Towards UPE with Equity and Quality in Bangladesh: Insight from Community and School Studies

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Policy Context

• Major progress made in enrolment – close to 100% gross
• Gender disparity in enrolment eliminated

But Bangladesh will fall short of 2015 MDG and EFA goal of UPE completion, because half of grade 1 students dropout by grade 5.

Major challenge for next phase of primary education development (2011-15) as PEDP II ends –

• How effective access can be accelerated by 2015 and a solid foundation laid for UPE with quality and equity soon after.
• What should be the structure and components of a comprehensive sub-sector programme and how external partners can support it.

(In the context of sixth 5-year plan and new Edn. Policy)

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## Table 1: Diversity of primary education providers (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School type</th>
<th>Enrolment %</th>
<th>Institutions (rounded numbers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Govt. Primary Schools</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>37,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regd. Non-govt. Pry. School</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>20,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-formal Pry. Education</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>&gt; 30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrasa</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pry. attached to high school</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (Community school, unregistered, etc)</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>81,400 + &gt;30,000 NFPE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 1 Enrolment by Grade - Bangladesh

[Graph showing enrolment by grade for Bangladesh with zones 0 to 6, age/grade population, and secure enrolment with meaningful learning]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>2005 Baseline</th>
<th>PEDP II Target</th>
<th>Latest Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net Enrolment Rate</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>90.8 (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Completion grade V (% of 1)</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>52 (2008)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Budget (% of GNP)</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.28 (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Budget (% of total edn.)</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>41.0 (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil-Teacher ratio</td>
<td>54:1</td>
<td>48:1</td>
<td>50:1 (2008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers and Pedagogy

The high student-teacher ratio, low contact hours (90% schools run on double shift), and low student outcome are consequences of low overall public sector allocation for education and low allocation for primary education, which has remained less than 1% of GDP, one of the lowest in the world.

The PEDP II target projects only a modest increase.
Community/School Study

Communities and schools in six locations from six divisions over three years with two rounds of data collected in 2007 and 2009
To gain insights into the dynamics of participation and exclusion of children in schooling.
Sample: 6,696 households, 9,045 children 4-15 years from 18 school catchment areas (12 govt. and 6 registered non-govt. Primary schools)

The survey used CREATE’s conceptual model of ‘zones of exclusion’:
- Children excluded in both 2007 and 2009 ‘zone 1’ – never enrolled.
- Children who dropped out from primary school (zone 2),
- Those enrolled but attending irregularly, being over age and learning little (zone 3)
- Those not transitioning to secondary level (zone 4)

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Some key findings

• The excluded children (zones 1, 2, 3, & 4) were from poorer families, both economically and educationally.

• Those who dropped out were on average
  - Older at entry to school
  - Repeated more school grades,
  - Came from lower income families,
  - Had parents with lower levels of education,
  - Had more household responsibilities. and
  - Received less support from parents for their school work.

• Poverty, low levels of parental education, and unskilled parental occupations related to late entry into education.

• School related factors in exclusion – large classes, too little learning time, school too far, dislike of school by students, parents’ negative view of school.

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Figure 2: Education status of primary school age (6-10) children by data rounds, 2007 and 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Data round 1</th>
<th>Data round 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>83.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropout</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never enrolled</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Community and School Study (ComSS); Household Survey, 2009
Figure 3: Percentage of dropout children by age and data round
Enrolment data issues

• Fig. 2 showed an increase in dropout and a decrease in never-enrolled category at 2-year interval in study sites.
• An actual change or a problem of recognising and recording status of children?
• Confounded by child migration, multiple providers, intermittent attendance, no birth registration
• Household survey appears to underestimate out of school children and school data inflate enrolment

• Non-enrolment rate under 10% officially, but difficult to establish rate definitively for a particular time in specific communities.

Signifies problems of diagnosing different dimensions of exclusion and complexities in remedial strategies.

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Child Migration

• ComSS revealed half of children recorded as dropout apparently were migrants to urban centres.

• Child migration is a livelihood strategy for families – children taking up paid/unpaid job or informal apprenticeship.

• Pattern of child migration of indicated scale has important implications for policy and strategy for access, continuation, completion of primary stage and transition into secondary.

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Late enrolment

• 40% of students 2 or more years older for grade in primary school.

• The culture of enrolling children at age 6 has not caught on.

• Absence of birth registration and birth record supports a casual approach to age for starting school.

• Consequences of late enrolment - high dropout and high opportunity cost as children seen ready for paid/unpaid work.

• For older girls, increased concern about safety and family pressure to marry them off.
Stipends & Supply-side Constraints

Stipends to poor students (conditional cash transfer) is a government strategy to promote equity, but targeting a serious problem (1/2 poor missed out).

Supply-side constraints perceived by parents suggest funds could be better used in providing essential quality-enhancing inputs.

This question needs to be examined rigorously, especially because of major budget implications of choices made.

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Children in urban slums

• Rapidly growing poor slum dwellers are under-served by both governments and NGOs.
• Even low private education costs are prohibitive for the poorest quintile.
• Special coordinated efforts by city corporation and education authorities to reach urban poor essential to achieve UPE.

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**Areas of Strategic Policy Actions**

A long list of problems cannot be addressed in isolation; Must be tackled by strategic policy interventions, recognising connectedness among problems. Key blocks of actions:

- A system of basic education with diversity in delivery, but unified by common quality standards.

- Decentralised, participatory and accountable governance at local and school level

- Adequate resources to ensure quality with equity

- Effective modality and structure of programme management and external assistance.

*These strategic policy blocks can be scaffolding for other specific interventions as needs are determined by research, evaluation, analyses and dialogue.*

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Policy Area 1: Common quality standards

The critical policy challenge is to set and enforce common quality standards for all types of schools;
- ensuring acceptable learning outcomes from them;
- recognising contribution of diverse providers;
- assessing relative strengths and potential of each for improving outcomes in specific circumstances; and
- making best use of strengths and potentials of each.
Policy Area 2: Development /trial of upazila-based UPE planning and management

A rigorous trial should be conducted involving local government and all service providers in selected upazilas as a key feature of the UPE strategy;

Supporting as a part of development and trial, school and community-based actions to help the poor, the silently excluded, and overcoming misperceptions of role of non-governmental and community organisations

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Policy Area 3. A major increase in public resources

Question of affordability must be turned around to ask – Can we afford not to make the necessary Investments for education with quality-and-equity.

Much larger public resources must be committed for 6th 5-year plan and new education policy targeting quality-with-equity.

Equally important - effective use of resources, e.g., upazila-wise capitation formulas, decentralised resource management and assessing optimal use of resources – case in point, spending on stipends.

More resources needed at school level and greater discretion with accountability for schools in their use.
Policy Area 4: A pragmatic programme approach

In designing modality of programme management and cooperation with donors, a pragmatic/flexible programme approach for UPE (not a SWAp template) needed:

- Based on principle of a comprehensive programme that includes all modes of primary education, including second chance/non-formal provisions, and all children with various special needs, and going beyond the domain of DPE.
- Structure of the programme, its components and implementation mechanisms, have to be appropriately flexible.

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Specific Interventions within Policy Scaffolding Framework

Various specific action priorities surfacing from CREATE and other studies must be carried out within strategic policy measure blocks. E.g. actions in:

- New and retroactive birth registration
- Diagnostics and action on child migration
- Coordinated city+education bodies’ actions in urban slums
- Initiatives on teachers’ number, quality, incentives, role model
- Probing and action on silent exclusion
- Proper use of learning assessment and public examinations
- Harnessing NGO contribution
- Expanding preschools for the poor.
- School health, school meal
- Adequate schools, classrooms and so on.

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