

A Framework for Action on Education Governance

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Conference on Governance in Education: Transparency, Accountability and Effectiveness (March 2-4, 2008)

The three day conference on *Governance in Education: Transparency, Accountability and Effectiveness* was organized by UNESCO and the Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University and the Access to Information Programme at the Chief Adviser's Office, with technical assistance from UNDP, provided organisational support and substantial input into the conference. The conference was addressed and inaugurated by Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, Honourable Chief Adviser, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on March 2, 2008 at the International Conference Centre, Shapla Hall, at the Chief Adviser's Office. Dr. Manzoor Ahmed, Director, Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University and Anir Chowdhury, Policy Adviser, Access to Information Programme, Chief Adviser's Office presented the theme papers. The inaugural programme was chaired by Mr. Md. Momtajul Islam Secretary, Ministry of Education with Ms. Rasheda K. Chowdhury, Honourable Adviser for Primary and Mass Education, Culture and Women and Children's Affairs welcoming the audience and Mr. Malama Meleisea, Director, UNESCO, Bangladesh, concluding the session.

Over 80 participants from the central and field levels in primary and secondary education, academics, and representatives of NGOs and other stakeholders participated in the working sessions on 2-3 March, 2008 at the BANBEIS Conference Room. Distinguished speakers from home and abroad spoke during the working sessions, and the participants engaged in parallel brainstorming sessions to recommend solutions to five problem areas of the sector. These recommendations were taken as inputs into the Framework for Action from the conference.

The closing session was addressed by Dr. A.B. Mirza Azizul Islam, Honourable Adviser for Finance and Planning, as the Chief Guest, and Ms. Rasheda K. Chowdhury, Honourable Adviser for Primary and Mass Education, Culture and Women and Children's Affairs. Mr. Ashraf Moqbul, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education spoke on behalf of the ministry and Ms. Hua Du, Country Director, Asian Development Bank spoke on behalf of the development partners. Mr. M. Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, chaired the session and Dr. Mahmudul Hassan, Secretary, Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO made the concluding remarks.

The Chief Adviser's Speech

The Chief Adviser's address at the inaugural session of the conference was a comprehensive statement about pre-tertiary education. He provided important guidelines for educational priorities, which have major implications for national education policy and strategy. The main points in Chief Adviser's speech are the following.

- Great differences have emerged in the quality of education in urban and rural areas and for children of the rich and the poor. Segmentation and division in the education system have created a divided society.
- We have to ensure that a set of core knowledge and competencies are acquired by all students, along with choices for additional/complementary learning options. This calls for a core curricular content and objectives irrespective of the type of institution and provider of service.
- National commitment to "offer free and compulsory education to all boys and girls" as stated in Article 17 of the Constitution, and the MDG and EFA goals for 2015 will remain unrealized at the present rate of progress.
- Well-known NGOs in Bangladesh, which have pioneered internationally acclaimed innovations in preschool, primary, and secondary education, constitute a major "social capital" for our national development, which must be used to achieve national education goals.
- All service providers in a geographical unit, such as the upazila - be they government education authorities, NGOs, or community organizations - should work together through a mechanism of local coordination to ensure that every child can participate in an institution which meets minimum agreed standards of quality instruction, whoever provides the service.
- Non-governmental and community organisations can serve as the intermediary between the public education services and the community and parents to bring all stakeholders together. Educational institutions then can become

truly responsive and answerable to the community and the parents. The local government institutions, as they become stronger, can play a more direct role than at present in this process.

- Community, voluntary and non-governmental organizations and the private sector need to be encouraged and supported to create and manage community learning centres, ICT centres and education programmes for youth and adults as the building blocks of a “learning society.”
- Vocational and technical education opportunities at the post-primary level should be increased substantially. Participation in skill development of youth who do not continue in formal education has to be raised manifold to prepare young people for the world of work. New models of effective and high quality vocational and technical education need to be designed which are responsive and adaptable to changing market demands. Successful experience elsewhere shows that the government should focus on policy-making, regulatory framework for standards, and overall planning to promote public-private collaboration in provisions for market-responsive vocational and technical education.
- Critical educational policy decisions and choice of priorities should be made transparently with ample public dialogue and the opportunity for review by stakeholders. An institutional consultative mechanism mandated to review and provide policy directions on a regular basis can be an effective vehicle for public scrutiny and continuity of policy.
- An important step in utilizing ICT resources for education would be to make a BTV channel available for educational use, for which the infrastructure largely exists. This channel can be used optimally and effectively for high priority purposes, such as, teacher training and support, literacy and continuing education, supplementing formal primary and secondary classroom instruction, Open University courses, English language instruction, and so on. The content and the delivery of the different programmes can be the responsibility of concerned education service providers, including non-government ones. The Ministry of information and the two Ministries in education should move expeditiously to create the new facility.
- A little over two percent of GDP is being devoted at present to education as public resources. This ratio needs to double within the next decade and the share of government for education needs to increase proportionately from the present level of under 15 percent. This investment is necessary to fulfill the aspirations in education. But good governance must ensure that the increased resources are used effectively and efficiently.

The participants of the conference welcome the statement of the Honourable Chief Adviser and endorse the content of the statement, consider these as important policy guidelines, and urge the responsible government authorities, particularly, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, to take necessary steps to translate the guidelines into appropriate action.

The Conference recognizes that several ministries such as the ministries of Education and Primary and Mass Education, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Finance and the Planning Commission, among others, need to work together to initiate and facilitate follow-up of the guidelines contained in the statement of the Honourable Chief Adviser. As such, the Conference recommends that a task-force with the lead taken at the Chief Advisers’ Office be formed for this purpose.

In light of the address of the Honourable Chief adviser, and having deliberated on the issues in the working sessions, the Conference attempted to develop a Framework for Action for good governance in pre-tertiary education, as presented below.

A Framework for Action for Improving Governance to Achieve Better Outcomes in Education

1. Decentralization of authority with accountability in educational management to local level and individual institutions

A structure of decentralization of education management should be developed which will assign central authorities such as the Ministry, Directorates and Boards broad policy and regulatory responsibilities, while empowering zilla and upazilla education offices, training institutes and schools to make decisions regarding activities, institutions and personnel.

Development of a mechanism for coordinating, planning and managing primary and secondary education involving all service providers at the local level should be given high priority. To do this effectively and to strengthen the capacity and

resources at the local level, development and trial of decentralised planning and management should be undertaken in a number of districts, before introducing it nationally.

2. Policy-making and coordination structures

In line with the suggestion of the Honourable Chief adviser for a consultative mechanism for policy dialogue and continuity, a permanent National Commission on Education for pre-tertiary education composed of distinguished and respected representatives of the major stakeholders – the civil society, the academic community, and the government education establishment – answerable directly to the National Parliament should be established. The Commission should be a statutory body with functions and status specified in a national education law. It should have a secretariat with technical capacity for policy review and evaluation of the performance of the education system. The Commission may provide an overall report on the national education system and a specific aspect or sub-sector of the system in alternate years.

In keeping with the goal of education “to build successful globalized citizens for the 21st century”, the quality parameters need to be redefined for every level including primary, secondary, technical and vocational education. Recruitment and promotion rules need to be revisited for education administration, teachers and members of management committees, and enforced transparently and objectively.

3. A comprehensive law for national education

A national Education Law should be enacted as a comprehensive legal framework for implementing the constitutional provision of providing free and compulsory education to all boys and girls. Such a law would spell out rights, responsibilities and obligations of citizens and government agencies at different levels, principles of decentralization and accountability, regulatory framework for different types of education programmes and institutions, and principles of defining and protecting public interest in education. The Citizen’s Charter initiative, espoused by the Honourable Chief Adviser, may be enforced through this law for all educational administrative and service provider institutions.

4. Adequate resources for education with quality and equity

As proposed by the Honourable Chief Adviser, measures should be taken to double the share of GN P and of government budget for education in the next ten years. Medium term budgetary framework (3 to 5 years) needs to be developed for both development and recurrent expenditures in education in order to achieve the target for ensuring adequate resources for education. Public subvention and incentives to educational institutions should be linked to commitment and fulfillment of agreed performance criteria and targets; greater autonomy and control of resources can be offered to institutions that prove their capability to use resources effectively. Schools may be given incentives to generate local funds.

5. Education governance freed from partisan politics

A consensus has to be built regarding political parties restraining themselves from involving teachers and teachers’ organizations in partisan politics; educational decision-making including those on appointments, transfers and promotion should be protected from extraneous political influence; appropriate legal provisions and rules for election for the parliament and other people’s representative bodies should help protect education institutions from undue political influence. Codes of conduct for teachers and students should be developed and enforced.

6. School as the locus of action

The locus of action for purposeful governance to address issues of quality and equity in education should be the school, since only at the school, the education authorities can reach the child, and the parents and the teachers can work out appropriate measures to act upon specific circumstances of disadvantage.

Strategy to promote greater authority with accountability at school level. This aim can be supported by the government by inviting and encouraging schools to take responsibility and demonstrate their capacity to do so on the basis of agreed criteria. Schools which perform well, based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are localized to the specific needs of the community, can be rewarded, exempted from control and allowed to develop and follow their own higher standards, as the incentive for nurturing self-regulation and greater school-level responsibility with accountability.

Making managing committees responsive and accountable. Modification of regulations, awareness raising and active encouragement on the part of political and education authorities are needed to make the selection of the chairperson and members of the managing committees less beholden to local political personalities and more a genuine choice of the community so that this key responsibility is given to those genuinely interested in education.

Gender balance in managing committees. The School Managing Committees should have better gender balance with more than symbolic participation of women in school management.

7. Supporting development and use of professional capacity

Human resource policy and practices in education including career structure should allow and facilitate professional development and professional staff to rise to management and decision-making level. Institutions including IER of Dhaka University, IED of BRAC University, NAPE, NAEM and NCTB should be supported to work together on developing strategy and plan for professionalisation and professional capacity development in primary and secondary education. The elements of this effort should include institutional and organizational analysis of primary and secondary education management, establishment of a primary education cadre, development of short and longer specialised training and professional development courses, rethinking and redesigning pre-service and in-service training for teachers and members of school management committee, including refresher training, and action research to cope with huge needs in terms of quality and quantity. ICT tools such as TV, VCD, mobile phone, and computer may be leveraged for “anytime-anywhere” training thereby saving time and cost and allowing flexible learner-centred schedules.

8. Career growth and better remuneration for teachers

A workable approach to increase remuneration for teaching and linking it with performance is to design remuneration structure to allow for more differentiation in teaching positions (for example, entry-level assistant teachers, teachers, senior/master teachers/ team leaders/ assistant headmaster and headmaster) with promotion and salary raise tied to clearly established and enforced performance criteria. Some special rewards or bonuses can be tied to group performance at the institution. The key role of the head master of the primary and secondary school as an educational leader and manager with enhanced authority at the school level should be recognised and commensurate status and salary granted. The Annual Confidential Report (ACR) for teachers needs to be transformed into a performance evaluation system and enforced.

9. A greater voice of stakeholders at all levels

Openness and sharing of information and dialogue in public forums (including posting the “Citizen’s Charter” publicly) should be the norm at school, union parishad and upazila education offices regarding objectives, plans and progress, and budgetary allocations in the school, and for the upazila. Monitored results of the Citizen’s Charter should also be posted publicly in the form of Citizen’s Report Cards.

Participatory planning process at the school and Union Parishad levels yearly and evaluation of execution based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on a half-yearly basis need to be instituted.

10. Partnership building

In local-level planning and management, formulating goals and strategies at national and local levels, and monitoring and reviewing progress, genuine partnerships have to be built for the government authorities and the non-governmental bodies to work together. Initiatives are needed on both sides to change mind-set, perceptions and attitudes in order to foster the spirit of genuine partnership for working towards the common goals in education.

In line with a suggestion from the Honourable Chief Adviser, the Ministries of Education and Primary and Mass Education need to collaborate with the Ministry of Information to make interactive educational programmes, and ultimately, a dedicated educational BTV channel a reality.