of skilled manpower in the country however the capacity of the above institutions seems much too inadequate .

The main problem with technical education in Bangladesh is lack of linkages to employers and the job market. Employers complain that the training institutions do not produce skills they require. The rigid and highly centralised training system limits the possibilities of capitalising on local responsibilities and initiatives. Technical education being quite expensive, as the government has to shoulder the entire financial burden, the beneficiaries-students and enterprises sharing no cost at all, equipment and consumable supplies remain chronically under financed adversely affecting the quality of technical education in the country.

Since mid nineties, in order to promote vocational education alongside general education, at secondary level, S.S.C. (Vocational) Course has been introduced in a number of non government secondary schools, funded entirely by government's own resources in the absence of necessary donor support. Different studies indicate that the programme enjoyed considerable support at local level, as people think that exposure to vocational education would contribute to generating interest in manual work besides acquisition of higher levels of skill. There however exists serious reservation about whether the above programme would at all be able to contribute to producing skills employable in industries particularly in the absence of adequately skilled instructors at the school level and curriculum acceptable to employers, and lack of necessary training materials.

3. Key Issues that Need to be Addressed

Based on the above discussion, for improved functioning of the education sector with a view to enhancing its role in promoting growth with equity in Bangladesh, the CPD Task Force on Education Policy has identified the following as key issues that need to be addressed during the next term of the government. The issues of access, equity and quality however being intertwined have to be looked at in totality in an integrated manner, and the strategies to address them must also look at the key areas simultaneously, not in a piecemeal fashion.

3.1 Primary Education

3.1.1 Access

Since provision of universal primary education has been recognised by the Bangladesh Constitution as a state responsibility, and Compulsory primary Education Law has already been enacted towards that end, it is extremely important to find ways and means to bring all school age children to primary schools.

CAMPE Survey conducted in 2001 found that the net enrolment at primary education in Bangladesh was around 80 percent. That means, in 2001, 20 percent of all children of Bangladesh aged 6-10 did not have access to primary education.

3.1.2 Equity

Those left out included the working children from extremely poor households, physically and mentally handicapped, urban slum dwellers, residents of inaccessible rural areas, tribals, adivasis etc.

3.1.3 Quality

There exists at present no mechanism for assessing learning achievement at primary level. A nation wide survey conducted by CAMPE found that in 1998, only 29 percent of primary students achieved certain basic competencies. Although it was slightly higher compared to 27 percent achieved in 1993, it can hardly be called satisfactory. Even this slight improvement was confined only to rural areas, as quality of primary education registered a marked decline in urban areas. Children from poorer families obviously suffered most from the above declining standard of education in urban primary schools. The 2000 Survey of CAMPE found that only 1.6 percent of all children completing primary education acquired all 27 competencies tested.

3.1.4 Relevance

Although by effecting necessary reforms in the curriculum of primary education, it was possible to widen the scope for primary education to play an increasingly important role in the national economy, failure to significantly improve its quality has contributed little to enhance its relevance.

3.1.5 Efficiency

Although the drop out rate came down significantly in recent years, to 24.3 percent in 2001, it still remains quite high. The CAMPE Survey revealed that the average attendance at schools was 57.8 percent only. 39.9 percent students repeated their courses. As a result it took 6.6 years to complete the five year course. All these indicate to poor efficiency of the system.

3.2 Secondary Education

3.2.1 Access

In a world of global market competition, the secondary level has become part of basic education that should be universally available. In Bangladesh, however, as most secondary schools belong to the private sector operating generally on commercial considerations, while prosperous regions experience a proliferation of such schools, many

poor regions remain totally un-served by any secondary school that acts as an effective barrier to access of children to secondary education. Net enrolment ratios at 50.23 percent, 32.33 percent, and 14.04 percent at junior secondary, secondary, and higher secondary levels respectively in 2001 can hardly be called satisfactory. Although gender disparity has significantly been removed up to secondary level, thanks to the stipend programme for girls, girls' enrolment at higher secondary level is considerably lower compared to boys'. At junior secondary level on the other hand boys' enrolment rate is lower compared to girls'. The key issue therefore is how to significantly improve access of children to secondary education, and at the same time remove all existing gender disparities at different levels of secondary education.

3.2.2 Equity

The problem of equity is worse compared to primary education. Tuition fees and other costs (for school uniform, text books, transport, private coaching etc) of secondary education including considerable opportunity costs serve as effective barriers to access for children from poorer households. Moreover, at this level of education, the social divide also gets prominently displayed. An elite mostly English medium system that functions with a degree of efficiency, and a mass system (bifurcated into a secular stream and a religious stream), considered largely dysfunctional are observed to coexist.

3.2.3 Quality

Quality of education as reflected by performance of students at public examinations can hardly be called satisfactory. In 2001, nearly two thirds of all students who sat for the S.S.C. Examination failed.

3.2.4 Relevance

Both in adequately preparing the students for higher education, and for meeting the manpower needs of the economy, secondary education in Bangladesh could hardly play an effective role.

3.2.5 Efficiency

With drop out rates at 19.8, 52.9 and 42.7 percent at junior secondary, secondary and higher secondary levels respectively in 2001, and failure rate at 65 percent at S.S.C. Examination in 2001, one can definitely raise questions about efficiency of our secondary education system.

3.3 Tertiary Education

3.3.1 Access

Access cannot be universal at this level, but it has to expand substantially to meet the challenges of today's knowledge economy and information society. Girls seem to have much lower access to tertiary education.

3.3.2 Equity

Equity is a major concern. Inequities at the previous levels are magnified by highly subsidized public education at tertiary level. Access to private universities being restricted only to those who can pay extremely high tuition fees, only the children from affluent families can get themselves enrolled in such universities.

3.3.3 Quality

Quality is a serious problem in tertiary education even at universities, both public and private. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has miserably failed in discharging its role as a guardian of public universities, and as a promoter of quality. It has also failed to institute a self-regulatory accreditation system for private universities.

3.3.4 Relevance

In the absence of any linkage between public universities (with the exception of a few Departments like Business Administration, Pharmacy etc.) and the job market, education imparted at public universities had little relevance to the needs of the economy. Private universities on the other hand responded only to market signals, relevant to the economy in the short run, and neglected long term interests of the economy.

3.3.5 Efficiency

Long session jams, a characteristic feature of public universities, is a clear indicator of inefficient management of public universities of Bangladesh.

4. Priority Action Points

On the basis of experience in countries which have registered rapid progress in education and national development as well as independent studies and analyses, the Task Force recommends the following key measures to address the nexus of access, equity, and quality at different levels of education, and also for enhancing the relevance of education, and efficiency of the delivery mechanism.

4.1. Mobilisation of Additional Resources and Ensuring their Efficient Utilisation

The education sector in Bangladesh, at present, is seriously under-resourced lacking the threshold of per capita expenditure needed at different levels to maintain a minimum acceptable standard of performance, resulting in wastage of most of what is spent now. At the same time systemic measures are needed (suggested below) that would create conditions for cost-effective use of resources. .

The Task Force, therefore, strongly recommends enhancement of allocation of public resources to education sector by reducing /capping at current level (in absolute terms) expenditure on unproductive sectors, such that its share gets gradually raised to 5 percent of GDP from its current level around 2 percent, by the end of the five year term.

Regarding the source of additional resources needed for the education sector, it may be mentioned that there already exist a number of avenues. With increasing market orientation of the economy where private sector is expected to play the leading role in the economic arena, there has developed a scope for dismantling/restructuring of a number of unnecessary public institutions such as TCB, the State Trading Organization, and many sector corporations. Revenue thus saved, and additional revenue mobilized through imposition of a new tax called Education Tax; and enhancement of tuition fees at all public educational institutions, with generous provision of scholarships for meritorious needy students, would surely contribute to mobilization of additional resources for the education sector.

Given the current low level, and declining trend in per student expenditure at primary level, adversely affecting the quality of education, and also for making provision for raising the duration of primary education to eight years i.e. up to class VIII, the share of primary education in total education budget has to be enhanced.

Share of secondary education in total education budget increased over the last few years but most of it went to pay salary to the teachers. Increased allocation to secondary education must go for improving library and laboratory facilities, teacher training, and teaching aids to improve the quality of education. Given the low level of qualification of majority of existing secondary school teachers, and also the poor coverage of existing teacher training facilities, there is a need for creating adequate training facilities for teachers of all streams of secondary education including Madrasahs. Increased allocation of resources to education sector should generally be linked to quality improvement at all levels of education. On top of mobilisation of additional financial resources for the education sector, other available national resources should also be tapped. Can there be a better use of national TV channels other than promoting education in the most cost effective way?

4.2 Decentralisation

Although Bangladesh has in the recent past experienced considerable administrative decentralization in the arena of primary education (many important decisions are now taken at the Upazila level), the school authorities who are primarily responsible for delivery of the education services at the school level, enjoy very limited power and authority. It is extremely important that the school authorities, particularly the Head Teacher, is given adequate power and authority commensurate with his/her responsibility. Also important is adoption of appropriate measures that would help transforming the educational administrators from playing the role of a Regulator as they are doing at present in a bureaucratic set up, to that of a Facilitator.

Management of secondary education in the public sector is highly centralized at present. Instead of implementing measures of administrative decentralization, similar to those in primary education, if the head masters of government secondary schools are given necessary power and authority so as to enable them discharge their responsibilities more effectively, educational outcomes in government secondary schools will significantly improve.

In Bangladesh, non-government secondary schools are currently being managed by their respective School Management Committees (SMC). Although the responsibility of running the school is shouldered primarily by the head master, he/ she enjoys little power and authority. This anomaly needs to be removed, and the role of SMCs should ideally be transformed from that of a Regulator to a Facilitator. At present there exists no educational qualification requirement for membership of SMCs that has allowed capturing of SMCs by vested quarters in many places. The membership rules need to be amended so that only those genuinely interested in promoting education become members of SMCs. The current practice of local MP becoming Chairman of SMCs of all schools in his/her constituency should be discontinued, and none should be allowed to chair more than one SMC.

The responsibility of primary and secondary education should be vested with the local government. Towards that end, alongside setting up of local government bodies, educational authorities should also be established at an appropriate local level. The functions of these education authorities would be, mobilization of necessary resources, provision of technical assistance, and administering academic supervision. A beginning should be made towards this goal by initiating in the next five years the trial of District Education Authorities in several districts and developing a plan for its nation wide implementation.

4.3 Partnerships

Although it is government that is ultimately responsible for provision of basic education for all, involvement and active participation of all stake holders including parents, communities, private sector, businesses, NGOs, religious bodies will surely contribute to effective functioning of a nation wide learning network, besides generating additional resources for the education sector. A comprehensive approach towards building partnerships, recognizing all potentials for contribution and participation, therefore need to be properly articulated. Towards that end, the Task Force recommends reintroduction of exemptions for educational expenditures from personal income tax liability, and also for donations, personal and institutional, to education sector.

4.4 Improving Management Capacity

The huge and complex education enterprise in Bangladesh is currently being managed rather amateurishly without recognizing the need for professional and specialized skills in educational management and planning. This would in fact turn out to be a greater handicap as and when measures of decentralization would be implemented.. The Task Force recommends establishment of a system of professional development of management, planning, administration, and supervision in education along with needed reforms in recruitment, incentives, human resources management, and organizational structures to make use of professional skills in educational management and planning.

For improved management of educational institutions at all levels, from primary schools up to universities, there is a need for improvement in quality and management capability of the heads of institutions, and this requires institutional arrangement “for placing right people in the right places”, and also for appropriate management training for such people. Search Committees should be set up for recruitment of Vice Chancellors of public universities. This however calls for an amendment to the existing University Acts.

4.5 A Unified-not Necessarily Uniform- System of Basic and Secondary Education

The three- way division of general schools, maktabas and madrassahs, and elite English medium schools, need to be unified into a common system. This common system comprising different types of schools under different sponsorships has to ensure that a set of core knowledge and competencies are acquired by all learners in primary and secondary education. This would require a core curriculum and common core of standards regarding teaching and learning, and assessment of learner achievement- not the elimination of diversity in provisions for schooling, or control of all schools by the government.

The Task Force also recommends introduction of a unified science based education at secondary level in place of early specialization practised at present.

As many English medium schools and the entire Qawmi/ Kharezi Madrasah system are currently operating outside the state regulatory framework, one does not really know what exactly is happening in these institutions. The Task Force strongly feels that no educational institution whether they receive public resources or not, should be allowed to operate in Bangladesh without government recognition.

4.6 Curriculum and Learning Materials

In line with the principles of decentralization and partnership, the current centralized, "statist", control oriented system in respect of curricula and text books must change. The task of the curriculum authorities should be to define core curricula, allowing schools and local authorities to supplement the core. The curriculum bodies should also work with teacher training institutions and other parts of the education system to improve skills for implementing curricula in class rooms and assessing student achievements. In order to avoid the recurring fiasco and associated corruption in providing text books and learning materials, the private sector should be allowed to prepare and produce text books and other materials- with curriculum bodies remaining responsible for general approval of text books and watching compliance with the objectives of the core curricula.

4.7 Teachers

Teachers are at the core of quality improvement in education. They need to meet professional standards, have ample opportunities for continuous professional development, and must receive a living wage. In turn, teachers must be accountable for their performance, which should be subjected to professional and public assessment, and which is eventually reflected in their pupil's achievement.

Recruitment of teachers in government primary and secondary schools through competitive examinations conducted by respective Directorates ensures reasonable standards in quality of teachers. Imposition of a quota for recruitment of female teachers, 60 percent at present, has improved the participation of women (33.9 percent in 2000) in teaching at primary level. Most of the primary teachers have already received training. Close supervision by officers stationed at the Upazila level has contributed to significant improvement in attendance of teachers in schools. The extremely poor performance of students at government primary schools in urban areas however point to the need for specialized training, as most of the students in such schools happen to be child workers, coming from very poor households.

At the secondary level about 97 percent of secondary schools and 93 percent of teachers belong to the private sector. Although there exist well defined rules relating to recruitment of teachers in non government secondary schools, quite often under political and other influences incompetent teachers get recruited. This happens to be a major weakness of the secondary education system in Bangladesh. In the absence of an appropriate quota for recruitment of female teachers at secondary level, their participation has been rather limited, only about 17 percent in 1999. Only about 37 percent of secondary school teachers, and 7 percent of Madrasah teachers received training that points to lack of adequate training facilities at present. Adequate teacher training facilities

need to be developed for training on a continuous basis both secondary school and Madrasah teachers, for raising their level of competence in view of their poor academic background. There exists a serious shortage of English, and Science (Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry) teachers. The science curriculum could not be properly implemented, as only 15 percent of secondary school teachers were capable of teaching the existing science curriculum.

At the university level also, quite often, due to group politics, now linked to national politics, less qualified candidates are recruited as teachers in preference to more deserving ones. As there exists at present no institutional mechanism for ensuring accountability of teachers, quite often it is noticed that classes are not held regularly, examinations do not take place in time, and there is inordinate delay in publication of results, all contributing to development, and lengthening of session jams.

On the basis of the above findings, the Task Force recommends setting up of a Service Commission for recruitment of secondary school teachers; imposition of an appropriate quota for recruitment of female teachers; special incentives for teachers with major in English/ Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry; recruitment of only those who did major in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics as Science teachers; expansion of training facilities for secondary school and Madrasah teachers; appropriate amendment of University Acts; improved facilities for research; and academic supervision of universities, both public and private, by the UGC.

The Task Force also recommends increase in contact hours at schools particularly at the primary level, and also in secondary schools running double shifts.

Because of poor infra-structural facilities in rural Bangladesh, secondary schools located there often fail to attract properly qualified teachers. Infra-structural facilities in rural areas therefore need to be developed to a satisfactory level, and until that is done, qualified teachers of rural schools may be provided with a hardship allowance.

4.8 Assessment of Learning

The circus that goes on in the name of public examinations has made Bangladesh a laughing stock of the world. The infiltration of the worst forms of self-seeking and corrupt politics into education is the main cause of failure to control this rot in the educational system. Teachers and their professional organizations imbued with a sense of professional and moral responsibility, the local civil administration, and the parents need to work together to restore the integrity of examinations.

There is also a need for improving technical and professional competence and skills in the examination bodies such as the Education Boards and the National University. Considering the sharp increase in the number of examinees there is a need for setting up a few more education boards, and decentralization of the National University. Finally, the Task Force recommends development of an institutional mechanism for learning assessment similar to SAT.

4.9 Non-formal and Continuing Education

With large non-participation and drop-out, in primary and secondary education, and an overall low literacy level of the people, there is a huge need for non-formal and continuing education. Supported by large external funding, a vigorous movement has

already been launched by the government in this particular area of literacy and post literacy education in the form of Total Literacy Movement (TLM) and other Non Formal Education (EFE) programmes. Unfortunately, however, a total neglect of effective performance standards, quality criteria, inept management and large scale corruption combined with official declarations of increase in literacy every other month have turned these efforts into a meaningless farce and a source of huge waste of public resources.

A proper literacy and continuing education programme-the foundation of life-long learning-with enforceable quality criteria and performance standards is very much needed.

4.10 Vocational and Technical Education

Scope and access to vocational and technical education need to be much wider. Most critical vocational preparation in today's globalized economy is a solid grounding in science, mathematics, and language skills offered through sound general secondary education.

Those who do not go for secondary education or drop out-a large number- need to have access to flexible and market responsive skill development opportunities. Public-private partnerships are especially important for this purpose.

For older adolescents without basic education-again a large number- a second chance that combines general education and skill formation need to be provided. Underprivileged Children's Educational Programs (UCEP), a national NGO, provides in this regard an excellent operating model worth replicating.

4.11 De-Politicisation of Education

The education system is in a vicious stranglehold of corrupt and partisan politics. All reform and development efforts, however sensible and well intentioned are thwarted by politics. The influence of corrupt politics is manifested in pervasive corruption in all aspects of education, and in the most cynical use of students and teachers by political parties in their political struggle.

No part of education is exempt from the corrupting influence of politics--recruitment and management of personnel, production and supply of text books, public examinations, subventions to non-government institutions, construction and maintenance of schools, distribution of food-for-education, and stipends for poor students-are all fraught with all forms of corruption imaginable including bribery, stealing, influence-peddling, falsifying records, rampant cheating in examinations, appointing and promoting unqualified personnel, phantom schools and teachers in government budget and so on.

The use of students and teachers directly in partisan power struggle including raising of armed cadres, and their involvement in violence including murders, terrorism, extortion, robbery, and other crimes worthy of any notorious crime syndicate has become the norm practised by all major political parties.

Theoretical and philosophical arguments about students' democratic rights to participate in politics and the political parties' right to organize student supporters are irrelevant in the face of the national crisis that has arisen. It is the height of irony if not hypocrisy to condone the current brand of political activism of students in the name of their

democratic rights. Extraordinary situations demand extraordinary measures. The most important education reform measure would be to institute a moratorium on students' active involvement in national politics. This would require persuading political parties to agree on a moratorium on sponsorship of party-backed student fronts and to cease by common agreement the involvement of students and teachers in partisan politics for a decade. This single step would help create the condition for effective of other reforms in education.

4.12 Education Policy-Making

The recent education policy statement announced by the government, both in respect of the process of its formulation and its content, is an example of how an education policy is not to be made. It has largely been a closed and non-transparent process involving mostly officials. It has been presented and adopted in the parliament without much of a debate and without making the report public. Its content has failed to address burning educational issues seriously. Specific action proposals focus on organisation and duration of programmes and physical expansion rather than the difficult issues of quality assurance, relevance and outcome of education, or indicating effective measure for fulfilling the rights and entitlements of citizens in education.

The Task Force however does not recommend another policy exercise. It suggests a pragmatic approach to solving problems based on experience and relevant international lessons without the fanfare of a new policy, with ample dialogue and participation.

4.13 Linkage between Education and Society

Finally, with a view to grooming up the students as socially conscious, responsible citizens of the country, the Task Force recommends compulsory participation of all students as Volunteers in certain national development programmes for a specific period of time during their student life. The Task Force also recommends promotion of lifelong education for all citizens of the country by non-formal means under an appropriate institutional arrangement. Finally, the Task Force recommends spread of computer education through out the country, up to village level, using both formal and informal education systems.

A Statement on Priority Action Points Suggested in the Policy Brief and Actions Already Taken by the Government and Proposals Under Consideration

Priority action points suggested in the Policy Brief	Actions already taken by the Government	Proposals under Consideration
<p>1. Mobilisation, and allocation of additional resources for the education sector</p> <p>1.1 Raising the share of public expenditure on education to 5% of GDP by 2006.</p> <p>1.2 Additional resources to be mobilised by, (i) Dismantling re-structuring of several public sector corporations; (ii) Putting a cap on non-productive expenditures in nominal terms at their current level; (iii) Imposition of an Education Tax; (iv) Raising of tuition fees at public educational institutions with provision of generous scholarships for poor and meritorious students.</p> <p>1.3 Raising the share of primary education in total public expenditure on education to improve its quality, and also to provide for extension of compulsory primary education by three more years i.e. up to Class VIII.</p> <p>1.4 Increased allocation to secondary education primarily to finance quality improvement measures e.g. training of teachers, development of school libraries and laboratories.</p>	<p>1.1 Actual expenditure on education in FY 2001 was 2.30 percent of GDP. Revised estimate for FY 2002 shows a decline, to 2.21 percent of GDP. Budgeted amount for FY 2003 is 2.34 percent of GDP.</p>	<p>1.1 According to I-PRSP, in FY 2004 allocation of public expenditure to education sector would be considerably increased, and this increasing trend would be maintained in the subsequent two years as well. Projected public expenditure on education in FYs 2004, 2005 and 2006 are 2.62%, 2.81%, and 2.93% of GDP respectively.</p> <p>1.2 For mobilisation of additional resources, Report of the Expert Committee for Educational Reforms, July, 2002 (RECER, 2002) suggests fixing of tuition fees in public educational institutions, particularly in universities taking into consideration income of the parents as practiced at present in the Cadet Colleges of Bangladesh.</p>

<p>1.5 Effective use of TV channel for educational purposes.</p>		
<p>2. Decentralisation</p> <p>2.1 From the central government, the responsibility of primary and secondary education to be handed over to the local government. Towards that end, establishment of District Educational Authorities responsible for mobilization of resources, provision of technical support, and for academic supervision of all educational institutions operating within the district.</p>	<p>2.1 Some administrative decentralization measures have been taken in primary education sector e.g. recruitment of primary teachers is now made through open competition against upazila quota; and responsibility for transfer and posting of teachers have been entrusted with the district level.</p>	<p>2.1 RECER recommends administrative decentralisation of secondary education. It suggests a separate Directorate for secondary education; transformation of nine regional offices of Secondary and Higher Education into nine Zonal Educational Authorities headed by nine Regional Directors with adequate power and authority including those of transfer of teachers, and making recommendations for inclusion of educational institutions under MPO. The Regional Directors will be responsible for conducting S.S.C. and H.S.C. Examinations in their respective regions; conduct inspections of schools, colleges and Madrasahs ; provide academic supervision; conduct surveys on students and educational institutions; recommend establishment of new schools and colleges after making necessary need assessment; supervise construction and renovation of educational institutions; monitor progress of different project activities, and also take measures to involve local people in all educational activities of the region. RECER also recommends further administrative decentralization of secondary education by suggesting creation of posts of Upazila Secondary Education Officers, and Assistant</p>

<p>2.2 Increased power and authority to Head Teachers/ Head Masters of primary/secondary schools.</p> <p>2.3 School Management Committees (SMC) to function as facilitators rather than regulators of schools.</p> <p>2.4 SMC Members to have a minimum educational qualification.</p> <p>2.5 No SMC Member to serve in more than one school.</p>		<p>Officers, and Assistant Upazila Secondary Education Officers.</p> <p>2.2 RECER recommends graduation as the minimum requisite educational qualification for Governing Body Membership of a College.</p> <p>2.3 RECER suggests that no person should serve as a Chairperson/ Member of a Governing Body in more than one college.</p>
<p>3. Partnerships</p> <p>3.1 Partnerships of all stake holders-parents, communities, private sector, businesses, NGOs and religious bodies to be fostered</p> <p>3.2 Re-introduction of exemptions for educational expenditure from personal income tax liability, and also for donations to educational institutions.</p>	<p>3.1 In order to monitor functioning of educational institutions the government has recently issued a circular providing guidelines for setting up of Committees at upazila and district levels.</p>	<p>3.1 RECER recommends setting up of Advisory Committees at all levels, from Upazila to National, by drawing representatives from different stakeholders. The Prime Minister, the Education Minister, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Education, Secretaries of the Ministries of Education, and Primary and Mass Education, and eminent educationists will serve as Members of the National Advisory Committee.</p>
<p>4. Improving Management Capacity for Efficient Utilisation of Resources Allocated to the Education Sector</p>		

<p>4.1 Establishment of a system for development of professional capabilities in the areas of planning, management, administration and supervision in all sub-sectors of education.</p> <p>4.2 From primary to university level, “ putting right persons in right places” and arranging appropriate management training for such people. University Act to be amended for ensuring that properly qualified persons are appointed as Vice Chancellors of public universities.</p>	<p>4.1 Under SEIP, for the secondary education sector, within education cadre a separate professional sub-cadre is currently being created.</p> <p>4.2 Under Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SECIP), certain measures have been taken for improving institutional capacity for effective inspection and auditing of educational institutions with a view to ensuring proper utilization of public resources allocated to the education sector.</p> <p>4.3 The Ministry of Education recently served notices to a sizeable number of poorly performing non governmental educational institutions receiving public resource support (i.e. institutions under monthly pay order) to show cause why the above resource support should not be withdrawn.</p>	<p>4.1 RECER recommends strengthening of institutional mechanism for Monitoring, Inspection and Supervision of all educational institutions. It recommends formation of Governing Bodies for government colleges as well.</p> <p>4.2 In view of growing number of public and private universities, RECER recommends strengthening of the Chancellor’s Secretariat, and suggests that it should be headed by at least an Additional Secretary.</p> <p>4.3 RECER recommends amendment of several provisions, particularly those relating to appointment of Vice Chancellors, Deans, and Syndicate Members of the Public University Acts of 1973 in consultation with the teaching community. RECER also emphasises the need for updating post 1975 Public, University Acts, UGC Act, and Private Universities Act. RECER recommends formation of a Search Committee comprising eminent persons with high levels of education, drawn from different segments of the society to prepare a panel from which Vice Chancellors are to be appointed by the Chancellor. Deanship may rotate amongst teachers of the concerned Faculty on the basis of their seniority. Similar measures have also been suggested for selection</p>
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		<p>of Syndicate Members.</p> <p>4.4 RECER recommends development of NAEM as a centre for imparting pre and post employment management training to education cadre officials. In order to develop capabilities of faculty members of NAEM to those of Experts, the need for specialized training for them has been emphasized. RECER also recommends that their jobs should be made non-transferable.</p>
<p>5. A Unified but not Necessarily Uniform System of Basic and Secondary Education</p> <p>5.1 All streams of education (General, Religious, and English Medium) to ensure that a standard set of core knowledge and competencies are acquired by all learners at both primary and secondary levels.</p> <p>5.2 Introduction of a unified science based education at secondary level.</p> <p>5.3 Without state recognition no educational institution such as Kindergartens and Qwami/ Khareji Madrasahs to operate within the country.</p>		<p>5.1 RECER recommends adoption and implementation of a uniform core curriculum for all educational institutions including kindergartens imparting primary education.</p> <p>5.2 RECER recommends compulsory registration of all primary schools including kindergartens. Such schools would come under administrative umbrella of the educational administration at local level, which would also regulate how much such institutions can charge as fees from their students.</p>
<p>6. Curriculum and Learning Materials</p> <p>6.1 The current centralised control on curriculum to go. Curriculum authorities need to define only the core curricula allowing the schools and local</p>		<p>6.1 RECER recommends separation of curriculum development and textbook production functions of NCTB, and suggests creation</p>

<p>authorities to supplement the core.</p> <p>6.2 Greater interaction between curriculum authorities, teacher training institutes and teachers for better implementation of curriculum in the class rooms; and for assessing students.</p> <p>6.3 Production of text books to be left entirely to the private sector with curriculum authorities approving the text books in line with objectives set in core curriculum.</p>	<p>6.2 Under SESIP, measures have been taken for upgrading curriculum development capability of NCTB; and currently, B. Ed curriculum is being revised, and quality of all text books up to HSC level are being assessed.</p> <p>6.3 Other than English and Bangla text books, responsibility for publication and distribution of all text books have already been handed over to the private sector.</p>	<p>of two separate organizations bifurcating NCTB- one dealing with curriculum development, and the other dealing with textbook production.</p> <p>6.2 RECER suggests that curriculum should be developed by a group of specialists who would always keep themselves updated on advancement of knowledge in different fields, and make necessary changes in the curriculum at regular intervals.</p> <p>6.3 RECER suggests modernization of curriculum of Madrasah education such that their graduates can equally participate in competitive examinations including B.C.S.</p>
<p>7. Improving Quality of Education</p> <p>7.1 At all levels of education, particularly at primary level, school/contact hours have to be increased.</p> <p>7.2 Institutional mechanisms to be set up for ensuring recruitment of well-qualified teachers in all educational institutions.</p> <p>7.2.1 Setting up of a separate Service Commission for recruitment of secondary school teachers.</p>	<p>7.2.1 I-PRSP mentions that a proposal for setting up of a separate Teaching Service Commission for recruitment of all teachers of non-government schools, colleges and madrasahs has been under active consideration of the government, and a draft in</p>	<p>7.1 I-PRSP stated that in FY 2004, quality improvement would be the focal point of educational reform measures in Bangladesh, and over July 2004-June, 2006 period, significant improvement in quality of education would be achieved.</p>

<p>7.2.2 Quota for recruitment of female teachers particularly at secondary level.</p> <p>7.2.3 Study of Mathematics and Physics/ Chemistry at degree level to serve as requisite qualifications for appointment as a Science teacher.</p> <p>7.2.4 Special incentives for English and Science teachers.</p> <p>7.2.5 Special allowance for teachers in rural schools.</p> <p>7.2.6 For teachers to fully concentrate on their work, they need to be provided with respectable income, and adequate facilities for training, higher education and research.</p>	<p>government, and a draft in this regard would soon be placed before the cabinet. The Ministry of Education has recently issued a circular suspending recruitment of teachers by SMCs and Governing Bodies of all non-government educational institutions. The circular provides for formation of an eight member committee at the district level, headed by the Deputy Commissioner, that would prepare a panel of prospective teachers for appointment to vacant positions in the educational institutions operating in the district.</p> <p>7.2.6 The 2001 election manifesto of BNP mentioned that on assumption of office it would nationalize all primary schools and would pay 100 percent of basic salaries to teachers of non-government educational institutions. Both these promises are yet to be realised.</p>	<p>7.2.6 RECER recommends adequate incentives, and facilities for higher education, training and research for teachers.</p>
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<p>7.27 Expansion of quality training facilities for teachers of both secondary schools and Madrasahs.</p> <p>7.2.8 Strengthening of academic supervision at all educational institutions.</p> <p>7.2.9 Necessary amendment of Public University Acts for ensuring recruitment of competent teachers and also for making them accountable.</p> <p>7.2.10 Strengthening the role of UGC in academic supervision of both public and private universities.</p>	<p>7.2.7 Under SESIP, a new teacher education policy, and programme for development of teacher education system has been adopted.</p>	<p>7.2.9 RECER recommended that teachers of non-government educational institutions would also be guided by a service code similar to the one followed in government educational institutions. Teacher's performance during the previous year would regularly be evaluated by the heads of educational institutions by means of Annual Confidential Reports (ACR). SMC/Governing Body of the concerned institution on the other hand would evaluate the performance of the head Master/ Principal. Good performance would be rewarded. Promotion to higher positions would depend entirely on academic achievements and performance at work.</p> <p>7.2.10 Students, at the beginning of an academic session, would be provided with a detailed academic programme for the whole session that would be strictly followed.</p>
<p>8. Encouraging Gender Balance at all Levels of Education</p>	<p>8.1 In order to maintain the current high level of female participation at junior and secondary level (grades 6-10), and for improving</p>	<p>8.1 I-PRSP mentions that a separate stipend programme for girls studying in metropolitan areas will be implemented during FY</p>

<p>10.2 More educational Boards to be set up.</p> <p>10.3 Decentralisation of National University.</p> <p>10.4 Improving professional and technical competence of the above institutions.</p> <p>10.5 Introduction of learning assessment and aptitude test similar to SAT.</p>	<p>papers for assessing analytical faculty of students.</p>	<p>10.2 RECER recommends construction of a multipurpose hall room in all colleges and Upazilas for holding public examinations. When not in use for examination purposes these halls will serve as resource centres.</p> <p>10.3 RECER also recommends certain reforms in the examination system for better assessment of the examinees, and also for ensuring holding of fair examination. The suggested measures include, holding of two mid-term and one final examinations in every academic year, and allowing only those who pass such examinations to sit for public examinations; holding of examinations in centres other than the examinees' own educational institutions; holding of examinations in the afternoons so that classes are not hampered etc.</p> <p>10.4 Holding of a single test conducted by the UGC for admission into different disciplines of all public universities within 4-6 weeks of publication of the results of H.S.C examinations.</p>
<p>11. Non-formal and Continuing Education</p> <p>11.1 Adequate institutional arrangements be made for non-formal and continuing education catering to the needs of school</p>	<p>11.1 According to Annual Development Programme (ADP), during FY 2003, a number of non-formal</p>	

<p>dropouts, and child labour in particular.</p>	<p>programmes were being implemented. Bangladesh Economic Review, 2002, stated that in FY 2002, through various programmes, 2.6 million persons were made literate. Literacy rate increased from 35 percent in 1991 to 65 percent in 2001. A survey conducted by Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) however revealed that one third of the graduates of different Non-formal education programmes such as Total Literacy Movement (TLM) and Community Based Approach (CBA) remained illiterate. A nationwide survey conducted by CAMPE in 2002 found literacy rate to be 41.4 percent.</p>	
<p>12. Vocational and Technical Education</p> <p>12.1 Secondary school dropouts to have access to flexible and market responsive skill development opportunities. Public-private partnership to play a crucial role in this regard.</p> <p>12.2 Institutions like Underprivileged Children's Educational Programs (UCEP) that implement an integrated programme of general education followed by vocational and technical education; and employment services particularly for the working children need to</p>	<p>.</p>	<p>12.1 I-PRSP states that in FY 2004 in addition to improvement in quality of education, development of technical and vocational education would feature as key educational reform measures in Bangladesh. Public-private partnership in this regard would particularly be encouraged during FY 2004-FY2006.</p> <p>12.2 RECER recommends introduction of flexible courses in response to market demands; provision of adequate equipments and training materials for increased effectiveness of practical classes;</p>

<p>be replicated with necessary financial and technical support.</p>		<p>attachment of students to industrial enterprises in order to improve their job prospects; involvement of representatives of industries in designing appropriate trade courses; and regular updating of curriculum and introduction of new trade courses in line with changes in the job market.</p>
<p>13. De-Politicisation of Education</p> <p>13.1 All educational institutions to be kept totally free from any type of political influence.</p> <p>13.2 Moratorium on cadre based student and teacher politics for at least 10 years.</p> <p>13.3 Political infiltration into School Management Committees and Governing Bodies to be totally stopped . Only those who are genuinely interested in promoting education to be involved in SMCs and GBs.</p>		<p>13.1 RECER recommends introduction of service code for teachers and code of conduct for students. RECER recommends de-linking of both teachers and students from political activities.</p>
<p>14. Education Policy Making</p> <p>14.1 Non-transparent and non participatory process of formulation of Draft Education Policy, 1998 and its subsequent adoption without any parliamentary debate in 2000 made Education Policy 2000 a non-starter. Instead of setting up of a new Education Commission, it would make better sense to reach a consensus on what needs to be done in the light of experiences of other developing countries</p>	<p>14.1 The new government that came to power in October, 2001 abandoned the Education Policy, 2000, and set up an Expert Committee for Educational Reforms for suggesting measures for immediate implementation. The above committee submitted a report in July, 2002. Subsequently the government set up an Education Commission</p>	

	<p>headed by a former Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University for drafting a new education policy.</p>	
<p>15. Promoting Linkage between Education and Society All students to serve as volunteers in certain national development programmes for a specific period of time during certain stages of their student life.</p> <p>16. Computer education to be spread throughout the country including rural areas using both formal and informal educational systems.</p>	<p>16.1 The 2001 election manifesto of BNP mentioned that highest priority would be given to Information & Communication Technology, and skilled manpower in this area would be developed.</p> <p>16.2 The government in its 100day programme had mentioned that in order to develop interest of the youth in Computer education, an international seminar on Computer would be held. Such a programme was arranged in due time.</p>	

5. Concluding Observations

A review of the above table indicates that the government has already taken certain measures, and is considering some actions in line with recommendations made in the policy brief. Some measures however seem to be ad hoc in nature, e.g. preparation of a panel of prospective teachers for appointment in non-government educational institutions by a committee headed by the Deputy Commissioner, and some against the spirit of the recommendations, e.g. taking bureaucratic control down to lower levels rather than moving towards actual decentralization in case of secondary education.

A few emerging issues need to be immediately attended to.

First, the issue of liberal granting of permission to open up new private universities before the prescribed requisite conditions are satisfied has given rise to mushroom growth of private universities providing education of uncertain quality. So far 45 private

universities got permission to operate in the country. The regulatory framework for private universities need to be properly examined.

Second, most public universities, and the national university have adopted 4 year honours programme. The issue of whether this should be treated as a terminal degree needs to be immediately resolved.

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