

PROBLEMS OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH: A PRAGMATIC STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to identify the problems of primary education in Bangladesh. Primary education is the foundation of education in a country. In principle, education can provide solutions to virtually all economic, social, and political problems. Accordingly, there is now a consensus that basic or primary education is a fundamental right. In recent years, Bangladesh has made significant progress in promoting enrolment at the primary level of education, especially enrolment of girls and poor children. Bangladesh is a signatory to the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA), held in Thailand in 1990. Bangladesh also participated in the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. The various steps taken by the government, the socio-economic development of the country and the increase in awareness of the public have reached the primary level of 87% of the enrollment of the students.

Key words: - Primary education, teaching, educational structure, scope.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a state of mind that enables individuals to make choices bearing on its merits and demerits, and eventually acquire skills to fulfill that choice. It contributes directly and indirectly to a higher level of socio-cultural and economic development that provides sufficient resources to address environmental issues also.

Through a distinctive and unique freedom struggle in the contemporary history, Bangladesh achieved its independence in 1971. It has an area of 147,570 square kilometers, a population of around 130 million and a per capita income of about US\$350. Having an almost agrarian economy and visited frequently by natural calamities, for instance, flood and drought, the country has recently attained self-sufficiency in food. In spite of its making satisfactory progress in the field of education, its adult literacy remains yet at 56%. With a population of 130 million Bangladesh has emerged as a densely populated country in the world. Statistics of 1999 reveals the literacy rate of Bangladesh stands at 56 percent. Government along with Non Government Organization takes several initiatives in past few decades to improve the scenario but the significant development has not been demonstrated yet.

Education to all children, and removing illiteracy within reasonable time limit, is yet to be accomplished. Considering the extent of these requirements and fund constraints Government realized that the conventional system of education was inadequate to meet the demand. There was a persuasive need for exploring and introducing new modes of education and training.

While the primary school system in Bangladesh has made great strides in increasing access to education over the past decade, educational quality remains low. Indeed, Bangladesh has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world and the lowest literacy rate in Asia. Nearly 66 percent of children do not achieve basic literacy. Innumerable causes like inadequate resources, insufficient and unqualified teachers, lack of community involvement, and corruption all contribute to the poor state of education in Bangladesh.

The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education requires children to master 27 cognitive competencies through primary education, but only 1.6 percent of students do. Boys achieve 16.7 of these competencies on average; girls average 15.3. The Campaign for Popular Education estimates that 66 percent of children in Bangladesh do not even

achieve basic literacy. Bangladesh's 41 percent adult literacy rate ranks at the bottom of eleven low-income Asian countries. The Education Development Index reflects this poor performance, ranking Bangladesh 105 out of 121 countries in terms of educational outcomes.¹¹ Several factors contribute to the poor state of education in Bangladesh: inadequate resources, insufficient and unqualified teachers, lack of stakeholder involvement, and corruption.

Bangladesh's tiered school system is categorized into four forms of primary education: 1) public schools, 2) private schools, 3) madrasas, which incorporate general education and religious teachings, and 4) non-formal schools.

This study provides an in-depth exploration and investigation into the overreaching disparities existing in our primary education through studying different streams of primary education system and tries to develop a clear pathway of linking different streams for a sustainable uniform quality education in Bangladesh. Its perspective is built around the question of the essential value of education and its outcome in different streams.

Performance of Bangladesh in Primary Education

This section of the paper examines the performance of Bangladesh in not only "quantity" but also quality of primary education with the help of several indicators. Before presenting the data on these indicators, it is useful to consider some basic statistics on primary education. During the 1970-2008 periods, the number of all primary schools jumped from about 29 thousand to over 82 thousand. During the same period, the number of students increased from about 5.25 million to over 16 million. Two other elements which have changed the image of a primary school in Bangladesh deserve to be mentioned: First, the percentage of female teachers has increased from only 2.2% in 1970 to 41.2% in 2008. Second, the percentage of girls among students has increased from 31.8% in 1970 to 50.5% in 2008.

Table 1: Teachers and Students by Primary School Type

Table 1 presents a disaggregated picture of primary schools in 2008 in terms of school type. Currently ten types of primary schools exist in Bangladesh. Government school is the dominant category accounting for about 46% of schools, 50% of teachers, and 60% of students in Bangladesh. The next important category is Registered-Non-Government Primary School (RNGPS) with a student population of 3.5 million. Madrasahs and Primary School attached to High Madrasahs (PSHM) constitute the next category providing general and religious education. It should be noted that the primary education authority in Bangladesh has effective control mainly over Government Primary School (GPS) and RNGPS. The diversity of schools has led in practice to increased dispersion of the quality of primary education in Bangladesh.

Type of School	No. of Schools	No. of Teachers		Female Teachers (%)	No. of Students		Girls (%)
		Total	Female		Total	Girls	
GPS	37,672	182,899	96,543	52.7	9,537,571	4,893,215	51.3
RNGPS	20,083	76,875	25,299	32.9	3,472,799	1,753,551	50.5
NRNGPS	966	2,460	1,579	64.2	99,564	49,046	49.3
EPS	54	221	91	41.2	10,346	5,168	50.0
CPS	3,263	8,772	6,513	74.3	388,051	197,788	51.0
KG	2,987	16,980	9,937	58.5	226,187	97,551	43.1
NGOS	408	763	503	65.9	25,872	13,176	50.9
Madrasahs	6,726	28,227	2,987	10.6	919,065	447,403	48.7
PSHM	8,920	35,707	3,734	10.5	1,051,360	482,763	45.9
PSHS	1,139	13,021	5,855	45.0	270,790	142,107	52.5
Total	82,218	365,925	153,041	41.8	16,001,605	8,081,768	50.5

Note: GPS= Government Primary School, RNGPS= Registered Non-Government Primary School, NRNGPS= Non-Registered Non-Government Primary School, EPS= Experimental school, CPS= Community Primary School, KG = Kindergarten school, NGOS= Non-Government Organization School, PSHM = Primary School Attached to High Madrasah, PSHS = Primary Schools attached to High School.

Source: Directorate of Primary Education, Government of Bangladesh, 2009.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main focus of this research initiative is to visit and explore the heart of the problems and shortcomings of primary education system in Bangladesh and therefore to analyses, examine and demonstrate their prospect and possibility.

In addition, the objectives of this study might be featuring as follows: Identify and explain major issues and constraints in the development of education and factors related to the issues, present the current status, government policies, and progress made in Bangladesh's education sector in recent years, and Summarize major responses to the issues by government, non-governmental initiatives.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Research Methodology

This research initiative is aiming at setting a methodology comprising study of largely distinguished topics while the prime concern is to make comprehensive understanding and therefore conceptualize with detailed and elaborate, information about the real nature and feature of the problems and shortcomings of primary education system in Bangladesh and therefore examine and demonstrate their prospect and possibility.

The study is entirely based on both primary and secondary materials. The researcher has reviewed the development plans, laws and regulations, available studies and statistical reports. The researcher has interacted with a number of present and retired education sector policy makers and administrators. Active involvement of a dozen researchers professionally engaged in and committed to educational development in Bangladesh has enriched the study and has brought an indigenous professional perspective to the study.

The primary sources includes Government record, such as writing, correspondence of the Government and national leaders, official reports, dispatches, reports of the commissions and committees and Government resolution on education, the confidential office records, proceedings of legislatures, the census reports, newspapers, speeches, addresses, extracts etc, while the secondary sources are books, articles, research reports etc. Related information from educationists and officers of the Education Department are collected through informal interview method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the result it was found that Age group 41-50 years was 28% which was maximum, Age group 31-40 years was 24% which was second position, Age group 21-30 years was 18% which was third position, Age group 51-60 years was 17% which was fourth position and age group above 61 years was 13% which was the minimum.

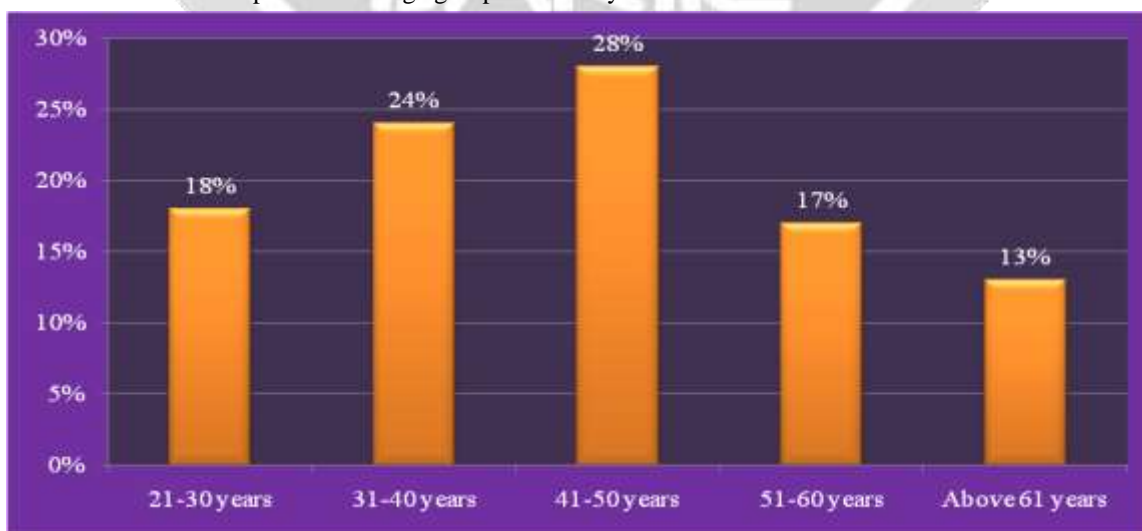


Figure 1: age group of the respondents

Source: Survey

From the above graph it was found that among 300 respondents 31% respondents were completed higher secondary level and 28% respondents completed Bachelor level, 29% respondents completed masters level and 12.00% respondents completed more than masters degree respectively.

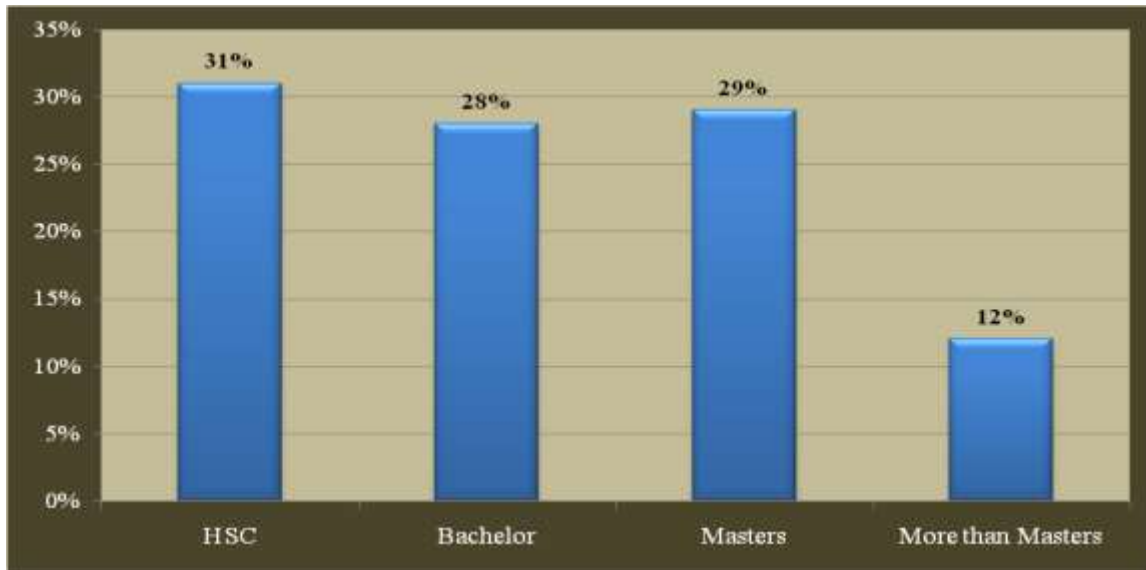


Figure 2: respondents' education

Source: Survey

Respondent's Residence area have shown in the above graph. From the result it was found that out of 300 respondents, 73.30% respondents lived in urban area and 26.70% respondents lived in rural area.

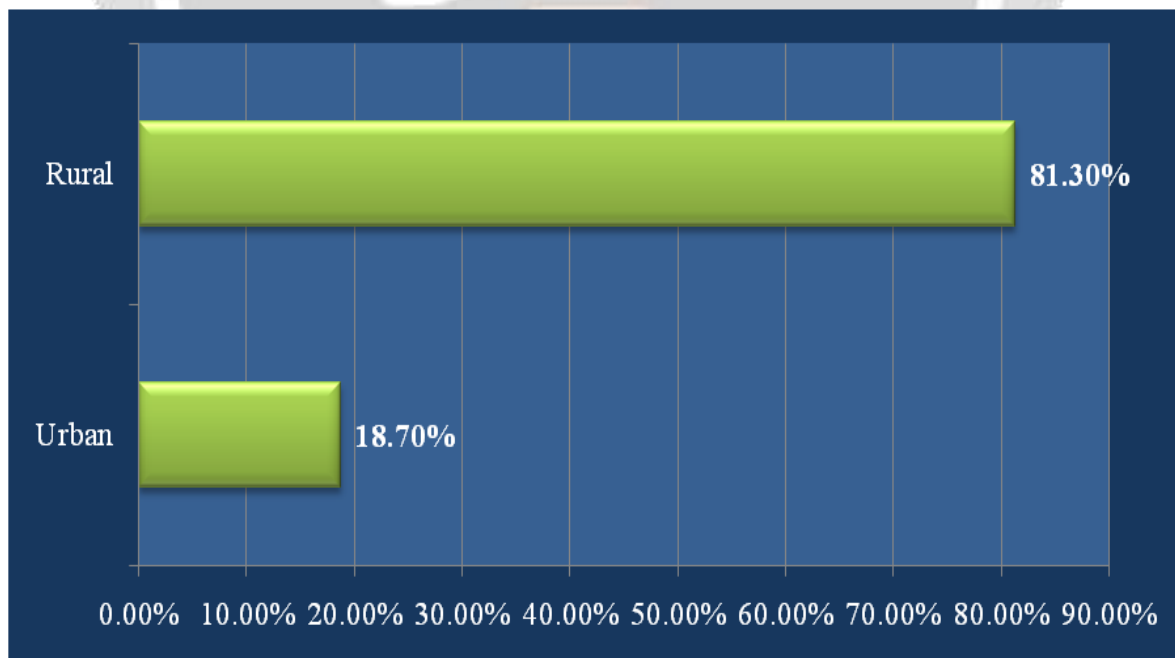


Figure 3: respondents' residence area

Source: Survey

Respondents' Religion has shown in the above graph. From the result it was found that out of 300 respondents 90% respondents were Muslim and 10% respondents were Hindu.

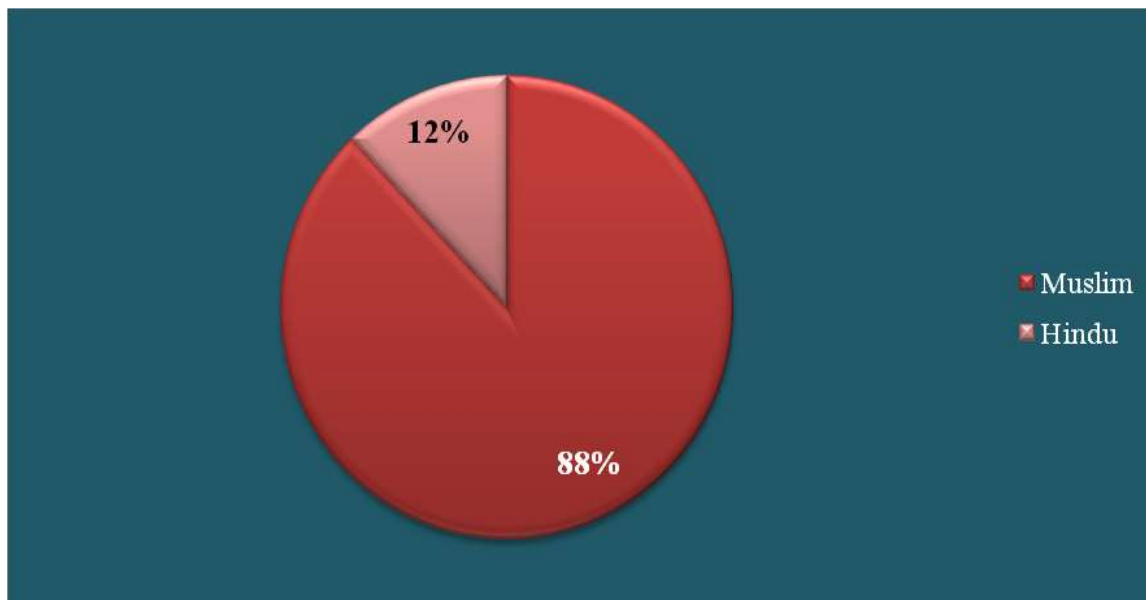


Figure 4: respondent's religion

Source: Survey

Table 1: respondents' attitude about identified the problems of primary education

Respondents' opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive attitude	200	70%
Negative attitude	50	15%
No Comments	50	15%
Total	300	100%

Source: Survey

From the result it was found that 70% respondents express positive attitude about identified the problems of primary education in Bangladesh, 15% respondents express negative attitude about identified the problems of primary education, and 15% respondents express nothing about identified the problems of primary education.

Table 2: availability of information is favorable for identify problems of primary education in Bangladesh

Respondents' opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
availability of information are favorable for identify problems of primary education	150	50%
availability of information are not favorable for identify problems of primary education	100	35%
No Comments	50	15%
Total	300	100%

Source: Survey

From the result it was found that 50% respondents replied that availability of information are favorable for identify problems of primary education, 35% respondents express that availability of information are not favorable for identify problems of primary education, and 15% respondents express nothing about availability of information for identify problems of primary education in Bangladesh.

Table 3: whether respondents know proper knowledge about identify problems of primary education

Respondents' opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Have proper knowledge	200	70%
Have few knowledge	50	15%
Have no knowledge	50	15%
Total	300	100%

Source: Survey

From the result it was found that 70% respondents replied that they had proper knowledge about identify problems of primary education, 15% respondents replied that they had few knowledge about identify problems of primary education and 15% respondents replied that they had no knowledge about identify problems of primary education in Bangladesh.

Table 4: whether identified problems of primary education is very much important for education developments

Respondents' opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agreed	120	40%
Agreed	100	34%
Disagreed	40	14%
Strongly disagreed	20	6%
No Comments	20	6%
Total	300	100%

Source: Survey

From the result it was found that 40% respondents strongly agreed that identified problems of primary education is very much important for education development of Bangladesh, 34% respondents agreed that identified problems of primary education very much important for education development, 14% respondents disagreed that identified problems of primary education is not very much important for education development of Bangladesh. 6% respondents strongly disagreed that innovative methods of teaching is not very much important for education development of Bangladesh and 6% respondents did not replied any answer.

CONCLUSION

Bangladesh enters into market oriented new millennium where quality of education is sole criterion to be fit in the market. Three compelling economic forces pull it-widespread, pervasive poverty, a small but growing participation in a global economy, and a still fragile local economy. Unarguably, education plays a major role in shaping the direction of all three forces. Education can transmit specific, targeted, useful tools for survival and improvements in quality of life. Hence, nationwide, even modest exposure to education contributes a major role in reducing poverty levels substantially. The first step in competing globally is therefore to address the fundamental issue of poverty and quality of education that reflects nation's heritage and aspiration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, education is presented as the shape of the expression of a country's economy, social system, values, national heritage etc. The purpose of education is to develop it in the process of creating progressive people with human values where creative.

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby presentable:

- 1) The overall education system of a country depends on the educational structure, so the primary education activities in education structure should be one-way.
- 2) To reduce the cost of education materials, it is easy to get it done for the poor and the middle classes.
- 3) Education is not a scope, right; it is necessary to apply the reality.
- 4) The physical condition of primary schools should be improved; the classroom environment should be so that the children are encouraged to take education in spontaneity.
- 5) The teacher's salary structure should be determined on a national basis and other facilities should be ensured. The position of teachers in society will reach the respective level.

- 6) In addition to general education, the subjects of drawing, physical education, music, etc. should be included in the syllabus.
- 7) The teacher-student ratio should be consistent.

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