

Report No. 98

**Achieving Universal Primary Education
with Quality and Equity**

Publisher

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The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), established in 1993, is a civil society initiative to promote an ongoing dialogue between the principal partners in the decision-making and implementing process. The dialogues are designed to address important policy issues and to seek constructive solutions to these problems. The Centre has already organised a series of such dialogues at local, regional and national levels. The CPD has also organised a number of South Asian bilateral and regional dialogues as well as some international dialogues. These dialogues have brought together ministers, opposition frontbenchers, MPs, business leaders, NGOs, donors, professionals and other functional group in civil society within a non-confrontational environment to promote focused discussions. The CPD seeks to create a national policy consciousness where members of civil society will be made aware of critical policy issues affecting their lives and will come together in support of particular policy agendas which they feel are conducive to the well being of the country.

In support of the dialogue process the Centre is engaged in research programmes which are both serviced by and are intended to serve as inputs for particular dialogues organised by the Centre throughout the year. Some of the major research programmes of the CPD include **The Independent Review of Bangladesh's Development (IRBD), Trade Related Research and Policy Development (TRRPD), Governance and Policy Reforms, Regional Cooperation and Integration, Investment Promotion and Enterprise Development, Agriculture and Rural Development, Ecosystems, Environmental Studies and Social Sectors.** The CPD also conducts periodic public perception surveys on policy issues and issues of developmental concerns. With a view to promote vision and policy awareness amongst the young people of the country, CPD is implementing a **Youth Leadership Programme.**

Dissemination of information and knowledge on critical developmental issues continues to remain an important component of CPD's activities. Pursuant to this CPD maintains an active publication programme, both in Bangla and in English. As part of its dissemination programme, CPD has decided to bring out CPD Occasional Paper Series on a regular basis. Dialogue background papers, investigative reports and results of perception surveys which relate to issues of high public interest will be published under its cover. The Occasional Paper Series will also include draft research papers and reports, which may be subsequently published by the CPD.

As part of CPD's publication activities, a CPD Dialogue Report series is brought out in order to widely disseminate the summary of the discussions organised by the Centre. The present report contains the highlights of the dialogue on ***Achieving Universal Primary Education with Quality and Equity*** held on 5 November 2008 at the BRAC Centre Inn Auditorium, Dhaka. The dialogue was organised under CPD's IRBD Programme.

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Dialogue on
Achieving Universal Primary Education with Quality and Equity

The Dialogue

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) together with Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) arranged a dialogue on education titled '*Achieving Universal Primary Education with Quality and Equity*' at the BRAC Centre Inn Auditorium on Wednesday 5 November 2008. The initiative was also supported by the Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University (IED-BRACU). *Professor Rehman Sobhan*, Chairman, CPD chaired the session. *Ms Rasheda K Choudhury*, Hon'ble Advisor to the Caretaker Government, Ministries of Primary & Mass Education (MoPME), Women & Children Affairs, and Cultural Affairs made her presence to the occasion as Chief Guest. *Mr Badrul Alam Tarafdar*, Secretary In-charge, MoPME attended the session as the Special Guest. As representatives from the host institutions, *Ms Anisatul Fatema Yousuf*, Director, Dialogue & Communication, CPD and *Md Azizul Haq*, Director In-charge, CAMPE made their introductory speeches where they provided relevant background of the dialogue with briefly illustrating on the keynotes to be presented and welcomed the participants to the session including policy planners, academics, researchers, development activists, education professionals, members of diplomatic missions and donor agencies, journalists and media representatives. *Dr Mahabub Hossain*, Executive Director, BRAC and *Dr Manzoor Ahmed*, Senior Advisor, IED-BRACU made their presentations to initiate focused discussion in and around the dialogue. This report outlines the dialogue held and extracts the key issues raised in the session triggered by the two keynote presentations.

Introductory Remarks by Ms Anisatul Fatema Yousuf, CPD

With a welcome note, *Ms Anisatul Fatema Yousuf* presented the necessary background for this dialogue on **universal and equitable access to quality education** for all Bangladeshi children. In clarifying the objective of the dialogue, *Ms Yousuf* referred to *Bangladesh Vision 2021*, one of CPD's recent publications resulted from the compilation of wishes and aspirations of more than 7000 people participating in 16 *Nagorik Songlaps*, a series of dialogues arranged by CPD teamed up with *Nagorik Committee 2006*. This vision document envisages on what kind of Bangladesh we want to see when Bangladesh celebrates its 50 years of independence. It proposes a set of concrete measures to achieve eight identified goals, of which one is 'to develop skilled and creative human resource'. One major objective to this goal is, 'by 2021 in Bangladesh, every child irrespective of gender, religion, ethnicity, disability and family income, will receive quality primary and

secondary education'. It is in this context, she referred, CPD is holding a series of dialogues on various issues like *energy*, *regional inequality* etc. to be able to more concretely articulate the actions required to achieve these objectives for this vision. This dialogue on *education* is one of these objectives which appeared very prominently within the realm of the vision envisaged. Recognising CAMPE's contribution to the development of education sector in Bangladesh, *Ms Yousuf* expressed CPD's satisfaction about teaming up with CAMPE in this dialogue.

After providing the audience this big picture, *Ms Yousuf* then tried to connect the two keynote papers to be presented. The first by *Dr Mahabub Hossain* was based on a longitudinal survey over a 20 years period in 62 villages of Bangladesh identifying social factors contributing to drop out and exclusion of children from ultra-poor families. The other by *Dr Manzoor Ahmed* was based on a position paper of CAMPE that outlined the civil society's role in achieving universal primary education on the progress of government's umbrella programme on primary education—the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II). With the hope for a lively discussion on effective strategies to deal with emerging challenges, *Ms Yousuf* then requested the Chair Professor Sobhan to initiate the dialogue.

Opening Remarks by *Md Azizul Haq*, CAMPE

Invited by Professor Sobhan, *Md Azizul Haq* welcomed the participants and noted the significance of this very event as an attempt to look back and make an appraisal of progress towards achieving Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and national goal of primary education for all by 2015. With less than two years to go, he termed PEDP II as a major national sub-sectoral programme for primary education, designed to achieve certain definite goals including quality improvement, infrastructure development, equitable access and efficient implementation, management and monitoring. Identifying areas like classroom construction, teacher training, textbook distribution, stipend scheme and creation of inclusive education framework as areas of reasonable progress, he also maintained that there were areas which remained unattended. A mid-term evaluation exercise asserted the need for consensus building on next steps, tasks, time tables and responsibilities among the government, civil society groups and development partners, he reported. He mentioned that MoPME had asked CAMPE to outline the complementary role of the civil society in achieving universal primary education. It is in that context; a position paper was prepared by Dr Manzoor Ahmed, IED-BRACU and Professor James H Williams, George Washington University on behalf of CAMPE, through a wide consultative process involving all relevant stakeholders. The position paper was shared with the government, and MoPME in its initial response,

requested for specific recommendation for indicating Non Government Organisation (NGO) role in PEDP II follow-up programme, areas of participation and increased intervention. *Mr Haq* concluded that through this dialogue the civil society consensus would be further sharpened for strengthening PEDP II follow-up programme, and identifying the key areas where civil society organisations could purposefully contribute to achieving EFA goals.

Welcome Address by *Professor Rehman Sobhan*

Professor Rehman Sobhan expressed his hope to have a fruitful discussion on the Bangladesh education agenda, prompted by the sharing of observations and experiences of the two ‘exceptionally distinguished’ keynote speakers. With their crucial engagement with national policy planning and longitudinal empirical works, the speakers would stimulate a high quality discussion, *Professor Sobhan* expected. He then asked Dr Mahabub Hossain to present first his observations and findings drawn from an empirical longitudinal survey research on rural economy.

Presentation by *Dr Mahabub Hossain*

Dr Mahabub Hossain’s presentation titled ‘*Exclusion and dropout in school participation: Insights from repeated household surveys*’ examined the changing pattern of educational participation of children from socio-economically disadvantaged population groups. The data were drawn from representative national sample surveys, conducted in several rounds starting from 1988 jointly by *Dr Hossain* and his colleague Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, currently the advisor to the Caretaker Government, Ministries of Commerce and Education. ‘We started it in order to monitor the developments in the rural economy in Bangladesh and we have been conducting repeated surveys of the same samples over time’ he informed. For his presentation *Dr Hossain* used the 1988, 2000 and 2008 survey of the same households in the same villages and focused on studying the socio-economic aspects related to education that ‘generally come up in the context’.

From the analyses of this longitudinal study spanning over a 20 years timeframe taking the 1988 as the benchmark, *Dr Hossain* looked at –

- *The trends in school participation*
- *Factors affecting exclusion and dropouts*
- *Returns from education and*
- *Policy implications*

Dr Hossain mentioned that school participation increased and gender parity was achieved over time. He then turned attention to some more crucial issues, such as, whether the dropout rate had substantially reduced, the quality of education at primary and secondary levels was satisfactory, and how households viewed demand for education in line with the supply side factors.

Study Methodology

Dr Hossain gave an overview of the research methodology applied in his investigation. The approach adopted was basically a longitudinal panel survey research. Applying a multi-stage random sampling method, 64 unions were selected from 64 districts of Bangladesh with the aim to have a country-wide representative sample. One representative village was then selected from each union and census of households was carried out using a small one page questionnaire. Using a stratified random sampling technique, 20 sample households per village in 1988 and 30 in 2000 were then chosen. The household stratification was done based on the following criteria:

- *By landownership and land tenure in 1988*
- *By wealth ranking in 2000 using PRA method*
- *1988 sample households covered in 2000*
- *The 2000 samples revisited in 2008*

A fairly large nationally representative sample was thus formed and followed over 20 years time span.

Key Observations

School participation of 6-17 years age group: Examination of the patterns in school participation rate in the *6-17 years* age group revealed that the boys' school participation rose from 63% in 1988 to 82% in 2008, while the girls' participation rate increased from 51% to 87%. Rate of boys attending secondary schools increased from 18% in 1988 to 30% in 2008 and the increasing rate for girls was 13% to 32%. This means girls' participation rate in both primary and secondary education was nearly doubled than the boys' over the last 20 years. The general trend was that, the participation rate of girls was substantially lower than boys in 1988; gender parity was achieved in terms of participation by 2000; and in 2008 girls' participation was substantially higher than boys.

Educational attainment of 18-40 years age group: The trend in educational attainment of the young, i.e. *18-40 years* age group showed that only 42% of the male workers of this age group had beyond primary level schooling in 1988; the number increased to 52% in 2000, but the progress remains marginal since then, the rate being 54% in 2008. The

progress was more pronounced for women. The proportion completing primary schooling increased from 32% in 1988 to 49% in 2000, and further to 61% in 2008. However, schooling beyond grade 8 for the labour force remains low at 36% in 2008; the number being stagnant during 2000-2008 time period, even though the impact of higher school participation has already been felt on the quality of human capital.

Exclusion and dropout scenario: Though the enrolment age for primary education is six, in the past many children enrolled at an older age and this gave a misleading indication for exclusion. However, enrolling at an older age declined over time. The exclusion rate for boys of 9-11 age group dropped from 28% in 1988 to 12% in 2000 and further to only 6% in 2008. For girls the number dropped from 37% in 1988 to only 3% in 2008. Only a small fraction of children never went to school. While almost half of the boys and three-fourth of girls were out of school at 12-14, the primary completion age, the dropout rate was reduced substantially by 2008, which was 17% for boys and 5% for girls. However, almost half of the boys and girls in 2008 were out of school at age 15-17, the high school completion age.

Factors associated with exclusion: With an estimate of logit regression for 7-9 age group, key socioeconomic factors affecting exclusion in school participation in 1988 were found to be landownership, education of spouse and level of poverty. Over the last two decades, the improvement in female education and reduction in poverty might have contributed to increase in school participation, besides the contribution of supply side factors. The low level exclusion prevalent in 2008 appears to be limited to landless households particularly those with both the parents illiterate. Special targeting will be needed to further improve participation.

Factors associated to dropout rates: Analyses of socio-economic factors contributing to dropout for 13-15 age group indicates that there lies a weak negative association of dropout with landownership. There has been found a changing pattern in the relative significance of factors such as education of head of family was a significant driver in 1988, but no longer so in 2008. The education of spouse remains as strong negative driver for dropout indicating that the higher the education of women, the less likeliness of the child to be dropped out. The dropout is high in ultra-poor households and the association has become stronger in 2008. Geographical location and remoteness remain an important factor behind dropout rates. Regionally, the dropout rate is higher in Sylhet division but lower in Barisal and Rajshahi division compared to Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna division. The opportunity cost of keeping children in school is the forgone income of not using them as labour in family enterprises. The returns from education in secondary school must compensate this income loss to keep children in school. Touching upon the

issue of difficulty on single age reporting, *Dr Hossain* indicated to the trend in dropout age that seemed to be 11 for both boys and girls in 1988, but the recent cut point is 13 for boys and 14 for girls. The boys are taken out of school in order to participate in family enterprises, mostly by the poor households, while the main cause for girls' dropout is early marriage.

Returns from schooling: Estimates of income functions show that marginal productivity of land and labour has increased substantially over time. Return from non-agricultural labour is almost three times higher than agricultural labour. Education contributes to higher productivity by facilitating occupational mobility from farm to non-farm occupations. However, the independent effect of education is found significant and has increased over time only for schooling beyond secondary level. Indeed, in 1988 the high school dropouts earned much less than even the illiterate workers, as 'they become a misfit for the society'. In 2008, the return is found positive but not statistically significant. In fact workers with lower secondary education earn more than the dropouts from the upper secondary level. So there is a sort of negative return of schooling, as they tend not to work in agriculture and others, referred the study. The minimum threshold level for the return of education is to be positive and high is—secondary completion. So 'unless the parents can make the investment to go upto that threshold level' *Dr Hossain* reported, 'education is not making any contribution and that might depress the demand for education'.

Key Findings

The following findings evolved from the analyses:

- Household level data supports the observation that school participation of children increased substantially over the last two decades, and gender disparity disappeared.
- Only 6 percent of the boys and 3 percent of the girls in the age group 9 to 11 did not attend school in 2008. It will be difficult to make further improvement from this level without targeting special groups, such as children from households with both parents illiterate and with special needs.
- However, one quarter of the children dropped out from school at lower secondary level and over half at the upper secondary level, including both boys and girls.
- Boys dropped out to provide labour at family enterprises, and girls for early marriage.
- The drivers of dropout are socioeconomic factors such as landlessness, poverty, and low levels of schooling of parents. In fact socio-economic factors are the very important factors determining exclusion.

- Land ownership and the education of the spouse, particularly the female, were significant contributing factors explaining exclusion in 1988. But education of spouse is no longer a factor for exclusion in 2008. Education of head was never a significant factor explaining dropout, but illiteracy of both the parents is a significant factor contributing to dropout and the other is ultra-poor households with extreme poverty.
- Estimated income function shows that the returns to education are high only for children who cross secondary schools.
- It seems that the high opportunity cost of keeping children in schools for households who cannot afford to invest beyond secondary level is a major factor causing dropout.
- The dropout rate may decline further in future with higher education of girls and reduction in poverty.
- A higher return in the work place for the secondary school dropouts will be needed to increase the demand for secondary education.

Policy implications

- For achieving the MDG goal of universal primary education, attention to be given for inclusion of children with special needs, from ultra-poor households, and those where both parents are illiterate. If some sort of incentives are provided, this remaining 6-8% left out children can be captured.
- The emphasis in primary education programme must now move from inclusion to quality improvement so that secondary education becomes more useful to high-school dropouts.
- The curriculum in secondary education school should include some work-oriented education. Teaching on modern agriculture and vocational skills needs to be integrated to increase productivity of labour for high-school dropouts as well as those who complete and become part of the national and international work-force.

Dr Hossain as a whole emphasised on the socioeconomic factors, in addition to the school factors in order to better address the issue of dropout and exclusion. Turning attention for a targeted approach to include the children who continue to be out of schools, he suggested for economic incentives for socio-economically vulnerable children, as he observed there is a lack of demand for schooling among this population group. He further elaborated the issue of opportunity cost by noting that, since there is an income forgone for not using the children's labour in family enterprises and if the return

of education is not higher to compensate this cost, the parents will not find it as an incentive for them to send their children to school.

Comments from the Chair

Mentioning Dr Hossain's presentation as an 'exceedingly informative perspective' to guide policy makers, *Professor Sobhan* thanked him and invited Dr Manzoor Ahmed to take the floor recognizing him as 'one of our most eminent authorities of education'.

Presentation by Dr Manzoor Ahmed

Recognising the significance of such a dialogue, *Dr Manzoor Ahmed* expressed his pleasure to be part of this endeavour. He also appreciated the opportunity to be part of a consultative process with Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), government, civil society groups brought together by CAMPE and development partners in preparing the position paper. Referring to Dr Hossain's interesting analysis of empirical evidence in understanding the changes and progress in school participation patterns, dropout trends and gender dimensions of inclusion-exclusion over the last two decades, he noted the pervasive problem of inequality, poverty, disparity that still exist strongly in our society. He pointed out that with notable increase in the level of enrolment including enrolment of girls, 'inequality and disparity is reflected not in just enrolment, but much more in terms of completion, in terms of staying on and in terms of acquiring the learning competencies and skills and actually benefiting from it'. So, in the three basic elements of EFA, MDG goals, i.e. *enrolment*, *completion* and *acquiring basic skills*, substantial progress have been made in the first one, but the latter remains out of our reach, he noted. Furthermore, in terms of completion and acquiring basic skills, inequality persists, since the quality deficit is mostly affecting the poor. With this problem in mind, he emphasised the importance of setting the agenda in an inclusive and participatory way involving all stakeholders, and making it a national agenda, rather than an isolated governmental and bureaucratic one.

Indicating that we are not on track to achieve 2015 EFA, MDG and national education goals with shortfalls remaining high, *Dr Ahmed* called for an extra-ordinary national mobilization with a special sense of urgency to begin preparation for the next major phase of government-led national activities in primary and basic education. Emphasizing on making the universal primary education as a truly national agenda, harnessing the contributions of all stakeholders and taking a longer term view until at least 2020, he

indicated that the CAMPE position paper¹ described the key stakeholders' role in achieving universal primary education. The paper, proposing a set of propositions to spark further consultation and dialogue instead of offering a comprehensive plan, sets a vision for UPE with an eye on the place of human resource development in national development priorities.

Dr Ahmed mentioned the areas where PEDP II made substantial progress including construction of classrooms, hiring of new teachers, offering PTI training to untrained teachers, distribution of textbooks and stipends, development of an inclusive education framework and a gender framework, trial introduction of school level improvement plan and introduction of primary completion exam etc. He then also pointed out where challenges remained, including application in practice of the inclusive and gender framework, effective implementation of school and upazila level planning, management capacity building at field and central level, better database for effective monitoring, significant improvement in teaching-learning in classroom. These deficiencies led to a very large dropout and non-completion rate, low learning achievement for the majority and great inequality in the system. With some issues addressed, leaving other vital questions largely unaddressed and even the need for addressing those unrecognized, successes have been partial, *Dr Ahmed* said. He questioned whether we can continue to ignore these vital concerns and be satisfied with the current incremental approach of PEDP II.

Dr Ahmed argued for a longer term vision for Bangladesh as a middle-income country – democratic, progressive, and pluralistic, with a real stake for all citizens in it. He added that the education system will play a critical role in establishing this stake for all in an environment of a globally competitive economy. This vision requires for certain strategies to be adopted and particular concerns to be addressed in 2010-15 period, outlined as follows:

- It has to be a truly national effort, led by the government, but not just a bureaucratic Ministry/DPE operation;
- It has to be a comprehensive programme covering all types of primary level education;
- It must recognize the right to education of acceptable quality for all children and guarantee this right in partnership with all who can contribute;

¹ A summary of the CAMPE position paper on formulating national programme for primary education was circulated among the participants.

- Equity in participation and outcome must be the key principle. Even if equity in outcome cannot be guaranteed, a good faith effort has to be made to create the essential conditions for equity with quality for all children.

With all these issues shaping and characterizing primary education development, Dr. Ahmed submitted that:

- Low quality characterizes much of the system, along with large variations in quality, which has resulted in serious inequity. The need for an inclusive and responsive system, with special efforts to serve highly deprived and poor groups and areas must be recognised. These efforts need to be linked with poverty reduction, e.g. challenging frontiers of poverty reduction (CFPR), perhaps through a challenge fund to support the work of NGOs.
- The diversity of delivery mechanisms, with upto 11 different types of primary schools, calls for a unified national system (not necessarily uniform) with common core curriculum and core standards for provisions that allow a common educational experience to all children. Such a system would include government schools, non-government schools, madrasahs, non-formal schools, English medium schools etc.
- With five grades of primary education seen as insufficient preparation for citizens of an aspiring middle-income country, there is a strong case for extending the basic education stage to grade 8 with a pragmatic and time-bound plan to move toward this goal.
- The system cannot achieve its goals with the current numbers of teachers, methods of preparation and professional development and the level of salary and incentives. New ways of thinking about teachers and pedagogy are needed, e.g., enabling selected and properly equipped degree collages to train primary teachers as part of the three-year degree, turning PTIs into in-service training centres, and commensurate salaries and status for highly qualified teachers.
- The quality goals in primary education require major changes in curriculum, teaching-learning materials and assessment. These necessary changes underscore the need for high quality textbooks, other learning support materials, teachers' guides and supplementary materials and the importance of learning assessment in support of instruction. Greater professionalism is needed in preparation of curriculum and learning materials, and a restructuring of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), separating responsibilities for textbook preparation and distribution from curriculum development. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resources must be widely and creatively used for improving the quality of teaching-learning as well as to support teacher development and enhance accountability at all levels.

- Physical infra-structure will require major further investments to meet the minimum acceptable criteria for appropriate learning environment for achieving the quality with equity goals.
- Preschool education has to be a key component of the unified system, especially to ensure school readiness for first generation learners and children subject to other disadvantages. A systematic area-based planning and provisions will be needed for children with special needs.
- Substantially greater resources are needed to assure minimum necessary levels of quality with equity. Equally important is the effective use of resources, through, for example, upazila-based capitation formulas, decentralised management of resources, and assessing optimal use of scarce resources, a case in point being the spending on stipends. More resources are needed at the school level along with greater discretion with accountability in their use. The question of affordability must be turned around to ask—can we afford not to make the necessary investment in education with quality and equity.
- Moving beyond incremental change requires the system to build learning and capacity-development mechanisms, through which information, monitoring and evaluation, and targeted research are used, involving academic and research institutions and NGOs, to better reach system goals and to learn and use the lessons from experience.
- Effective Governance and management are essential, at both central and school levels. A result focused system requires meaningful decentralisation in planning and resource management, recognising the need for professionalism and capacity building, especially at school, upazila and district levels. Decentralisation will involve decentralising implementation of the new programme itself. Structural and legal changes for this purpose will require national political decisions at the top, including recommendations to establish a permanent statutory education commission and a single ministry of education and human resources to ensure coordination and unified guidance.
- As a national responsibility, primary education should involve participation and consultation by all major stakeholders – parents, NGOs, academic institutions, and other civil society institutions in developing the programme, maintaining an oversight over its implementation, and contributing to the provision of primary education. It is the obligation of the government to ensure that this multi-faceted participation of stakeholders happens.

Dr Ahmed also pointed out that PEDP II should not be held responsible for deficits in respect to the abovementioned reforms, since these were not the main PEDP goals. In line with the above submissions, he suggested for greater political, legal, structural and

financial consensus which is a necessary precondition for leading to decision making processes that help to determine the next steps, tasks, time-table and milestones; as well as responsibilities and mechanisms for collaboration. Dialogues and consultations among stakeholders are needed to be held on rapid assessment procedures, fact-finding analyses and baseline studies for benchmarking. The major next step to make the other necessary steps possible, *Dr Ahmed* proposed to set up a working group to guide consensus-building and oversee implementation processes, and continuing public information and communication. It should be, he suggested, a government-led national process and mechanism mobilizing and effectively using all national capacities and international technical support and resources. However, he was critical of MoPME's response to the position paper, which was to ask CAMPE to reformulate the paper indicating only NGO role rather than a broader analysis of development in primary education. *Dr Ahmed* emphasised that NGO/civil society role is not a discrete segmented part from the whole primary education development framework; and therefore the civil society's key role in this regard is to 'participate in building the new vision of primary education and that a national process must be initiated to that end'.

Comments from the Chair

Professor Sobhan thanked Dr Manzoor Ahmed for making important suggestions on how to move forward towards both universalising educational opportunities for all and upgrading the quality. He then linked Dr Ahmed's propositions to Dr Hossain's findings. Referring to the late running of the session behind schedule, he asked the audience to keep the issues raised from both the presentations in mind and to be precise while responding and opened up the session for discussion.

A Synopsis of the Open-floor Discussion

Factors Significantly Contributing to Dropout

Appreciating Dr Hossain's study that it has precisely identified the socio-economic causes of drop out, *Dr Siddiquir Rahman*, Professor, Institute of Education and Research (IER), Dhaka University (DU) and Consultant PEDP II indicated the unattractive school environment as one of the major causes for dropout. Due to the unpleasant environment, students do not like school, he mentioned and demanded for research study that can depict what percentage of the children who drop out actually liked school and what aspects of school they did not like. In his presentation, Dr Hossain recommended for providing financial incentives for the children from poorer families to compensate their opportunity cost and to retain them in the system upto the secondary completion, the threshold for benefiting meaningfully from education. *Professor Siddiquir Rahman*

claimed that Dr Hossain's study did not take into account the impact of stipend programme on which government is spending a lot of money to maintain a greater retention rate. He further elaborated that 40 per cent of the ultra poor children at primary level and girls upto grade 12 are receiving stipend. So the recommendation is already in place, he pointed. Acknowledging that Dr Ahmed's study has rightly identified some challenges for offering primary education with quality and equity, *Dr Siddiqur Rahman* recognised that improving the standard of teaching-learning is the major challenge for quality education. He held that if we can overcome this problem, many of our problems would be solved, because children will only attend school if they can learn something meaningful in a joyful manner.

Taking poverty as the main culprit, *Sheikh Shahidul Islam*, former Education Minister and the Secretary General of Jatiya Party, identified lack of very basic infrastructural provisions and malnutrition as some of the main contributing factors to dropout. Distance between school and students' place of residence is another factor, he recognised and held that at least one school in each village should be set up.

Government-led programme, but not solely government's agenda

Referring to Dr Ahmed's proposal for PEDP follow-up programmes to be truly national effort led by government, but with active contribution from all relevant stakeholders rather than being an isolated DPE/ministry operation, *Dr Siddiqur Rahman* asked whether there is a difference between government-led programme and DPE/ministry operations. *Professor Shafi Ahmed* of English Department, Jahangirnagar University (JU) elaborated on this issue and agreed on Dr Ahmed's concern that government alone cannot address the problem of primary or secondary education, or not even of tertiary education. All have got some stake in the society, hence all have some responsibility to their respective community. So as a whole when we talk about community participation, we conceive it as a positive value, and accordingly NGO role in education should be taken as a positive value, he mentioned. Though he also acknowledged that, 'NGO, the word itself has somehow over the years, because of the performance of certain NGOs, has lost some of its virtuous aspects'. To this end, he referred to the recent dispute raised against BRAC to work with government's formal education system with its long successful experience in non-formal education. Reporting on the resistance from teachers, government officers, upazila officers, columnists and others in this regard, he continued to argue that though the government is in power, it is not within only government's power to alleviate all the sufferings and the government usually has a tendency to fail or some how divert the central target of it. So, all the NGOs, civil society and communities should make a TRIO to share experiences and to work together to achieve certain goals, he expressed. Another participant supported this line of argument with admitting that our country is a very poor

one where many of the students come to school without even having a proper meal. No doubt the government has undertaken a great responsibility, but however, if all of us work together hand in hand united; we can reach any and every target.

Pointing to the widely discussed debate about BRAC and its role as an NGO into the primary education principally conceived as a state affair, *Mr B M Ashadullah*, Convenor, National Primary Teachers Association spoke on behalf of the 3.5 lakhs of government primary school teachers. Referring to the chapter 17 of the national constitution, he held that the whole responsibility of primary education has been vested upon the government. So there is no legal or constitutional scope for the government to share this responsibility with others, he opined. 'If any NGO or any other voluntary organisation wants to be part of the scenario, they should work passively staying behind the focal curtain, they can just perform a few specific tasks assigned by the government, nothing more than that' he held. Dealing with this issue of NGO involvement, *Md A Awal Talukder*, President of Bangladesh Govt. Primary School Teachers Association apprehended that some reinforcement agencies can help the government to develop the primary education sector and therefore can take necessary interventions such as trainings or the like. But teachers being government employees will not accept it easily if others (including BRAC) enter into the class to supervise their activity. So the issue of political agency should be taken into active consideration. Another primary school teacher, in this line of argument added that the issue of BRAC's involvement in this stake has been misunderstood to some extent and can be settled more systematically with friendly dialogues. Since as a development organisation it has a wide range of experience in education, it can be involved in providing training to teachers, but the leadership and authority should be preserved in accordance with right and dignity on a his-his-whose-whose basis. If not dealt with considering these sensitive issues, government officials and employees would not be supportive to this collaboration from their standpoint.

Echoing with this premise that the chief responsibility to manage and offer primary education should be of the government and other initiatives including NGOs and civil society can support this, *Sheikh Shahidul Islam*, former Education Minister held that we should go for compulsory primary education, not universal primary education. The term 'compulsory' implies that the government should provide primary education to all children, while the term 'universal' offers an escape route to government, he claimed.

As an education enthusiast, *Mr Anir Chowdhury*, the Policy Advisor of the Access to Information Programme of the Chief Advisor's Office highlighted the significance of educational governance and the community involvement in education. He was of the opinion that the quality of education should be owned by the community while the

government is better prepared to actually ensure quantity than quality. So ‘the paper that has been prepared and the process through which perhaps the next phase of PEDP may be developed, only could encourage a catalytic process that NGOs and Local Government Institutions (Upazilla Parishads and Union Parishads) could devise so that the communities could be empowered to actually monitor the quality of education in schools’ he specified.

Expanding primary education upto Grade 8

In response to Dr Ahmed’s proposal to extend the extent of primary education from grade 5 to grade 8, *Dr Siddiquir Rahman* held that there is no need for this as because there are already provisions for junior secondary up to grade 8. What we need, he offered, is to expand the junior secondary provisions by increasing seat-capacity in schools and upgrading the curriculum standard rather than just renaming these grades as primary. Echoing with Dr Siddiquir Rahman, *Dr Kazi Saleh Ahmed*, former Vice Chancellor, JU referred to the ever deteriorating poor quality of present primary system where majority of the students do not even achieve minimum grade-wise competencies, but however the system allows them to move the next grades, making the whole system output more and more unproductive. He, therefore, held the antithesis to Dr Ahmed’s proposition to extending primary upto grade 8 and preserved the need for more focusing onto the quality upgradation within the present structure spanning from grades 1 to 5. He further added that, recommendations should be made with the fullest realisation of present capacity of the system and the potential significance that it can serve with. However, *Professor Shafi Ahmed* agreed on the proposition of this extension, and explained that it is not a matter of renaming junior secondary classes as primary, but this extension implies the responsibility to the state to cater primary education upto grade 8. He further argued that if system specification remains in a state where students in primary schools do not even achieve competencies of grade 1 or 2 level, that does not necessarily mean that we cannot move onto extending primary upto grade 8 level. He also conceded that even though we are not at a social revolutionary stage, but we certainly need to think of certain reforms within the system.

The Macro Conditions and the Micro Realities

Addressing Dr Ahmed’s policy paper as a very comprehensive one that covers almost all important areas of education, *Dr Siddiquir Rahman* commented that the paper focuses more on macro issues with less capturing the micro realities and concerns. Emphasising on the need for changing the classroom culture as an utmost requirement for quality improvement, he cautioned that no matter what we do at the macro level will have little impact on classroom culture that can significantly bring about qualitative changes. So, he referred, even if we have a single ministry in place of two or three, one directorate instead

of five, it will not directly lead us to the desirable conditions. And for changing classroom culture, we shall have to have very specific plans and programmes and then to materialize those into effective actions. However, *Mr Sheikh Shahidul Islam* agreed on Dr Ahmed's premise in this regard and suggested for two structural changes in the macro policy formation conditions. He first suggested for integration of the two education ministries – the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) for effective educational planning. And his second suggestion was that educational planning should not be done on annual basis based on Annual Development Programme (ADP). Referring to the current planning culture, he grieved that, 'We have abandoned the perspective plan, we have abandoned our vision. Then we went for five-year plan. Now we have also abandoned that. We now are going for PRSP. And we're moving on the basis of an ADP'. Commenting that education cannot and should not be planned on a year to year basis he suggested that we should come back to at least five-year-plan process and probably this can create an impetus to the efforts of achieving the MDG targets.

Dr Ahmadullah Mia, Director, Research, Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) referred to another macro issue – the need for a cross-sectoral approach. His submission was that the primary education sub-sector should not be treated in isolation, rather other sub-sectors like secondary, tertiary and higher education should be considered in improving primary education. Because primary teachers come through secondary or tertiary levels and at present, we do not have good teachers, as the quality at these levels are not upto the mark. Signifying political commitment as one of the crucial necessity for sustainable development in education, he submitted that we need good leaders with strong political commitment, honesty and dedication for educational development. In addition to political commitment, he defined commitment from business sub-sector as another crucial issue that can contribute a lot in promotion of educational quality. He then moved on to capture the attitude, the kind of approach that government takes into development and towards education and referred to this as a damaging factor prevailing in the macro-policy realm. Denoting Dr Ahmed's paper as a very thoughtful, analytic and insightful paper, he criticised the MoPME's response as very much disappointing.

With a deteriorating economic condition the social disparity will continue to be worsened day by day, *Dr Mia* cautioned, until we have radical reforms in our economic and social sectors. In order to improve the condition, our family poverty situation needs to be addressed. Our best schools are the most expensive ones. So only the rich can avail good quality education for themselves. So there should be a holistic approach to change the family poverty situation and to change the nature of functioning of the local governments rather than putting all our attention to the macro issues. We therefore need to have a sort

of social campaign, social movement to alter the micro reality at the same time, he embraced.

The Need for a Unified System

Referring to one of CAMPE's studies that revealed a stratified education system with 11 different school types meant for different population groups, such as poorest, middle class and richest, *Dr Kazi Saleh Ahmed* notified that by agreeing to have these different types, we are intentionally trying to create disparities in the society. The available indicators that show Bangladesh's substantial progress in primary education mask this social disparity, he observed. He indicated that with minimum spending madrasah education is of the poorest quality, government primary schools are offering a second grade education, the private schools serve the better-offs and the kindergarten and English medium schools are offering the best available services. In that sense, majority of the students, 75-85% is deprived of quality education that reinforces the social inequality. The government policy is responsible for this situation, he claimed and argued that conceiving education as a right for all is not a sufficient condition to allow everybody to complete primary education. The state should actively come forward to find out why some children are always left behind or lag behind and should take necessary steps accordingly.

Referring to Dr Ahmed's paper on post PEDP II phase, *Chaudhury Mufad Ahmed*, Joint Programme Director, PEDP II realised one of the major shortcomings of PEDP II is that it basically concentrated on the formal primary education sector and did not take into account the non-formal sector. 'But we cannot divide our children who are going to formal schools, non-formal schools, to madrasahs' he regarded, 'so if we talk about achieving universal primary education, if we talk about quality education for our children, our programme should be a holistic one'. However, *Ms Rasheda K Choudhury*, Hon'ble Advisor to the Caretaker Government, and the Chief Guest to the session held that since it is a competitive globalised world, 'right to choice' should be equally addressed along with the 'right to education'. She further pointed out that the demand side should be kept in active consideration in doing so, since the mainstream has been failing so far in delivering quality education upto the standard.

Teacher Salary, Incentives and their Career Growth

Admitting that the teacher recruitment process has been very strong with good teachers being recruited, one speaker indicated that the very poor incentives offered to the teachers is one of the causes for which the teachers do not stay and sustain in the system. Referring to some recommendations formulated in 1997 about teacher recruitment and their professional career growth, he asked about how much of it has been successfully achieved. 'Same was the case with the recommendations those came in 2003' he

lamented, ‘recommendations came and stayed in the folds of those papers’. Even if one third of the recommendations were tried to be implemented, we could have achieved a logical progress in the primary education sector, he reported.

Regarding to the salary structure of primary school teachers, one teacher observed that the salary that our education sector offers is extremely low and lower than many of our neighbouring countries. ‘We can not expect good efforts from a person, who is under the pangs of poverty and unable even to feed his/her children properly’ he expressed. He, on behalf of all teachers presented his earnest and humble request to all development partners and NGO-civil society representatives to take forward that the financial empowerment of the teachers should be considered with proper solemnity. Observing that the madrasah teachers receiving a negligible honorarium of 500BDT (Bangladeshi Taka), the community teachers getting a consolidated 1200 BDT, a non-government teacher drawing 2440-3200 BDT, he asked whether it is really possible for a teacher to run his/her family with this smaller amount of money. So this would be an essential should-be for all to submit a proposal to the government to consider the salary structure of the primary teachers, so that the structure at least keeps a comparable ratio with those of the neighbouring countries like India, Maldives, Srilanka or the like, if not equal, he claimed.

Regarding the teachers’ professional career growth, this teacher admired the intension being expressed by one advisor to the caretaker government in a TV talk show to endow the primary teachers with second grade position salary rank. With a masters-degree, if a primary teacher is given the opportunity for further professional development and promotion to different suitable sectors, he thought it would definitely go a long way for the enlistment of the standard of primary education with more mobilization and enthusiasm in teachers resulting into a greater change in quality. It will also reduce the number of teachers leaving the profession so frequently and will minimise the eventual cost for teacher development. *Ms Barbara Payne*, Senior Education Advisor to Department of International Development, UK (DFID) also flagged the premise that the teachers have to be at the heart of the education system and developing a cadre of teachers who are themselves of quality is the core to the transformation of an education system.

The Teaching Reality and the Non-teaching Burdens

Mr B M Ashadullah, Primary School Teacher and Convener of the National Primary Teachers’ Association assumed that to achieve quality primary education and the certain targets within the speculated time, the one who is held responsible at the highest degree is a primary school teacher. He expressed that almost all the different voices like the civil intellectuals, educationists mostly count the part of the teachers’ responsibility, and they

sometimes even ‘stir us and hit us’. But the professional problems those the primary school teachers are undergoing have not yet been properly detected. There is no such forum where teachers’ problems are heard. Pointing to the huge teacher-student ratio, *Mr Ashadullah* illustrated how impossible and inhumane it is to manage for one teacher to handle a size of 80-100 young children. ‘The child that comes into the class leaving its mother’s lap does not keep quiet’ he added, ‘they go on pinching others, urinate inside the classroom, their nose waters all the while and that is the situation’. He then illustrated the devastating work-situation explaining that even if the teacher-student ratio is reduced to an agreeable number, to the proposed 1:30 for example, even then the problem will persist due to lengthy recruitment process. This is because if 50 are recruited, 100 make up another vacuum. So there is no single school where at least one or two positions remain vacant all the while. So, if 6 is the supposed-to-be regular number of available positions and 1 is always missing, a simple calculation shows that the system always lag behind at a rate of 15% of the target. He further added that ‘it has been sort of customary for Bangladesh to impose each and every national undertaking on to the primary teachers’. In the last one year, he reported, teachers had to prepare the voter list for 3 times. ‘So when shall I do my school-jobs?’ he asked. ‘This is how I am sort of kept outside the class’ he informed with grief.

In addition to the teacher-student ratio, *Mr Ashadullah* touched upon the issue of contact hours. The primary schools are presently run in two shifts – the first for grades 1 & 2 and the second for grades 3, 4 & 5. For the first shift the contact hour is 2 hours and 50 minutes but at best teaching can be held for 2 hours and 30 minutes and for grades 3-5, it is at best for 3 hours and 50 minutes. ‘What shall I teach in this small 2 or 3 hours when it does not even allow me to reach every student for once?’ he asked ‘while there remain more additional tasks and the regular attendance keeping and even appeasing the large number of students’. Unlike the university and college teachers, the primary teachers have to take not less than 8/9 classes a day, he continued. Addressing this issue as violation of human rights he stated, ‘just like an ever-rotating fan, I revolve all through around the school. Starting from 9:00 am I do not get a single moment’s off my work to take a refreshing breath. It results in first 2/3 classes as good, but for the rest of the classes one simply counts the moments very casually to reach the ending bell’. These are the causes that create the situation of targets not being achieved, and ‘the gust of rumour that is thus cast upon us does not have any touch of reality’ he finally claimed.

The Teacher Recruitment Process

Sheikh Shahidul Islam emphasised on the necessity to establish transparency on the teacher recruitment process and held that it should completely be on merit basis and free from political influence. Only then we can expect quality education to be delivered, he

realized. On this flow of conversation, *Professor Rehman Sobhan* threw a question to the primary school teachers whether they are willing to put themselves under the Upazila Parishad or it should be the concern of the ministry at the central level. One of the teachers explained, as per the constitution the responsibility solely lies with the government. *Professor Sobhan* further asked whether Upazila administration is a part of government or not, and the reply came 'yes'. He then probed the question that 'if the primary education is decentralised and given under Upazila's authority, do you have any problems?' the reply from a teacher referenced that in 1981 a bill was passed in the national assembly handing over the responsibility from the central government to the local Gram-Sarker, but a strong teachers' revolt forced the government to cancel that. When *Professor Sobhan* asked whether the decentralisation can be done now, answers from various teachers came that not only the teachers' revolt but also some corruption caused the turn back of the recruitment process to the central government as candidates had to satisfy the recruitment authority's demand at the cost of cattle, roof-tin or house. Finally they commented that if research proves the benefits of decentralising recruitment to the Upazila level, it can definitely be given a try.

Dealing with the issue of decentralisation, *Awal Talukder*, President of Bangladesh Govt. Primary School Teachers' Association emphasised on the unruly situation that it creates. If the responsibility is handed over to the Upazila level, the problems occur in the unruly penalizations imposed upon the teachers in the form of illegal transfers and the like for not supporting the Chairmen during the election, he illustrated. So he wished for certain freedom to be given to teachers which will enable them to keep the political influence away from their work. Touching upon but without detailing much the issues of scope, achievements and constraints of PEDP II, *Chaudhury Mufad Ahmed* flagged the formulation of transparent and corruption-free teacher recruitment as one very important but very difficult achievement of PEDP II. He pointed out that the district teacher recruitment process has been ensured to be completely corruption-free which has been recognised by the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), who are very critical about the corruption at the field-level. He recognised this as a big achievement since Bangladesh positions itself amongst the most corrupt countries.

The Role of Development Partners

Ms Barbara Payne, Senior Education Advisor to DFID found both the papers presented and the dialogue held very inspiring calling for a way forward to take through PEDP II onto its next phase. Whatever initiatives are taken for this, she emphasised, these should be fully owned by Bangladesh and that the development partner community will take a supporting role in that. There have been a lot of achievements of PEDP II that do not get even mentioned, she identified, one of them is the way in which the government is

driving the seat. She expressed her belief that who ever look into the schools will see that there is a difference now, though not a hugely significant one. However, quality is beginning to happen and the discussion about what constitutes quality is beginning to happen, she ratified. She then emphasised on the need for a road map illustrating clearly where we are now and where we want to go which she identified as a prerequisite to secure development funding at this time of global dismay and downturn. She further mentioned that the quantitative achievement of Bangladesh in development index leads the donor bodies to think that Bangladesh is doing well and there is no need to allocate that much funding any more. *Ms Payne*, however, opined that advancement in terms of quality is needed. So, there is a greater need to know how resolution is going to come to provide a framework where all the issues raised today get appropriately addressed and how the donors can work in harmony to support this.

Remarks from the Special Guest

Indicating the process of achieving MDGs as a massive task, *Mr Badrul Alam Tarafdar*, Secretary In-charge, MoPME and the Special Guest to the session mentioned this dialogue as an opportunity in producing guiding directions for involving and creating room for effective participation for all players, all the stakeholders in the primary sector, particularly the civil society and the government. Emphasising on the need for having more programmes and strategies, he requested the organisers to have these recommendations codified so that the government can follow these as a set of guiding principles for future actions in policy formulation and take these steps forward accordingly.

Remarks from the Chief Guest

Ms Rasheda K Choudhury, Hon'ble Advisor to the Caretaker Government, Ministries of Primary & Mass Education, Women & Children Affairs, and Cultural Affairs and the Chief Guest to the session addressed the dialogue as a tremendous learning opportunity for her. Being part of the government now, she particularly found this dialogue to offer her a different perspective; from the one she had before being part of the civil society organisation. She profusely expressed that Dr Hossain's paper has rightly identified the pockets of deprivation, particularly the geographical ones delineating the realities that one size does not fit all. In place of the 'Income Parity Index', she called for the 'Social Parity Index' to enable us to have the fullest explanation of the deprivation scenario and then to targeting all policies and interventions accordingly. Highlighting the need for targeted approach she held that there has to be some kind of thorough analysis, both academic and professional to recognise and acknowledge the need for specific demands. Specific

interventions are required to address these specific demands which are completely left out from the development agenda. Urban poverty pockets including commercial sex workers' and cleaners' (Porichchannata Kormi) children, geographical areas such as char, haor-baors; the traditional socially backward societies, such as Sylhet and Chittagong etc. are some areas those need special targeted approach, she suggested.

In her very first response to Dr Ahmed's paper, the Chief Guest strongly criticised the general trend of criticising government's role in every respect and upheld the need for acknowledging, respecting and recognising public servants' contribution. She particularly indicated to the civil society's tendency to negating everything, and opined that if it is taken as a thankless job, it will not help from an advocacy point of view, and there will be no innovation from the part of the government. In her speech she elaborated some of the government's achievements and contemplations for further improving the situation.

Admitting that the state has continuously been failing to focus on many of the crucial issues regarding equity and quality, she asked – who is the state? What is the role of community? What is the role of Upazila and Union Parishad? Are these not parts of the state? Since all these constitute the state, she indicated to the institutional reforms, through which the state has been trying to empower these various bodies more and more. More responsibilities to the local communities have been delegated through various ordinances, including Upazila Parishad ordinance, Union Parishad ordinance, City Corporation ordinance etc. In addition to these decentralisation processes, the government has actively promoted women empowerment by reserving one-third of the *Tofshills* in all these tiers. Also in each of these tiers, two positions of vice-chairs have been created with one being reserved for women, addressing women generously as proactive, committed and active in decision-making positions.

Addressing the question of NGO and civil society participation, the Advisor called for 'informing, involving and engaging people who can make a difference'. She questioned the role of communities and of the teachers in this regard. Pointing to one of government's contemplation for innovation in improving teachers' quality where a kind of competency test was tried to be developed, she elaborated the teachers' inertia in this regard. As a result of the political processes, mishandling and under-the-table deals related to teacher recruitment process, many teachers are entering the profession without having the required quality. So there is a need for some kind of mechanism that can address the situation, some kind of cadre service as public service commission for selecting, upgrading, challenging and testing the teachers' competency. And a probable strategy could be the introduction of the teachers' competency test and those who qualify

such testing could get enhanced salary. In response to government's such effort, the teachers went to the court challenging the whole decision, and this way they showed their resistance to change, she notified. How the government can deal with such problem, she asked. She pointed to another innovation, some kind of professional exam to test teacher proficiency administered by some professional bodies as is done for TOEFL or SAT. However, all these kind of innovative thinking that the government is contemplating encounters some stumbling blocks in the forms of politics or lack of commitment or lack of vision from many of the stakeholders, she claimed. The teachers, the community, the parents, the NGOs, everybody has a role to play, she mentioned. It is not only the government that has a problem, but also the teachers' role needs to be specified, she suggested. Pointing out that the teachers have different sections, fractions, seven different associations – how can they be integrated into a common agenda, she asked. She also pointed to another problem in regards to the political government that, whom the teachers should sit with and consult? So these issues need to be agreed upon. A strong political commitment needs to be there to deal with all these problems.

Some other achievements of the government the Chief Guest mentioned are the reduced teacher-student ratio from 1:70 to an average of 1:49 and the gender parity achieved in the teacher recruitment in all primary schools. Another big step from this government was to ensure 'the right to information'. The issue of information generation and dissemination has been so far a problematic area and getting access to vital information at school levels was a problem due to the schools' resistance. But now with new legal provisions, everyone has the right to have any information they need. These little gains can lead us to getting somewhere, particularly in achieving universal primary education, she mentioned. The other issue she raised is the need for advocacy and awareness building to reactivate mechanisms that already exist or institute new mechanisms to activate public-private partnership.

Informing that in the ADP review meeting there were very positive feedbacks from the ministry about the CAMPE position paper, Ms Choudhury greatly appreciated the policy options the paper suggested, particularly to have one single ministry for human resources development, the permanent national commission for education and the extension of primary education upto grade 8 and expressed her concern that all these have to be implemented, instituted and activated for an efficient system. She thanked CPD and CAMPE for taking such an initiative to help produce a common understanding and emphasised the need for more full-length dialogues to be held on specific issues such as the roles and responsibilities of teachers, the role of community, the role of next elected government, particularly the role of local government. How we are going to visualise each of their roles within the new frameworks of the Upazila, Union and City Corporation

ordinances and how the partnerships with civil societies and local communities could be strengthened to implement this forward-looking vision – would be one of our challenges, she viewed.

Concluding Remarks by the Chair

In his concluding remarks, *Professor Rehman Sobhan* summed up the major issues discussed on the floor. Recognising the creation of a divided society with a self-perpetuating ruling class, divided by virtue of education and continuously reinforced by the stratified educational provisions, he flagged that this will not bring a sustainable social order in any society in the 21st century. He therefore emphasised on the operative issues to be chalked out that can help us to reach the goal to ensure access to the same kind of education for all children irrespective of their origin, both at the primary and secondary level, to enable ordinary people to reach the same levels of opportunities in the society which are available for the elites. And this is the goal in which his organisation CPD is broadly committed, he regarded. With hoping that both Dr Mahabub Hossain and Dr Manzoor Ahmed's paper will particularly guide to that anticipated direction, he concluded the session.

List of Participants

<i>Dr Manzoor Ahmed</i>	Senior Advisor, BRAC University - Institute of Education and Development (BRACU-IED)
<i>Dr Kazi Saleh Ahmed</i>	Former Vice Chancellor, Jahangirnagar University and President, Foundation For Research on Educational Planning and Development (FREPD)
<i>Professor Shafi Ahmed</i>	Professor, Department. of English, Jahangirnagar University
<i>Dr Soaib Ahmed</i>	Assistant Professor, Bangladesh Open University
<i>Mr Chaudhury Mufad Ahmed</i>	Joint Program Director Primary Education Development Program - II (PEDP-II) Directorate of Primary Education (DPE)
<i>Ms Tasmin Akter</i>	Assistant Programme Officer Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)
<i>Mr Md Shafiu Alam</i>	Former Director Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS)
<i>Mr Md Mahbubul Alam</i>	Secretary General, Community Primary Teachers' Association
<i>Mr Samsul Alam</i>	General Secretary, National Primary Teachers' Association
<i>Mr B M Ashadullah</i>	Convener, National Primary Teachers' Association
<i>Ms Tasneem Athar</i>	Deputy Director, CAMPE
<i>Mr Md Abdur Rahman Bachchu</i>	Secretary General Bangladesh Non-Government Primary Teachers' Association
<i>Mr A Fazlullahil Baqi</i>	Deputy Programme Manager, CAMPE
<i>Mr Laverne Barretto</i>	First Secretary, Head of Development Cooperation Canadian High Commission
<i>Dr Anwara Begum</i>	Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
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<i>Mr Reshma Choudhury</i>	Member, Primary Curriculum, NCTB
<i>Mr Anir Chowdhury</i>	Policy Advisor, Access to Information (A2I) Programme Chief Adviser's Office
<i>Ms Rasheda K Choudhury</i>	Hon'ble Advisor to the Caretaker Government Ministries of Primary & Mass Education Women & Children Affairs and Cultural Affairs Consultant, NCTB
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<i>Mr Mohammad Badrul Hassan</i>	Deputy Programme Manager, Advocacy and Communication Save the Children (USA)
<i>Dr Mahabub Hossain</i>	Executive Director, BRAC
<i>Md Azizul Haq</i>	Director In-charge, CAMPE
<i>Mr Khondoker Shakhawat Ali</i>	Research Fellow, Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC)
<i>Mr Vibekananda Howlader</i>	Team leader, Community Network Unit, IED-BRACU

<i>Mr Md Kabir Tafiqul Islam</i>	Team Leader, Advocacy Unit, IED-BRACU
<i>Mr Md Mainul Islam</i>	Coordinator, Village Education Resource Centre (VERC)
<i>Mr Sheikh Shahidul Islam</i>	Former Minister of Education & Secretary General Jatio Party
<i>Dr James Jennings</i>	Regional Education Adviser Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) Australian High Commission
<i>Mr Md Fariduddin Kamal</i>	Senior Vice President Bangladesh Govt. Primary Teachers' Association
<i>Ms Terri Kelly</i>	Consultant, DFID
<i>Ms Hla Sein Khaine</i>	Team Leader, Primary Education Team, IED-BRACU
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<i>Mr Md Awal Talukder</i>	President, Bangladesh Govt. Primary School Teachers' Association
<i>Mr Badrul Alam Tarafdar</i>	Secretary In-charge, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
<i>Mr Kazi Raihan Zamil</i>	Coordinantor, CARITAS

List of Journalists

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<i>Mr Mahmudul Karim Chanchal</i>	Senior Reporter, Channel i
<i>Mr Suranjith Deabnath</i>	Staff Reporter, The Daily Star
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<i>Ms Rubina Mustafa</i>	Reporter, Channel 1
<i>Mr Bellal Bin Quashem</i>	Staff Reporter, The Daily Ittefaq
<i>Mr Sadequr Rahman</i>	Staff Reporter, The Daily Sangram
<i>Mr Ataur Rahman</i>	Staff Reporter, The Sangbad
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