

**PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH:
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ROLE OF
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS**

*Dissertation Submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH : WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS** submitted by **BANISHREE ASIT DAS** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** is her original work and has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or of any other university.

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To
Baba & Bou

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ABBREVIATIONS

BANBES – Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Statistics

BISE – Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education

BRAC – Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee

CAMPE – Campaign for Popular Education

CMES – Centre for Mass Education in Science

CPE – Compulsory Primary Education

DNFE – Directorate of Non-Formal Education

E FA – Education For All

FEP – Food for Education Programme

GSS – Gono Shahajjo Sangstha

INFEP – Integrated Non-Formal Education Programme

LEAs – Local Educational Authorities

METSLO – Mass Education Through Small Local Organisations

NAEM – National Academy for Educational Management

NCTB – National Curriculum and Textbook Board

NFPE – Non-Formal Primary Education

PEDP – Primary Education and Development Programme

PEOC – Primary Education for Older Children

PMED – Primary and Mass Education Division

RTCBS – Rural Technology Centre for Basic School

TLM – Total Literacy Movement

UPE – Universal Primary Education

WCEFA – World Conference on Education For All

Chapter – I

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The evolution and progress of human civilization is the cherished history of education. It helps man to inaugurate an era of survival and development. From the basic need of survival to the ideals of self-realization, education has acted as an important instrument for the all-round development of individual personality. Education should be recognized as a process by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential. The term 'education' means to lead the human society from the dark depths of ignorance to progressive development. Development and education will go together because the aim of education and the requisite of development are complementary.¹

Education is also sometimes used in a broad sense. It influences the nature of men and also enables them to awaken another citizen. According to Cant, "...the end of education is to develop in each individual, all the perfection of which he is capable." Education influences the ideas, sentiments and practices which express individual personality. It is a method of socialization for young generation and it also exercises its influence on those who are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to enlighten and to develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are demanded from him by the political society. Education is the only means by which society prepares the child to fulfill the essential conditions of its very existence. It is not only limited to develop individual

¹ "Development and Non-Formal Education" in *Education and Development: Education Reform for Social Justice*, K. Francis (ed.), (New Delhi: Discovering Publishing House, 1993), p.137.

organism but also hidden potentialities which need to be manifested. It creates in man a new being.²

Plato believed education is indispensable for the economic health of a good society as it made citizens 'reasonable men'. Since education has a higher economic value, Plato argued that a considerable part of the communities' wealth must be invested in education. Adam Smith highlighted the economic capital of value of education. David Ricardo and Thomas Malthus favoured education as a means of inculcating good habits, a desire for self improvement, moral commitment and individual responsibility. Education is also recognized as a productive sector. So education is inseparably intertwined with socio-economic aspects and is integrated in a society through every fabric of its being. The role of education in development is contingent upon the socio-economic, political and cultural environment prevalent in a given society. The political and demographic factors also have significant implications for education. The contribution of education is not confined to economic growth and distribution, it is also found to be significant in the fulfillment of basic needs, in the improvement of health, nutrition, child survival, fertility etc.³

Education is a process involving the acquisition of knowledge and experience formally in schools and informally in other social context. The earliest form of education consisted of learning in religious and community settings. In Plato's Greece, the education of free men is a conception of citizenship and moral quality. In early Christian Europe, it implied forms of service to church or state. In

² Emile Durkheim, , "Education: Its Nature and Its Role" in Sureshchandra Shukla, Krishna Kumar (eds.), *Sociological Perspective in Education: A Reader*, (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1985), pp..9-19.

³ Jandhyala BG Tilak, *Education for Development in Asia*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994)pp.19-25.

India the caste system made education a virtual monopoly of the high caste thereby denying the lower caste majority any access or right to education.⁴

Education gives rise to externalities considered to serve the public interest, whether in the form of public health, lower fertility, or a range of other associated benefits. A major focus of education today is facilitating thinking abilities in children. Education must equip the individual with a spirit of independence and a sense of adventure. It must also give a greater capacity for discrimination and judgment whereby one can make his or her own choice between the conflicting norms or values of the pluralistic society in which he or she will be called upon to live. The emphasis of education in today's world is not merely on the mastery of the extent of knowledge but also on the acquisition of a capacity to assess facts and to arrive at one's own conclusion. Every individual regardless of social class and economic status has the right to education. It enables an individual to discover his talents, sharpen his abilities, and develops his potential to the fullest and to become effective in the process of modernization and growth. It is a crucial input in human resource development, which is fundamental for the realization of the goals of national planning for development. It also develops within an individual ability to have access to resources needed to satisfy basic human needs.⁵

Asian countries are characterized with varying stages of socio- economic development, some are developed, some are newly industrializing and some are still very much underdeveloped. Some countries are modern while others are

⁴ Zaheda Ahmad, "Education in Bangladesh: Retrospect and Prospect", in Asit K Biswas, JSA Brichery-colombi, Amirul Islam chwdhury, KB Sajjadur Rasheed (eds.), *Contemporary issues in Development, Essayes in honour of Q K Ahmad*, (Dhaka: Academic Press and Publishers Ltd., 2002),p.267.

⁵ Ramya Subrahmanian "Community at the Centre of Universal Primary Education Strategies: An Empirical Investigation" in Naila Kaber, Geetha B. Nambissan, Ramya Subrahmanian, (eds.), *Child Labour and the Right to Education in South Asia: Needs verses Rights*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), pp.216-218.

highly tradition bound. The levels of living measured with the help of economic indicators like per capita gross national product, social indicators like life expectancy, health status and some development indicators like income inequalities, differ widely across different countries. The demographic and political situation too varies significantly from one country to another. Historical legacies of the various countries are also different. Some are democracies, some have communists' regimes with centrally planned economic systems and some are still ruled by the kings.⁶ But in spite of these differences the share of Asia in the world education is enormous. Asia alone accounts for nearly two-third of the increase in enrolments between 1960 and 1990. In Asia the number of learners expanded for about 114 millions in 1960 to 586 millions in 1990. The share of Asia in world enrolments increased from 35 percent in 1960 to 53 percent in 1990. The rate of growth of enrolments in primary education has been the highest among the world. The growth in enrolments in secondary and higher secondary is also higher than the world averages. However there is a clear contrast between the East and the South Asian regions. East Asia is well developed with respect to several educational indicators. Today more than two-third of the population in East Asia are literate .On the other hand South Asia is predominantly illiterate⁷.

One-fifth of the world's population lives in the South Asian countries. They are always in a low growth poverty reproduction syndrome. Despite more than four decades of development in South Asia, the number of poor has risen and continues to rise. The magnitude and complexity of the poverty is staggering. It poses a serious threat to the fabric of the society. Conventional development interventions during the past fifty years have made negligible impact on the living standards of

⁶ Tilak, op.cit,no.3, p.21.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 40-44.

the people It has largely failed in its commitments to alleviating poverty and redressing human sufferings. This situation of poverty is also indirectly affecting the development process of education. So a new vision is needed to deal with the crisis.⁸

1.1 STATUS OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA

The South Asian subcontinent consisting of seven countries, namely, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Among these countries there is spectacle of similarities and contrasts. Almost all the countries of the region share a common history of colonial subjugation, directly or indirectly, from which they became independent around 50 years ago. Therefore, they inherited a common administrative and educational apparatus from the British colonial rulers, which continues to be a point of reference in all discourses on educational developments in the region. If we see this region's diversities and complexities in ethnic and religious composition, political- administrative framework, economic development policies as well as size and nature of geographical terrain present the countries of the region in a vastly contrasting framework. But the last five decades have witnessed momentous changes in the political and economic horizons of South Asia. Most visible developments come in human life and that is mainly with the spread of freedom and democracy. But in spite of this, prosperity and progress is not that impressive. It has emerged as the poorest, the most illiterate, the most mal- nourished and the least gender sensitive region in the world. But it has all the potential to become the most dynamic region in the twenty first century if there is massive investment in human development. The

⁸⁸ M Ghulam Sattar, "Social Movement through Basic Education Experience of BRAC" Paper Prepared for the Conference *Asia in the 1990s: Meeting and Making New World*, Queens University, Kingston, Canada, October 1993, pp.305-306.

constitution of all countries guarantees free Universal Primary Education for all. Article 45 of the Indian constitution provides universal and free education to the children including girls of 6 to 14 years old within 10 years when the Indian constitution was promulgated in 1950. The 93rd constitutional amendment makes education a fundamental right for all children aged 6 to 14 years. The constitution of Sri Lanka refers to the complete eradication of illiteracy and the assurance to all persons of their right to universal and equal access to education at all levels. The Sri Lanka government introduced further regulation in 1995 to enforce compulsory education. The 1962 constitution of Pakistan accords a special place to compulsory and universal primary education. In its Article 37 of 1973 constitution, Pakistan states that the state shall remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory education within minimum possible time and make technical and professional education generally available and higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of merits. The government of Nepal has also declared the universalisation of free primary education. It considers primary education as one of the objectives of its development plans. The constitution of People's Republic of Bangladesh also tried to establish a uniform mass oriented and universal system of education which will be free and compulsory. For last of couple of decades, the South Asian countries have tried and intensified their efforts to set the national policies and programme for basic education in the right direction. The National Policy on Education in India, the 1992 Education Policy in Pakistan, the Education Act of 1992 in Nepal, the compulsory educational legislation brought about in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are all indicative of the heightened awareness on basic education

among political leadership as well as the educational bureaucracy in all the countries.⁹

They have increased substantially the resources devoted to education. For example, India has pledged to reach 6 percent of GNP for education before the end of the decade. Bangladesh has doubled public expenditure in primary education in real terms during the last five years. They came to know that partnership and decentralization work effectively when there is a functioning structure of support and capacity development that extends from the national and provincial levels to districts, local authorities, communities and individual schools. The countries of the South Asian region have now recognized that conditions for learning have to be created. The countries of the region have diverse approaches regarding primary education. This diversity and flexibility are essential because children in the countries of the region unlike industrialized countries are not just students of primary schools. A majority of children are engaged in paid or unpaid labor within the family or outside to make a contribution to their family's survival.¹⁰

The gender gap in education in South Asian countries is wide even at the primary level. Despite higher annual growth rates for girls than for boys, girl enrollment rates lag far behind. The gap at the secondary level is smaller than it is at the primary level. For example, in Bangladesh fewer than half of girls between

⁹ R Govinda, "Educational Provision and National Goals in South Asia: A Review of Policy and Performance", in Naila Kabeer, Geetha. B. Nambissan, Ramya Subrahmanian(eds.), *Child Labour and the Right to Education in South Asia: Needs versus Rights*, (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2003), pp.168-171.

Performance", in Naila Kabeer, Geetha. B. Nambissan, Ramya Subrahmanian(eds.), *Child Labour and the Right to Education in South Asia: Needs versus Rights*, (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2003), pp.168-171.

¹⁰ Manzoor Ahmed, , "Primary Education: South Asian Perspectives", in A.K Jallaluddin, A. Mushtaque R Chowdhury, (eds.), *Getting Started: Universalising Quality Primary Education in Bangladesh*, (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 1997), pp.7-9.

the ages of 7 and 12 where in primary school in 1986, compared with more than two thirds of boys in this age group. In Pakistan less than one third of girls were enrolled, compared with more than one half of boys. If we see India, although universal primary education has been achieved for boys, this has not been done in the case of girls. But Sri Lanka was an exception in the region both in primary and secondary schooling. It had achieved universal primary education for both boys and girls by 1980. So many factors are responsible for the larger gender gap in education in South Asian countries. They are:-

- 1 Poverty is considered as one of the main reasons of gender gap. Because of this families fail to enroll their children in primary school or withdraw them prematurely from it. It is difficult for the families to bear the cost of their children's schooling. Poverty compels the children to do household and farm work. In fact these demand much more from the girls than the boys. Jamison and Lockheed show in their studies that the demand for girls' labour in Nepal exceeds the demand for boys' labor by about 50 percent. Papanek indicates that in Bangladesh the rate of participation in the labour force for the youngest group of girls was the highest of any female age group, whereas the rate for the boys of that age was the lowest of any male age group.
- 2 Most of the families lack interest to send their children for formal education particularly their daughters for reasons related to social and religious norms, in general and to marriage prospects, in particular. National Centre for Education Research and Training in India found that domestic work, marriage, betrothal and parental indifference accounts for 55 percent of the total wastage in girls' education at the upper primary level. Almost all South Asian cultures are

conservative, but the manner in which Islam and Hinduism have been practiced leads to an especially restrictive environment for girls and women schooling.

- 3 Education of girls also depends upon the families' income. A higher income enables the family to bear the direct and indirect cost of education. Ahmad and Hasan in 1984, from a sample survey in Bangladesh, calculated two ways cross tabulation to show that girls' education varies positively with their families' income and landholdings.
- 4 School related factors also contribute to gender differentials in enrolment. For example, distance to school related to the cost of attendance. Distance to school implies expenses for travel, boarding and lodging. Female enrollments in South Asian countries are universally related to distance. It means, the shorter the distance to school, the greater the likelihood that girls will attend it. In case of Bangladesh, enrolment is negatively associated with distance because parents may be unwilling to allow girls to cross a major road or a river on the way to school. So distance is a deterrent in girls' education in South Asia. Lack of basic immunities also discouraged girls' attendance. Our cultural concern for the privacy of girls is one reason for single sex school. Studies from several South Asian Countries indicate that parents are concerned about the lack of separate schools for girls. Parent's desire for segregation at the secondary level is likely to be a serious barrier for continuing female education. The same cultural forces that create the need for single sex school also result in broad support for employing women to teach girls but the employment of women teacher has not been fully successful in all the South Asian countries. If we take Bangladesh, though local women were able to communicate with and gain acceptance from villagers, local teachers including women were chronically

absent because of their household activities. In addition, they were primarily concerned with earning extra income from private tutoring and were reported to show favoritism towards the students they tutored. Rigid examination policy affects girls more adversely than boys because girls were under more pressure to engage in household and farm work. They are absent from school more often than boys. When they fail in the examinations, the family perceives that its educational investment has suffered and withdraws them.¹¹

1.2 STATUS OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is generally known for its high population density, high population growth rate, endemic poverty and high rate of adult illiteracy. The state usually takes a number of measures to develop and sustain the education sector in general and primary education in particular. Nationalization of all the primary schools in 1973 and the recent approach to allow large number of non-state primary schools are examples of the state interventionist role of a varying degree in the primary education sub sector. At the national level, the role of the state in the enactment of adequate education-related law is also important.¹²

From the beginning, the importance of compulsory universal primary education has been recognized by many. For example, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959), UNESCO's meeting in Bombay (1952), the World Conference on Education For All in Jomtien (1990), and the Delhi Declaration (1993) all show the need for global commitments to Universal Primary Education. Primary

¹¹ Shahrukh, R Khan "South Asia", in Elizabeth M. King, M Anne Hill,(eds.), *Women's Education in Developing Countries: Barriers, Benefits, and Policies*, Published For the World Bank, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp.222-235.

¹² Mahmudul Alam, "Development Primary Education in Bangladesh: The Ways Ahead", *The Bangladesh Development Studies*, Vol.XXVI, no.4, December, 2000, pp.39-40.

education is considered as a basic need and a human right.¹³ The impact of the Jomtien World Conference on Education For All held in March 1990, which promoted an expanded vision of basic education with the aim of meeting the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults, has been felt in Bangladesh. As a result, a Compulsory Primary Education Act was passed in 1990 and in January 1992, the government launched the Compulsory Primary Education Programme in the country. This programme has been extended nationwide since January 1993. Bangladesh ranks among the bottom 20 countries in the literacy league table. Between 1980 and 1998, the adult literacy rate rose marginally from 30 to 38 percent with the rate of females being only half of that of males. In 2000 literacy rate reached over 60 percent. Since the mid 1980s, particularly since the Jomtien conference, a number of new policy decisions have been made and initiatives have been undertaken by the public, private and non- governmental organization sectors to promote primary education in the country. They are:-

1. An education policy enunciated by the parliament in 2000;
2. Free and compulsory primary education for all children;
3. Free education for girls up to class eight; free books for all children at primary level;
4. A food-for-education programme that provides a food ration to about a 12 percent of poor children in rural areas;
5. A proliferation of non-formal education programme by NGOs;
6. Creation of a separate Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED) headed by a secretary to the government.¹⁴

¹³ Tilak, op.cit.,n.3, p.45.

¹⁴ Ahmed, op.cit.,n.4, Zaheda,pp.281-282.

After independence in 1971, the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh recognized the need for basic education as a fundamental human right. According to the constitution, providing education to its entire citizen is one of the fundamental responsibility of the state. The responsibility is to establish uniform system of education, extending free and compulsory education to all children up to a stage determined by law and removing illiteracy within a determined time. Under the act of parliament, all the primary schools in Bangladesh were nationalized in 1973 with a view to improve quality of education.¹⁵

In 1994 the Government of Bangladesh initiated an incentive scheme that entitles children of poor families to 15kg of wheat each month if they enroll in primary school and maintain 85 percent attendance. The distribution programme is managed by local government functionaries. Poor families are selected by occupational and land holding criteria and include female headed households, and the programme tries to reach the poorest 40 percent of all rural children. All the government and non government primary schools were brought under its purview. But this programme was not that successful. In order to make this programme effective and successful, it is important that the programme designed include financial and technical assistance.¹⁶

The government also initiated a scholarship scheme in 1994 for all girls enrolled in grades 6 and 9. Entitlements to scholarship require 65 percent school attendance and maintenance of a certain grade average in the previous year. Schools receive a subsidy for each girl enrolled under this programme and a

¹⁵ A.H.M Sadiqul Haq, "Review of Primary Education in Bangladesh" in A.K Jallaluddin, A Mushtaque R Choudhury (eds.), *Getting Started: Universalising Quality Primary Education in Bangladesh*, (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 1997), pp.34-35.

¹⁶ Food For Education available at [http://www. Bangladeshgateway.org/sdnp/education/documents/ food- for- education.html](http://www.Bangladeshgateway.org/sdnp/education/documents/food-for-education.html).

monthly stipend is deposited in their bank accounts.¹⁷ The government also enacted 1990 Compulsory Universal Primary Education Act to provide free, universal and compulsory education to all children. Through this Act the government ensured women's participation and representation in all educational committees, provided community participation and social mobilization and also included local, educational, and municipal bodies in the CPE (Compulsory Primary Education) committees. This programme also includes supervision, reporting and monitoring mechanisms. The whole country was brought under CPE programme in 1993 for the proper implementation of this programme. The Ministry of Education has also made different arrangements at different levels. The Government of Bangladesh, now-a-days is gradually decentralizing its educational system. Decentralization of education can not be totally disconnected from the overall decentralization of government and public administration. The main reason behind decentralization was to promote public participation in nation building activities. The reason for decentralization of the primary school administration is to reduce central administration's control on primary education. This is done to the extent that it can offer professional services and finances to the decentralized school organizations and communities, involve local decisions, facilitate effective mobilization of local support to education, facilitate conditions for local educational planning, view primary education as an integrated approach, institutionalise linkages among school organizations structures, people, power and communities, present choice and use of local cultures for creation of quality educational programme. The Act of 1974 provided free primary education all over

¹⁷ Sajeda Amin and Gilda Sedgh, *Incentive Schemes for School Attendance in Rural Bangladesh*, Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, New Orleans, 1996, p.9.

the country. The teachers of the schools became central government servants. The act imposed upon the government the vast onus of restructuring the primary school system under a centralized administration. The Act of 1981 made provision for the establishment of local educational authorities at the sub-divisional level. Extensive power were to be delegated to these bodies and their executive committees headed by primary education officers. The act also reestablished school based management through the formation of the school management committee.¹⁸

A separate ministry level division under the name Primary and Mass Education was established in August 1992 in order to strengthen the primary and mass education activities. The new division has been entrusted with the full responsibility of formulation and implementation of policies and plans in order to put special emphasis on the government in this sector. In 1981 universal primary education programme was a significant effort for improving the status of primary education in the country. An independent directorate of primary education was established through the Act of 1981. This was the first step taken to strengthen the administrative set-up of the primary education. For operation management and development of primary school a wide organization has been working within the directorate of primary education under Primary and Mass Education Division. The directorate is headed by a director general with functional division assisted by directors and other staff at the headquarters¹⁹

Bangladesh started with a very low adult literacy rate, nearly about 26 percent in 1974, but it has succeeded rapidly increasing this rate to 38 percent

¹⁸ Muhammed Hedayet Hossain, "Decentralisation of Educational Management and Planning of Primary Education in Bangladesh", in A. K Jallaluddin, A. Mushtaque R. Chodhury (eds.), *Getting Started: Universalising Quality Primary Education in Bangladesh*, (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 1997), pp.78-85.

¹⁹ Haq, op.cit.,n.16, pp.35-37.

within 1995. The gross enrolment ratio rose from 73 percent in 1990 to 95 percent in 1996 and has further risen to 78 percent. The drop out rate has also declined from 60 percent to 40 percent at the primary stage. The share of expenditure on primary education has risen from an average 50 percent to 65 percent during current plan period. Educational expenditure as a share of total government expenditure has increased from 9.4 percent in the First Five Year plan (1973-78) to 15.4 percent during the Fifth Five Year Plan (1997-2002).

Though the enrolment has been increasing satisfactorily, in spite of all governmental efforts, the problem of universal primary education lies in the large wastage due to a high rate of drop out. Poverty and deprivation in rural families make it difficult for parents to keep a child in school. Family labour and family income will continue to remain a major obstacle in imposing the demand for primary education. Bangladesh faces enormous obstacles in reaching primary education to all children. Around 40 percent teachers do not possess required academic qualifications, class rooms are invariably crowded, and the teacher-to-pupil ratio has only marginally improved. Even on the expenditure front, public expenditure on primary education as a percentage of total expenditure on education increased from 1991 to 1996 and thereafter started declining. Though gender disparity has been minimized, girls' education is at a low level and is facing lots of problems. Though the government of Bangladesh has taken so many steps to improve Universal primary Education but achieving this target in near future is difficult.²⁰

If we see the ratio, then the ratio of boys-to-girls in schools has been increased. The progress could be made due to large number of female teachers'

²⁰ Govinda, op.cit.,n.9. pp.174-175.

recruitment by relaxing entry qualification. It has been oriented to the needs of life having regard to the fact that education can serve the societal needs and children can acquire adequate knowledge about health, nutrition, population, and environment's sanitation. But in spite of all accessibility of universal primary education to all in Bangladesh now a days is difficult.

1.3 NGOs IN BANGLADESH EDUCATION SECTOR

In the 1980s a number of NGOs began to see the need for initiating the programme of basic education in support of their poverty alleviation activities. A good number of NGOs have been working in areas of primary education. NGOs have acquired a considerable experience and expertise by working for the last two decades at the grass root level. They have also initiated some innovative programme in this area. The task of providing literacy to the vast number of people in the country is so large that all the relevant forces and resources of the country must be mobilized to carry out this task. So it would be very helpful to ensure effective participation of NGOs at every level from planning to implementation in ensuring education for all which is the main goal of government.²¹

Though NGOs started their work in the literacy field immediately after liberation in the war, it was not until 1976 that NGOs made any serious intervention in this field. In 1990s a coalition was formed of the mainstream NGOs implementing major education programme. Now as many as 435 NGOs are involved in this education programme with 2.52 million learners. Both government and private efforts are going on for the last two decades to improve the quality of education. Non governmental organizations like Bangladesh Rural Advancement

²¹ Haq, op.cit,n.16, p.43.

Committee (BRAC), Gono Shahajjo Sangstha (GSS), PROSHIKA, CAMPE, and many others are involved in this sector.²²

BRAC, the largest NGO in Bangladesh is a comprehensive development organization with multifaceted activities spread across the country. Established in February 1972, it is almost as old as Bangladesh. BRAC adopts a simple and workable definition as developed by the World Conference on Education for All held at Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. Basic education includes skills in reading, writing, simple arithmetic and knowledge of selected essential life skills. BRAC views basic education not only as a basic human right, but also from a development point of view. It organizes two types of schools such as, three year NFPE schools for 8-10 years old who have never attended school, and two year kishore-kishori schools for 11-16 years olds who have dropped out of primary schools and are likely to return. One class consists of 33 children. Among them 72 percent are girls living in rural areas. Teachers are generally married adults and among them 95 percent are women. There is one teacher for every 33 children. It has a well developed curriculum model which has been revised several times. BRAC's ability to implement all the necessary elements of a targeted basic education programme derives largely from its expertise in development management. BRAC's cost for schooling is roughly equal to the governments schooling. BRAC's material for primary education has gone through several phases of revision, sometimes with assistance from the Institute for Education and Research of the University of Dhaka and several out side consultants.²³

²² Hossain, op.cit.,n.19, pp. 91-92.

²³ A.M Sharafuddin, *Innovations in Primary Education in Bangladesh*.[www.ashanet.org/munich/articles/innovations in Primary Education Bangladesh.pdf](http://www.ashanet.org/munich/articles/innovations%20in%20Primary%20Education%20Bangladesh.pdf).

BRAC School has reached most parts of the country. In rural areas mainly there is a growing demand for these schools. A combination of factors has led to the phenomenal growth of BRAC schools. Significant among these are, extensive community involvement, flexible school hours, relevant curriculum and emphasis on extra curricular activities like physical exercises, music, drawing and crafts, motivated and totally recruited teachers, good training and re-training of the teachers and close monitoring on the part of BRAC workers. Education is free. BRAC supplies all the teaching materials free of charge.²⁴

PROSHIKA considers education a basic need and believes that deprivation from education is an impediment to economic, social, political and cultural development of the nation. Universal education of PROSHIKA programme is aimed at supplementing national efforts towards building an illiteracy free society which ultimately helps the poor to empower themselves to come out of poverty. PROSHIKA's primary education is a three years course made for 8-11 age group children, especially girls of poor households. PROSHIKA does not follow the traditional class room culture for its schools. The teacher and students have a very close contact. They have a very informal relationship with each other. Its course structure is designed in academic years. Students are taught in practical methods. Its enrolment programme has attracted the poor parents and now they are interested to send their children to schools. For PROSHIKA, education is a basic need and no one should be deprived from it because deprivation from education is an impediment to economic, social political and cultural development of the nation. PROSHIKA aims at building illiteracy free society. Its main objective is the socio-economic empowerment of the people. Though 54,199 adult literacy centres and

²⁴ Sattar, op.cit., n.8, pp.306-312.

17,585 non-formal primary schools, PROSHIKA has brought benefits of functional literacy to more than a million of children and adults. Another component of UPE (Universal Primary Education) is enrolment of children from the poor households into formal schools to enhance further growth of literacy.²⁵

GSS (Gono Shahajjo Sangstha) approach to education is widely appreciated as being one of the most advanced and possibly best in approach among the developing countries. Its primary education programme started in 1986-87. For GSS women empowerment is a must, because it believes that without empowering women it is difficult to achieve capacity building and sustainable process. The major emphasis of GSS is on the education of slum children. GSS considers the current educational system is not sustainable for slum children. So a five year curriculum was designed to provide basic education to slum children who work in the informal sector of the urban centers. It adopted western method for the slum children. Its main objective is to promote child-centered teaching methodology, provide education to the destitute and poor children who have never been exposed. It also cooperates and supports other NGOs engaged in educational development programme. GSS also gives importance on quality education. GSS has its own time management framework which makes clear to both teacher and student, how they spend their time during the school hours. Another aim of GSS is to develop among the children the independence of thought and the ability to produce their children in writing.²⁶

Similarly both CMES (Centre for Mass Education in Science) and CAMPE (Campaign for Popular Education), these NGOs, are active in primary education

²⁵ *Universal Education Programme, PROSHIKA*, available at www.proshika.org

²⁶ R. Govinda, and Shahjahan Tapan, *Quality Education Through School-based Supervision and Support: The Case of GSS Primary Schools in Bangladesh*, (UNESCO: International Institute for Educational Planning, 1999), pp.13-16.

programme. CMES is a technology based education programme. The main goal of this NGO is to provide non-formal primary education to disadvantage children and youth along with integration of technology training and marketing. It develops skill among the children, which help them in creating income source. CMES gives emphasis on girls' enrolment. 50 percent of girls' enrolment must be there in schools ran by CMES. In their basic education programme they have their adolescent girls programme. The aim is to free the girls from social constraints and provide a right direction to their creative energy.²⁷

CAMPE is a campaign programme for education. In 1999 it started its educational programme on basic education and gives special emphasis on internal efficiency. CAMPE is strongly involved in its effort to bring close cooperation between government and NGO and other progressive forces in primary education. Due to this active involvement of NGOs, some notable improvements have occurred in primary education sector. More than 95 percent children aged 6 to 10 years are admitted to primary schools and the drop out rate is now only 38 percent.²⁸

Though the objective of NGOs vary from one another, still some common objectives are there like creating opportunities of learning for the destitute and poor children who have never been exposed, introducing primary education in the areas of the country where no school exist and promoting child centered teaching methodologies. Besides this these NGOs have an undeniable social influence in the villages, which may help to change attitudes towards children's education. NGOs credit scheme also increase and regularize the flow of cash within the village

²⁷ Sharafuddin, op.cit., n.24.

²⁸ *Bangladesh Education Sector Review*, Vol.II, Published for the World Bank, (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 2000), p.8.

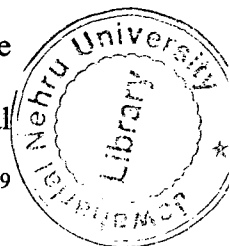
economy. They can also promote non-formal education programme at the local, regional and national level by cooperating with and supporting the efforts of non-formal educators and other community based organizations. Government and NGO can take initiative to promote women's education by improving enrolment opportunities, to include females in primary education programme as student and instructors. Priority should be given to education of young females and programme promoting literacy among men.

Now-a-days both government and NGO are cooperating with each other for the proper implementation of primary education programme. The government launched a mass education programme in 1980. Local NGO are associated with the programme and running two thirds of all non-formal education. In 1994, the government sponsored study on "monitoring and evaluation of non-formal primary education programme". Seventeen NGOs participated in the study.²⁹ Specifically in education, many NGOs in Bangladesh have come to recognize that linking up with government may be an opportunity to scale up their innovative education activities, influence formal education policy and provide opportunity for additional funding. Though it is a complex and evolving process, but now NGOs have started to engage themselves in a constructive partnership with the government in order to influence government policy by working from within.

CONCLUSION

Bangladesh government has taken many steps for positive developments for the improvement of primary education. Still some weaknesses are their, such as:-

²⁹ Hossain, op.cit., n.19, p.92.



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1. Bangladesh has most centralized system of governance and public administration which is also reflected in its educational management.
2. There is still some hesitation found in the idea of true partnership of government, non-governmental development organizations and communities in the effort to achieve universal primary education.
3. There is also resistance in the idea of flexibility and diversity in the approaches towards frame work of primary education.
4. It's planning, management and implementation is carried out largely by people without specialized professional expertise and training in the field of primary education. The availability of resource is also very low and it is also used very poorly or even wasted. So definitely there is a need for high level of resources.

However a good number of NGOs have been involved in Bangladesh primary education programme. For this good management sound administration, supportive supervision and most importantly a high quality teaching force and learning material is required. To remove various obstacles, Primary and Mass Education Division has adopted a National Plan of Action, which among others, include the elimination of gender disparity, ensure greater participation of the people in primary and mass education programme and decentralize management responsibility to the grass root level to the extent possible. It is hoped that with the implementation programme, it will be possible to achieve the target by the year 2000 which will add a new dimension in Bangladesh's march towards achieving an universal primary education programme.

Chapter – II

GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TOWARDS PRIMARY EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Education should be recognized as a process by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential. It facilitates sustainable development and improves the capacity of the people to address environmental and developmental issues. Education is indispensable to changing people's attitudes so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable development concern. In this process basic education plays an important role.¹

Bangladesh, a country in South Asia, covers an area of 147,570 square kilometers in which 120 million people live. The country is rich in human resources but majority of the population are illiterate. It is generally known for its high population density, high population growth rate, endemic poverty and high rate of adult illiteracy. Its per capita income is very low and fifty percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Education is an indispensable necessity for transforming this large population into human resources. Education is an important form of human capital that improves productivity, health and nutrition and slows population growth. Rapid growth of population is one of the main obstacles to provide universal access to education.²

¹ *Food for Education* available at [http:// www. Bangladeshgateway.org/sdnep/education /documents/agenda-21.html](http://www.Bangladeshgateway.org/sdnep/education/documents/agenda-21.html).

² A.H. Sadiqul Haq, "Review of Primary Education in Bangladesh" in A.K. Jalaluddin, A. Mushtaque R. Chowdhury (eds.), *Getting Started: Universalising Quality Primary Education in Bangladesh*, (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 1997), pp 34-47.

2.2 STATUS OF EDUCATION

The education system of Bangladesh is characterized by co-existence of three separate streams. They are vernacular based secular education system, religious based education system known as *Madrrasah* education, English medium education. The curriculum of both secular and English medium education is same. This English medium education is famous in the metropolitan cities of Bangladesh.

2.2.1 Vernacular Education System

In this system five years Compulsory Primary Education starts from age 6 and it continues till 10. Both Government and non-governmental primary school impart this education. But in primary education sector very few NGOs are involved. After the completion of Primary Education, students enroll for Junior Secondary Education which is also a part of basic education. In Bangladesh most of the secondary schools operated by the private sector are generally based on commercial considerations. After ten years of schooling at Primary and Secondary level, the students join Higher Secondary Education in their respective areas of specialization which is of two years. The curriculum of both Vernacular Education System and English medium Education system is same.

2.2.2 *Madrrasah* Education

It's an important part of Bangladesh's education system. *Madrrasah* is offering Post Primary Education in Bangladesh. In 1999, there were 7122 *Madrrasah* schools operating in Bangladesh, out of which 692 were exclusively for girls. Their total enrolment was 15,87,373, out of which 6,38,531 were girls. Rural areas accounted for 91.49 percent of total *Madrrasah* enrollment. Education given

in the *Madrasah* is a mixture of both secular education system which is taught in the general stream, and religious education. *Madrasah* Education Board is responsible for conducting all public examinations. Besides the government recognized and state supported *Madrasah* education system there also exists a separate stream known as *Quami Madrasah* stream which imparts only religious education.³

2.3 CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

Education has been recognized as an investment not only for creating human capital but also for inducing social change and promoting overall development. It has been instrumental in bringing shifts in perspectives. Such changes in mind set and attitude is important for the development of education sector. Education gives exposure not only to new knowledge but also adds new skills. It brings changes in human behavior and practice. Looking at this the constitution of Bangladesh incorporated a basic policy on Universal Primary Education.⁴

In the Constitution of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Article17 describes about peoples right to education. Primary education occupies an important place in this constitution. Primary Education aims at,

1. Establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children of such stage as may be determined by law,

³ *Policy Brief on "Education Policy" CPD Task Force Report; Report 2001 (Dhaka: Centre For Policy Dialogue, 2001), pp.1-15.*

⁴ *The Research Paper by Firoz M. Kamal on Impact of Non-Formal Primary Education on Marital Age, Contraception and Health Skill: Evidence From BRAC Villages, (Dhaka: Research and Evaluation Division, BRAC, December 1997), p.3.*

2. Relating education to the needs of the society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs,
3. Removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law.

These constitutional provisions serve as a guide for educational planning and development.⁵ Bangladesh has adopted a democratic method in preparing education system for every child. The policy initiated included provisions for adequate supply of trained teachers, books, educational aids and school facilities. To pursue these constitutional goals, the government legislated mandatory primary education in 1990. Its nation wide implementation started in 1993. The government committed itself to achieve compulsory Universal Primary Education by the year 2000.⁶

2.4 STRUCTURE OF EDUCATIONAL SECTOR

Bangladesh is divided into four main administrative units known as divisions. They are- Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Khulna. There are sixty four districts, each one with an education office and about five hundred Thana, (now they are called Upazila) education offices. Besides there are staff level educational organizations, which help the organizations to function effectively in order to achieve the goals of education. These organizations include Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE), National Curriculum and Text Book Board (NCTB), Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Statistics (BANBES), and National

⁵ Sattar Ellen, *Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press Ltd, 1982) P.83.

⁶ Muhammed Hedayet Hossain, "Decentralisation of Educational Management and Planning of Primary Education in Bangladesh" in A.K Jalalludien, A Mushtaque R Chowdhury (eds.), *Getting Started: Universalising Quality Primary Education in Bangladesh*, (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd, 1997), p.74.

Academy for Education Management (NAEM). But Bangladesh education system is mainly controlled by the Ministry of Education, Primary and Mass Education Division and Directorate of Education.⁷

2.5 DIRECTORATES OF EDUCATION

Directorates of Education have key roles in the administration and management of Bangladesh education system. There are four directorates. They are Directorate of Primary Education, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, Directorate of Non-Formal Education, and the Directorate of Technical Education.

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education is responsible for the implementation of government policies and development programmes in secondary education. It has 208 administrative and supervisory staff, 40 at the Head Quarters and 40 at the zonal level and 128 at the district level. It is largely involved in project level planning. It has also specific responsibility for the enforcement of academic standards of secondary and higher secondary education. It is also involved with the recruitment of teachers and non teaching employees of the government schools. The process of Integrated Non-Formal Education Programme (INFEP) was initiated in 1991 to address the need of the illiterate population outside the formal education system. INFEP supported three different types of non-formal education programme such as:

1. Centre based literacy programme implemented by the government and non government institutions.

⁷ *Bangladesh Education Sector Overview, Final Report, Japan Bank for JBIC International Cooperation, March 2002, available at www.jbic.go.jp/English/dec/environ/report/pdf/eban.pdf.*

2. The Total Literacy Movement (TLM) a “campaign” by the district administration.
3. Distribution of free primers for literacy activities by philanthropic and voluntary organizations.

In 1996, INFEP was replaced by the Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DNFE). The Directorate of Technical Education is responsible for planning, development, co-ordination and supervision of technical and vocational education under the Ministry of Education. Its main functions are:

1. To assess the needs of skilled manpower at all levels,
2. Prepare policy guidelines for the Ministry of Education on consolidation, improvement and expansion of technical education and training and,
3. Thirdly, prepare annual budget proposal.

The Directorate of Primary Education which is an independent body was established in 1981. This step was taken to strengthen the administrative set-up of primary education. The directorate is headed by a director general. The functional section is headed by directors at the headquarters. In different tiers of administrative units such as, division, district, and thana the directorate has field officers. The responsibility of construction, repair has been given to Directorate of Primary Education.⁸ The objective of all this is to implement the policies of Universalisation of Primary Education by undertaking the programme in a planned manner.

2.6 VARIOUS POLICIES AND PLANS ON PRIMARY EDUCATION

⁸ *Bangladesh Education Sector overview*, Final Report, Japan Bank for JBIC International Cooperation, March 2002, op.cit, n.7.

Educational planning in Bangladesh began as a state policy in 1973. Since independence, Bangladesh has expressed its determination to create an educated civil society through implementation of Universal and Compulsory Primary Education programme. In order to deal with educational problems and development, Bangladesh government has created many policies and Acts. These include First Five Year Plan (1973-78), Second Five Year Plan (1980-85), Third Five Year Plan (1985-90), Task Force Report on Primary and Mass Education (2001), Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-95) and Fifth Five Year Plan (1997-2002). Besides, Primary Education Act 1981 and the Compulsory Primary Education Act 1990 are also important⁹.

2.6.1 The First Five Year Plan (1973-1978)

In the first plan Bangladesh took many steps to provide education to all children. Primary education was to receive 18% of allocation for education and was seen mainly as a level where the child would acquire basic skills. Some of the major objectives were specified in the plan and they are:

1. The total enrollment to go up by about 2.6 million from a base of 6 million to 8.5 million.
2. 90% of the boys of primary age group to be given access to primary education during the plan, compared to 76% attending schools at that time.
3. Participation of the girls to be accelerated. At present 40% of the girls of the primary schooling age group attend schools. This will be raised to 55% during

⁹ A Mushtaque R Choudhury, Rasheda K Choudhury and Samir R Nath, (eds.), *Hope not Complacency: State of primary Education in Bangladesh*, (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 1999), pp,5-6.

the plan. This will lead to an increase in actual enrollment of girls in the system by 1.1 million compared to 1.4 million for boys.

4. The curriculum of the primary level will be revised to make it more relevant to real life obtaining in the country.
5. Text books, writings and instructional materials to be supplied to all children free of cost at subsidized rate.
6. Drop-out rate to be reduced from 63% to 53% by undertaking supplementary and non-formal measures such as provision of free schools, child feeding, female teachers, sports and recreational facilities and synchronizations of holiday and crop seasons will be introduced to drop-out between class 1 and class 2, where the problem is more acute.
7. Educated house wives were encouraged to teach in primary schools.

The first four objectives are different but they have a common objective. That is, increase in enrolment ratio. None of these targets had been achieved by 1978 or even by 1980. There are several reasons for this. Two most prominent ones are famine in 1974 and the increased price of text books in 1978.¹⁰

Despite this criticism, the Five Year Plan served a useful purpose. It gave target against which achievements could be measured; it served as some kind of a framework, within which education could be more critically reviewed.

2.6.2 The Primary Education Act 1981

The Act of 1981 made provisions for the establishment of Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) at the subdivisions which is now abolished.

¹⁰ Ellen, op.cit., n.5, pp.82-83.

Extensive powers were to be delegated to these LEAs and their executive committees headed by bureaucrats and primary education officers. The 1981 Act reestablished school based management through the formation of School Management Committee. But unfortunately; the primary education Act 1981 with the innovative features of the LEA decentralization was not implemented.¹¹

2.6.3 The Second Five Year Plan (1980-85)

In the Second Five Year Plan of Bangladesh fixed a target of enrolling 91 percent of the primary age group by 2000. Keeping this target in view, the objectives of the Second Five Year Plan was formulated as follows:

1. To bring about a noticeable improvement in the standard of living by ensuring adequate supply of the basic needs,
2. To bring about significant improvement in the quality of life in the rural areas through greater participation of the mass in development activities through local bodies,
3. To expand opportunities for employment beyond the growth of labour force so that people have access to resources for their basic needs,
4. To eliminate illiteracy and make a significant progress towards a comprehensive development of human resources,
5. To reduce the rate of population growth,
6. To attain a higher degree of self-reliance,
7. To move towards a more equitable distribution of income, resources and opportunities for better social justice,

¹¹ Hossain, op.cit, n.6, p.83.

8. To accelerate food production beyond self-sufficiency in the shortest possible time,
9. To accelerate the pace of economic development.

The second five year plan did not emphasize the constitutional provision for establishing free and compulsory primary education. However all the objectives of the second five year plan can be realized by the improvement of the primary education which is both a basic need and a means to improve the quality of life by the more equitable distribution of the opportunities to all students.¹²

The Second Five Year Plan, 1980-85, acknowledged the importance of decentralization of the administration of education particularly, primary education because centralization leads to inefficiency and corruption. There is the rationality behind decentralization and democratization of the primary school administration. This decentralization process included the need to:-

1. Reduce central administration's control on primary education to the extent that it can offer professional services and finances to the decentralized school organizations and communities.
2. Involve local decisions and initiatives to growing local educational needs.
3. Facilitate effective mobilization of local support to education.
4. Create facilitating conditions for local educational planning. Institutionalize linkages among school organizations, structures, people, power and communities.
5. Consider the importance of the implementation process, technical context and moral sensitivity to the programme success.

¹² Ellen, op cit., n. 5, p. 87.

6. View primary education as an integrated approach combining it with health, nutrition, skills and human qualities.
7. Preserve choice and use of local culture for creation of quality educational programme.¹³

2.6.4 The Third Five Year Plan, (1985-90)

In the Third Five Year Plan, emphasis was given to strengthen institutional capacities, increase community participation and try to find out the way to provide education at lower cost. During this period the government felt that UPE could not alone increase the rate of literacy. For this an experimental mass educational programme was launched in January 1988 at a cost of TK 262.2 million. It is a joint programme conducted by the government and the NGOs. The government's role is to make 1.3 millions illiterates literate through 27, 600 centers by June 1990. The part of the programme being executed by the NGOs is called the Mass Education through Small Local Organizations (METSLO). The government's objective during this plan period

1. Increase the rate of literacy from its existing level of 30 percent, so that at the end of the prospective plan Bangladesh can achieve education for all.
2. Establish a viable institutional or organizational framework for the implementation of the literacy programme.¹⁴

¹³ Hoossain, op.cit, n.6, pp.78-79.

¹⁴ Ambica Prasad Nanda, *Universalisation of Primary Education in South Asia With Special Reference to Bangladesh*, (Unpublished Ph.D thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, School of International Studies, New Delhi, 1995), p.4.

2.6.5 The Compulsory Primary Education Act, 1990

The Compulsory Primary Education (CPE) Act was enacted in 1990 in order to translate the constitutional provisions for free, universal and compulsory education into a reality. The Act empowered the government to undertake the legal and administrative measures to implement purposes of CPE Act. The Act of 1990:-

1. Provided ward, union, upazila/thana and district CPE education committees for effective implementation and coordination of CPE programme in their geographical areas,
2. Involved ministers, state ministers deputy ministers and parliament members as advisers in the district and thana level committees respectively.
3. Ensured women representation and participation in all committees,
4. Gave role performance to deputy commissioners and executive officers as CPE committees' chairpersons at districts and upazila/ thanas.
5. Ensured membership of elected members of local governments in the CPE committees.
6. Ensured membership of the local educationalist and municipal bodies in the CPE committees.
7. Provided education to officials to act as secretariats of all CPE committees.
8. Standardized frequency of meetings for all CPE committees.
9. Provided supervision, reporting and monitoring mechanisms for CPE programme.
10. Described functions of all CPE committees.
11. Established procedures and norms for the enforcement of Compulsory Primary Education, and

12. Provided community participation and social mobilization role to School Management Committees and parent teacher associations.¹⁵

The whole country was brought under CPE programme in 1993. The Ministry of Education has also made different arrangements at different levels to implement, monitor and coordinate the CPE programme.

2.6.6 The World Conference in 1990

The World Conference on Education for All (EFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990 was a landmark in reaffirming the participating nation's commitment to basic education. Bangladesh is a signatory to the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) which is an outcome of the Jomtien Conference. To achieve basic education for all, an emphasis was given on the completion of primary education for all children through formal and non-formal systems. According to this declaration, the countries are to impart basic education to at least 80 percent of their primary school children by 2000 AD. Imparting basic education entails achievement of a minimum level of accomplishment. The available evidence suggests that Bangladesh has to go a long way to accomplish this.¹⁶

2.6.7 The Fourth Five Year Plan, (1990- 95)

In the Fourth Five Year Plan the government adopted a strategy regarding low- cost development and launching of primary education. The objectives of the Fourth Five Year Plan are:-

¹⁵ Bangladesh Education Sector Overview, Final Report, Japan Bank for JBIC International Cooperation, March 2002. op. cit., n.7.

¹⁶ Chowdhury, op.cit., n. 9, pp. 2-3.

1. To introduce compulsory primary education.
2. To reduce illiteracy.
3. To enlarge and upgrade the base of science education at all levels.
4. To enhance the functional character of technical education of vocational training by making them more job oriented through constant and appropriate links with the employment methods.
5. To ensure optimum use of existing facilities at all levels and to introduce a process of accountability in the educational system.
6. To utilize the multi-sectoral potential of education with respect to their objective, awareness, population-planning, extension services etc.
7. To maintain regional balance in growth of educational facilities.
8. To ensure enhanced participation of women in every possible sphere of education.
9. To inculcate moral values in society.¹⁷

2.6.8 The Fifth Five Year Plan (1997-2002)

The education objectives under the Fifth Five Year Plan provided for:

1. Compulsory Primary Education for all children,
2. Attaining 70 percent literacy rate
3. Introducing functional, technical and vocational education with effective linkage with the job market
4. Maintaining regional balance to educational development.
5. Encouraging private sector and community participation in education.
6. Expanding management and professional education.

¹⁷ Nanda, op. cit., n.14, p.79.

7. Providing cost effective and merit based higher education.
8. Enhancing participation of women in every sphere of education.
9. Improving management of educational institution through involvement of local bodies.
10. Improving physical and health education at primary and secondary level.

The government also identified various strategies to achieve these objectives, such as:

1. Mass literacy through effective Total Literacy Movement and the enhancement of NGOs.
2. Continuous training for primary and secondary teachers.
3. Management training courses for educational administrators.
4. Performance of institutions and teachers to be evaluated and linked to government's financial support.¹⁸
5. From above facts it can be said that the government attached a great deal of importance to education in Bangladesh's development. Government also adopted various programmes to attain gender parity in school education. The core objectives and development strategies of the Fifth Five Year Plan 1997-2002 is to reduce poverty and accelerate economic development and in this process education may prove to be a prompting base .Without proper education, this objective is difficult to achieve.

¹⁸ *Bangladesh, Fifth Five Year Plan, (1997-2002) pp.420-429.*

2.6.9 Food for Education Programme

Hunger is a barrier to learning. School feeding programme throughout the world have been successfully applied to school. It was designed to develop long term human capability by making the transfer of resources to a household contingent upon primary school enrollment of children. Food for schooling programmes provides a free ration of food to poor households as long as primary school age children attend school. The free food for schooling, monthly food grains rations becomes an income entitlement that enables poor families to release children from household obligations so they can go to school. This innovative programme was also introduced in Bangladesh. The objective of the programme is to:

1. Increase enrolment in primary schools.
2. Increase attendance of the enrolled students.
3. Decrease drop-out rate of registered students.

All the government and non government registered primary schools of the selected unions have been brought under its purview but what has been found out is that, this programme actually deteriorated the situation since the enrollment increased only in those schools which implemented this programme in full earnest, while other schools remained at their previous enrollment rates which was low. In order to improve the quality of education under this programme, it is important that programme designed include complementary, financial and technical assistance to build more schools, improve school facilities, hire more and better qualified teachers and provide proper training to the teachers.¹⁹

¹⁹ Food for Education, op.cit., n.1.

2.7 FINANCIAL ALLOCATION

During the period covered by the four Five Year Plans, the allocation of money to primary education increased enormously. In the first Five Year Plan, the government allocated TK 577 million which went up to TK 14280 by the Fourth Plan. In the fifth Five Year Plan it is increased to TK. 68,594.20 million. International donors also extended valuable financial assistance to the countries non-formal education which is administered by NGOs.²⁰

Bangladesh spent an average of 0.9 percent of its GNP on education during 1973-80. By 2000, the proportion of education spending rose to 2.2 percent of GNP. Intra sectoral allocation for education in the Fifth Five Year Plan revealed that primary and mass education received 64.18 percent of total plan allocation for education. Government expenditure on education consistently increased up to a peak of 2.4 percent of GDP in 1995. In 2000 it came down to 2.2 percent, primarily due to a fall in development expenditures in education. The share of primary education in revenue budget however declined from 48.5 percent in 1991-92 to 39.5 percent in 1990-2000, while secondary education share increased. Real public spending per student per annum declined in primary education in this period.²¹

²⁰ Chowdhury op.cit., n.9. p.10.

²¹ www.jbic.go.jp/English/oec/environ/report/pdf/eban.pdf

Table 1: Trends in the Level of Central Government Expenditure on Education (% of GDP)

Fiscal year	Revenue Expenditure	Development Expenditure	Total Expenditure
1973-1980 average	0.63	0.27	0.09
1981-1985 average	0.73	0.23	1.0
1986-1990 average	1.03	0.30	1.3
1991	1.06	0.16	1.2
1992	1.14	0.21	1.4
1993	1.34	0.47	1.8
1994	1.36	0.66	2.0
1995	1.30	1.06	2.4
1996	1.30	0.83	2.1
1997	1.30	0.90	2.2
1998	1.34	0.73	2.1
1999	1.35	0.80	2.1
2000	1.37	0.84	2.2

Source: www.jbic.go.jp/English/oec/environ/report/pdf/eban.pdf

Table 2: Allocations in the Five Year Plans and Education Sector (in crore TK)

Plans	Total Allocation	Allocation to Education	% Allocation to Education
First 5-year plan (1973-78)	4455	316	7.1
Two years plan (1978-80)	3861	186	4.81
Second Five Year Plan (1980-85)	16060	836	5.20
Third Five Year Plan (1985-1990)	38600	1370	3.54
Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-95)	67230	3289	4.89
Fifth Five Year Plan (1997-2002)	203422.9	12868.15	6.32

Source: www.jbic.go.jp/English/oec/environ/report/pdf/eban.pdf

Table 3 : Intra-sector Allocation for Education and Religion in the Fifth Five Year Plan (1997-2002)

Sub-Sector	Total Allocation (Million TK)	Allocation in Percentage
1. Primary Education	74635.00	57.99
2. Mass Education Subtotal	7959.20	6.18
	8259.20	64.18
4. Secondary Education, <i>Madrasah</i> and College	31204.40	24.24
4. University Education	5494.40	4.26
5. BITS	900.00	0.69
6 Education Ministry	628.40	0.48
7. Technical Education	5088.30	3.95
8. Technical Assistance Subtotal	321.00	0.24
	43636.50	33.91
9. Cadet college and Cantonment Public schools and College	791.50	0.61
10. Religious affairs	1659.30	1.28
Total	128681.50	100

Source: www.jbic.go.jp/English/oec/environ/report/pdf/eban.pdf

This increased funding for primary education requires the government to implement mandated programme. Additional funds are targeted for the support of new programme such as expansion of non-formal schools and schools based on religious affiliations. A consensus should develop among the professional groups in education for the transformation of million of people of Bangladesh into productive human resources, and it needs substantially more investment in education.

2.8 VISION FOR 2020: A STEP TOWARDS QUALITATIVE IMPROVEMENT IN EDUCATION

The Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies in cooperation with the World Bank undertook an exercise of projecting the course of development up to the year 2020. Bangladesh by 2020 should achieve a strong system of basic education with virtually all children enrolled and low drop out rates. For the poorer

groups primary education will be supported by pre school education programme addressing nutritional, health and dietic concerns. Adult literacy rates have been targeted at 90.0 percent, based on increased school attendance of youth and successful literacy programme provided through non-formal means. Within primary sub-sector, emphasis should be placed on raising learning skills or quality of education to acceptable levels.

Sustained progress should be the chief aim in primary education. Bangladesh's substantial progress in having the fertility rate lowered will be felt principally at the primary school level over the next two decades. Investment can be devoted mainly to improving the quality of education. The resources that government concentrates should be in the area that can't be taken up by the private sector, namely, science and technology education, graduate studies and research. In the interest of equity and resource mobilization, higher funds will be financed increasingly through greater cost sharing with beneficiaries and there by also making it less dependent on public sources. Bangladesh will have achieved universal primary enrollment by 2010. By 2000, basic education will have been extended to incorporate classes 6-8 also.²²

These objectives stress that the highest priority must be assigned to quality improvement and strengthening of management. Improvements in quality and management capacity from the bottom-up will inevitably raise completion rates and reduce wastage and inefficiency in the system. The government should be able to achieve Universal Primary Education and raise quality within existing spending as a percentage of GDP. The investments in quality improvement

²² *Bangladesh Education Review*, Vol II, Published for The World Bank (Dhaka: 2000) , p.18.

themselves should go a long way towards correcting problems of inefficiency in the system. Quality enhancement will largely help in addressing deficiencies and also improve completion rates. The best way to implement the strategy and to make maximum impact on primary education is to successfully implement the PEDP(Primary Education Development Programme).

CONCLUSION

After discussing the government's priorities and policies, it can be said that like any other South Asian country, Bangladesh also has similar problems such as access and equity, problem in the quality of education, governance and management of education and adequacy of resources and their effective use. Access to primary education for children is regarded in Bangladesh as a question of citizen's right under the constitution and under International Human Rights treaties as well as national development imperatives. But beyond this, access at secondary and tertiary level is necessary for meeting the developmental priorities of the country. Quality in educational programme is best reflected in learning achievements of students. It is the outcome of combined effects of a host of factors. So a useful, analytical approach should be adopted by the government to bring changes and improvement in the quality of education. The administration and management processes ruled by regulations and practices based on tradition and customs are found in South Asia, particularly in Bangladesh. So there is no recognition of the need for specialized formal training. Education system should be decentralized and the bureaucratic control should be lessened. Government should introduce workable quality improvement mechanisms. It should properly mobilize and effectively use resources.

Adequate and proper use of resources will definitely lead to the development of education sector. But in case of Bangladesh, educational financing is heavily dependent upon public sector allocations. So government should try to develop its financial capability. Several policies have been made for the proper mobilization of resources. What is important is the proper implementation of the policies. Besides this Bangladesh government should ensure strong governmental commitment to increase resources for primary education.

Government of Bangladesh makes primary education free and cost effective. No child should be denied access to a basic education because he or she can not pay for it. To achieve success in primary education requires strong commitment to gender equality. It needs a conscious education system that changes the attitude of the people regarding this. Government should try to develop community participation in educational system which will help them to understand the purpose of primary education. It will indirectly lead to the improvement in the quality of primary education. Child drop-out rate goes on increasing because of poor quality of schooling. So people should be made aware of this problem through community participation. A well developed curriculum should be adopted with the changing local and national context.

Finally, it can be said that the government of Bangladesh is trying hard to improve their educational quality by bringing change in their educational policy. Steps are also taken to attract donation from the international organizations. Government of Bangladesh has already decentralized the educational system and mainly the directorate of education. So from these steps, it can be predicted that the future of Bangladesh primary education is bright.

Chapter – III

ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Emphasis on education, particularly primary and basic education is the order of the day in global development planning. There are 872 million adult illiterates or one in every three and 125 million children of primary school age are out of schooling in the world. During the decade of the 1990s three major conferences attended by world leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the goal of primary education. The 1990 declaration of the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA), held in Jomtien, Thailand, reaffirmed the right of all people to education. Bangladesh is also a signatory of this conference.

Bangladesh is known for its high population density, high population growth rate, endemic poverty and high rate of adult illiteracy. It ranks among the bottom twenty countries in the literacy league table. Between 1980 and 1998, the adult literacy rate rose marginally from 32 percent to 38 percent with the rate for females being only half of males.¹ The impact of the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All(WCEFA) held in March 1990 which prompted an expanded vision of basic education with the aim of meeting the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults has been felt in Bangladesh. As a result of this, Compulsory Primary Education Act was passed in 1990, and in January 1992 the government launched the Compulsory Primary Education Programme in the country. This programme has been extended nation wide since 1993. The aim of

¹ A Mushtaque R Chowdhury, Samir R Nath and Rasheda K Choudhury, "Equity in Primary Education Provision in Bangladesh: Hopes and Concerns" in Asit K Biswas, JSA Bricchiri Colombi, Amirul Islam Choudhury, KB Sajjadur Rasheed, (eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Development* (Dhaka: Academic Press and Publishers Ltd., 2002), pp. 280-281.

this programme is to develop basic competencies and life skills among the children, so as to enable them to effectively pursue further education and productive life in the society. But in spite of this, student enrolment was not that satisfactory and drop out rate did not increase.

In this context, it has become necessary to enlist greater support and involvement of voluntary organizations in the education sector. In the 1980s a number of NGOs began to feel the need for initiating programme of basic education in support of their poverty alleviation activities in Bangladesh. They identified education as a priority sector for their areas of operation. Currently more than 400 NGOs are involved in non formal education programme in Bangladesh. Their main aim is to provide education having a mechanism for measuring achievement, simple and effective management. Presence of large number of NGOs in the primary education sector is one of the special features of Bangladesh. Around 40 percent of primary school age children are enrolled in schools managed by NGOs. Among them BRAC, GSS, PROSHIKA and CMES are most important.²

3.2 BANGLADESH RURAL ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE (BRAC)

BRAC, the largest NGO in Bangladesh, is a comprehensive development organization with multi-faceted activities spread across the country. It came into existence in 1972 and it is almost as old as Bangladesh. Because of its multi sectoral programme, it has spread over the most parts of the country. BRAC has a vision for basic education. For BRAC, basic education includes skills in reading, writing, simple arithmetic and knowledge of selected essential life skills. BRAC has its justification for putting emphasis on basic education. It views basic

² A.M.Sharafuddin, "*Innovations in Primary Education*", available at www.Ashanet.Org/munich/articles/InnovationsinPrimaryEducationinBangladesh.pdf

education as a human right which leads to the all round development of human beings. BRAC is deeply conscious that poverty is the main obstacle in the path of education in Bangladesh which also poses a threat to the promotion of development in the country. Poverty and illiteracy are closely linked and interconnected. BRAC has learnt through its experience that some level of basic education is needed to attack the root causes of poverty. With the promotion of basic education, the women can effectively cope with the problem of poverty. Bangladesh ranks 115th out of 131 countries in its literacy rate with only one third of these over fifteen able to read and write. Among the rural women, 85 percent are illiterate.³

BRAC was one of the first NGOs to have started large-scale programme of Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) in Bangladesh. The education programme was launched in 1985 with only 22 experimental schools. Today it has the largest single Non-Governmental Primary Education programme in Bangladesh. Now it has expanded to over 40,000 schools, with an enrolment of over one million children. NFPE's objectives are to reduce mass illiteracy, contribute to the basic education of children, especially those from the poorest families, promote the participation of girls in education, and support the government's universal primary education programme. BRAC schools are situated in the centre of villages. It has an easy flexible schedule which ensures that BRAC schools are compatible with rural life. The village communities are also involved in school time tables.⁴

³ M Ghulam Sattar, "Social Movement Through Basic Education Experience of BRAC in Bangladesh" Paper Prepared for the Conference *Asia in the 1990s: Meeting and Making of a New World*, Queens University Kingston, Canada (Dhaka: October 1993), pp. 4-5.

⁴ *Girls First*, available at <http://brac.Net>.

BRAC schools have some specific features such as:

1. Easy accessibility for the poor children.
2. Participatory and life related curriculum.
3. Learning through co-curricular activities like dancing, singing, story telling specifically aimed at exercising articulation, enhancing observation skills and improving co-ordination of movements of different body organs.

The schools are primarily meant for the socio-economically disadvantaged, especially the girls of landless rural households. However, children from an illiterate richer family can also be enrolled. For easy, educative and fear-free teaching methodology, the BRAC schools have gained popularity. The children who were early dropped out from formal schools are showing high rate of continuation in these NFPE schools.⁵

BRAC organizes two types of schools such as, three year NFPE schools for 8 to 10 years old children who have never attended schools, and two years Kishor-kishori schools for 11 to 16 years old students who have dropped out of primary school and are unlikely to return. Pupils, teachers and parents are some of the important parts of NFPE. BRAC schools are one room classes consisting of 33 children. Among them, 72 percent are girls living in rural areas, within about a two kilometres radius of the school. Maximum people come from relatively disadvantaged homes, their families being landless or owning only their homesteads. BRAC gives preferential enrolment to girls and to children from poor families. Teachers are generally married adults. Among them 95% are women. The teacher is usually a woman from the village with at least an eighth grade education

⁵ Firoz M Kamal, *Impact of Non- Formal Primary Education on Marital age, Contraception and Health Skill: Evidence from BRAC villages*, (Dhaka: Research and Evaluation division, BRAC, December 1997), pp. 3-4.

who has completed an intensive teacher training course run by BRAC. The teachers are hired on a temporary part time basis and paid modest wages. There is one teacher for 33 pupils. Teacher training includes 12 days of initial training at a residential BRAC training centre, and one day or two day refresher training sessions each month conducted by BRAC staff at a BRAC office near the teacher's school. There is also a provision of weekly visits from BRAC field workers which provide regular feedback.⁶

The parents of most BRAC school pupils are illiterate and they are socially and economically in a backward position in their villages. Parents pay no fees for the schooling. BRAC provides all the study materials to the pupils. Prior to the opening of a new school, parents and BRAC staff meets several times. Its instructional materials have gone through several phases of revision. The curriculum originally covered three subjects such as Bangla, mathematics, and social science. BRAC curriculum was modified to incorporate English and religious instruction, and required subjects in government schools. The current BRAC curriculum spans grade1-3 and includes Bangla, mathematics, social science and English with an emphasis on health and social issues. The NFPE instructional programme is presented in three year cycles. The programme policy is to maintain a 70-30 ratio of girls to boys among those enrolled. BRAC schools make an effort to enroll dropouts from the regular school system, and the curriculum developed by BRAC is intended to provide gender sensitive, functional education.⁷

Instruction in BRAC schools is based on two models. The first model is:-

⁶ Sharafuddin, op.cit,n.2.

⁷ Ibid.

1. Non-formal primary education (NFPE) for 8-10 years old, they are taught for three hours daily, six days a week and for three years.
2. The second model, Primary Education for Older Children (PEOC) is a two years course for students of 11-16 years age group who are supposed to learn faster and are thus able to finish the course in a shorter span. The objective of the education under both models is to provide elementary education and knowledge about social studies.

There are various factors, which are responsible for the phenomenal growth of BRAC schools. Some significant factors are- extensive community involvement, flexible school hours, relevant curriculum and emphasis on extra curricular activities like physical exercises, music, drawing and crafts, motivated by locally recruited teachers, good training and retraining of the teachers and close monitoring on the part of BRAC workers. BRAC felt that without mobilizing the community and other social forces, it is difficult to achieve the goal of educating all children. BRAC has thus developed a system to stimulate awareness of the community and involve the poor in educating their children. Thousands of landless poor, women and men have been organized by BRAC through its rural development and other programmes and they have been linked with the BRAC schools. A committee was established comprising of parents and the managers of the school which takes care of issues such as students drop outs, progress in education etc. Mothers are invited to the school every month to exchange their views with the teacher about their child's performance. Active involvement of the community has produced many well accepted results such as low drop out rate and

high attendance rate. In BRAC schools the drop out rate is quite insignificant, less than 2 percent, as against the 60 percent of the formal schools.⁸

BRAC also started its Education Support Programme in September 1991 to reach out a larger population with local NGOs. This partnership increases BRAC's effort towards the eradication of illiteracy and also develops the technical/conceptual and human skills of smaller NGOs. At present Education Support Programme is providing its support to 303 NGOs for 2,505 schools. BRAC is assisting their initiatives with counseling and training, as well as financial and material support. BRAC has also introduced a continuing education programme in 1995 to focus the post-literacy activities. It aims to develop the reading habits of both the rural and urban people. These objectives are achieved through establishment of libraries and reading centers. Every library has a children's corner. So far, 570 libraries have been opened and run by the local community management with active support from BRAC. The management committee observes the day-to-day functioning of the libraries. These libraries organized socio-cultural and learning events. While administering education extensively in the rural areas, BRAC realized that it was not reaching out to uprooted slum children. Although government is providing free education for young learners all over Bangladesh, there were few schools for the poor children of slum dwellers. Therefore, in March 1992, BRAC started implementing school education in the urban areas to cater the needs of urban life and surroundings where a large number of poor children are deprived of formal education due to scarcity of formal schools.⁹

⁸ Sattar, *op.cit.*, n.3, pp.6-7.

⁹ *Girls First*, *op.cit.*, n.9.

So BRAC's model of non-formal primary education has drawn the attention of many people even beyond the national boundaries. Many of the South Asian countries are interested in non-formal primary education programme by BRAC. They are sharing experience and each others programme. BRAC's non-formal primary education is more contributive to women's autonomy and socialization. Hence, it implies that BRAC's low cost non-formal primary education is an effective instrument for enhancing women's autonomy and socialization in a rural set-up.

3.3 THE GONOSHAHAJJO SANGSTHA (GSS) PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The Gonoshahajjo Sangstha (GSS) which means "organization for extending support to people" was set up in 1983 as a non-governmental development agency. The main focus of GSS is to initiate activities that help to re-allocate power to the poor and the women through a participatory process of organization building and self determination. In order to attain this goal, people's mobilization and education are seen as main path towards achieving this goal.¹⁰ The GSS approach to education is widely appreciated as being one of the most advanced and possibly best in approach among developing countries. The approach itself is not innovative. It is derived from an approach which is common in western countries.

The primary education programme of GSS was started in 1986-87. The programme started in order to meet the demand essentially from women who had participated in various activities, including adult literacy activities of GSS. GSS

¹⁰ R.Govinda and Shahjahan Tapan, *Quality Education Through School-Based Supervision and Support: The Case of GSS Primary Schools in Bangladesh* (International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO, 1999), p.12.

felt that without educating women, the capacity building and sustainable process of empowerment could not be achieved. This process was also accompanied by the education of their children. Primary education programme was started in 1986 with six primary schools on an experimental basis in the slum areas of Dhaka and later on, in Khulna. In 1991 the programme was reviewed and a new approach was adopted to improve the quality of these schools by introducing child centered and activity oriented methods. The programme was gradually extended to rural areas also.¹¹

A major emphasis of GSS is on the education of slum children. Urban population is expanding and only 9.4 percent of the households in the slums have primary schools within their reach. The existing educational system is not sustainable for slum children because they have to work for their livelihood. So the five year curriculum was designed to provide basic education to slum children who work in the informal sector of the urban centers. In designing the curriculum and teaching method, GSS adopted western methods for the slum environment.¹² The specific objectives of GSS primary education programme are:-

1. Creating opportunities for learning for the destitute and poor children who have never been exposed to or who have dropped out from formal schooling;
2. Introducing primary education in the areas of the country where no school exists;
3. Designing and promoting child-centered teaching methodologies;
4. Developing a system of continued education for post-primary children;
5. Cooperating with and providing support to other NGOs engaged in educational development programme; and

¹¹ Govinda, op.cit., n.10, pp. 13-14.

¹² Sharafuddin, op.cit., n.2.

6. Contributing to quality improvement in the government primary education programme.¹³

GSS now runs a large network of primary schools including 23 training schools located in different districts of the country. By mid 1998 GSS was running more than 700 primary schools located in 20 different districts of Bangladesh, with a total enrollment of over 114,000 children, the ratio between boys and girls being almost equal. Most of the schools are set-up in families of landless laborers or marginal farmers and are normally aged from 6 to 11. The number of boys and girls in these schools is equally balanced, with a marginal bias in favor of girls.¹⁴

At present there are 14 urban primary schools located in slum areas. Eight of these are in Dhaka. These schools served three fold purposes.

1. They specially cater for the educational needs of the urban poor;
2. They serve as the-job training centers for teachers;
3. These schools help and influence the mainstream government and the government officials.

GSS also gives importance on the quality of education. It is not only focusing on the outcomes of schooling, but also on the physical, social and intellectual environment provided in the school. Quality can be improved by:

1. Creation of a problem solving, independent and learning environment designed to help children to raise questions and be creative;
2. Providing for an active learning system;
3. Maximizing individual student-teacher learning time;

¹³ Govinda, op.cit., n.11, p.16.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.15.

4. Providing developmentally appropriate learning materials and a relevant skill-based curriculum;
5. Providing clean, well lit schools with thirty students per class; and
6. Creating set lesson plans for each child.¹⁵

GSS has its own quantity targets such as:

1. More than 90 percent attendance rate,
2. Less than 5 percent drop out rate for grades 1-3,
3. More than 50 percent of the children going on to grade 4,
4. 100% children should be able to do creative writing by the end of grade 3.¹⁶

In order to improve the quality in primary education, the GSS has designed a well developed model and in this it seeks to:

1. Organize class room activities, providing a child centered and interactive teaching method to help children regardless of their capability of learning potential in all curriculum areas,
2. Motivate children towards reading books and developing sound reading habits in order to become independent readers and writers,
3. Ensure that a child should develop a sound understanding of mathematical concepts and practical application,
4. Give the children an understanding and respect of traditions and environmental issues,
5. Impart primary health education and make every child aware of relevant health related factors,

¹⁵ Ibid, p.16.

¹⁶ Sharafuddin, op. cit., n. 2.

6. Develop their creativity through the provision of appropriate art and crafts education.¹⁷

The curriculum followed in GSS schools is same as in government primary schools. It adopts a diversified learning approach involving project work, reading, games, creative writing, and primary health care and extra curricular activities. GSS curriculum includes colorful and interesting materials which relate closely to the children's environment. The course duration is three years for rural children and five years for urban slum children. The urban schools are experimental. In the rural schools, classes are held in two shifts and each school has three teachers. In order to make its content meaningful, easy and attractive, it has made provisions for multiple choices of materials developed by different organizations. During their course period, the students of GSS have been provided with a wide range of books published by the government, BRAC, individual writers and the GSS itself. It adopted western teaching- learning methods and group teaching methods in its classroom which allow the teacher to pay equal attention to each child and allows the children to develop according to their own ability and speed. There is one teacher and thirty children in each section. In a class room, there are three corners and three tables. The walls of the class room are decorated with various educational charts, posters and samples of work done by the children. The basic purpose of the arrangement is to ensure individual attention, allow the children to progress at their own pace, and facilitate continuous peer learning and interaction. GSS has evolved a time management framework which clearly says about how teacher and student will spend their time during the school hours. Children attend school on a shift basis and not more than three hours each day. This poses

¹⁷ Govinda, op.cit., n.11, p.16.

tremendous responsibility upon the teacher to use time very effectively and in a very efficient manner. On the basis of framework, time is also divided for children showing how much time they will spend on which activities. Children are encouraged to learn more and to develop the habit of group learning. The teacher in the classroom will listen to every learner. By doing this, GSS wants to develop among the children the independence of thought and the ability to produce their own ideas in writing. In this method, instead of being treated as part of the class room, the child is treated as an individual. The teacher pays attention to each child and the child proceeds according to her or his own ability and pace.

GSS tries to involve community in its primary education programme. Communities are involved in house-to-house survey of all children. Parent-teacher meetings are the basis of the interaction between the school and the community. Community involvement results in increasing awareness about education among children. Besides this, GSS tries to involve children actively in the learning process instead of being passive listeners. It is believed that by adopting such a child centered methodology, it is possible to develop a closer relationship between the learners themselves and with the teachers as well. This close and intimate relationship will make the learning process less difficult, more enjoyable and stress free. To provide quality education and uplift the performance of the children, every learner's learning achievement is monitored and assessed daily and fortnightly by teachers. The data from assessment are kept in the school and analyzed and if there are any loopholes, steps are taken to improve the quality based on the weekly, fortnightly and quarterly assessment of annual progress report. Progress reports also include information on the educational and family background of each student and also their attendance and academic achievement. Regular participation of all

enrolled children throughout the primary education is viewed in GSS as an important indicator of quality education. In order to achieve better quality in education, teacher and supervisor are required to make special effort to achieve this goal.

The average dropout rates in schools are 7.6 percent in rural schools and 20.9 percent in urban schools. One reason for the significant difference in dropout rate between rural and urban schools is associated with the fact that the urban children are temporary slum children and therefore highly mobile because they move from one village to another village. But in case of rural schools, the schools supervisors are required to monitor the student's attendance and meet their parents to encourage them to send their children to school on a more regular basis. Permanent infrastructure, attractive educational materials, interesting recreational programme and interactive child centered teaching methods play a vital role in reducing the dropout rates. In this process involvement of the community and the parents has a significant influence.¹⁸

So it can be said that, with a network of more than 700 primary schools located in the different districts of Bangladesh, the primary education programme of GSS is continuously expanding.¹⁹ In order to bring more qualitative improvement in education more effective bridge should be built between the GSS schools and other primary schools both government as well as private. It will help to transform the larger system of primary education in the country. Steps should also be taken to bring community involvement more effectively and parents community participation in the development of primary education programme.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 17-23.

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 17-23.

3.4 PROSHIKA

In Bangladesh, there are a group of children in society, who were enrolled but were not able to reach the formal course of primary education system. But they are a potential sector of human resources of their society and if effective steps are not taken, they will be an added burden to the illiterate masses of the country. These underprivileged boys and girls of 8-11 age groups help their families as domestic workforce. So these children have become the potential point of PROSHIKA's Universal Education Programme. PROSHIKA introduced the NFPE programme with a view of providing education to those disadvantaged children so that they could play a role in creating an innovative society. The primary education programme of PROSHIKA is a three year full primary course model for 8-11 age group children, especially girls of poor households. Its contents are similar with the learning contents of National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) of Bangladesh. PROSHIKA does not follow the traditional class room culture for its schools. One teacher runs one schools with a group of 30 learners for three years. The learners have to sit in a 'U' shape so that teacher can give attention to all of them. The children who are in PROSHIKA schools are usually older than the children of primary schools. The teacher and learners have a very close contact. They have a very informal relationship with each other. The course structure of PROSHIKA is designed in academic years. Each academic year is completed in nine months. The children are taught through practical methods. Sometime students are also taken out of the class rooms to observe situation in real life. PROSHIKA's activity based learning method in groups make NFPE different from

the traditional teacher-centered classes. These innovative methods help the learners to become creative and arouse their interest and attention.²⁰

PROSHIKA's school enrollment programme has attracted the poor parents very much and now they are interested to send their children to schools. Girls are most neglected part in the society. Under PROSHIKA education system, girls are taken special care. In order to manage the schools, PROSHIKA has established school management committee. It has also taken steps to involve parents in that managing committee. During the year 2000-2001, PROSHIKA's achievement in Universal Primary Education (UPE) has been remarkable. A total of 153,733 adults became literate and 138,900 girls and boys attended the NFPE schools through PROSHIKA's comprehensive literacy programme.

The children's enrollment programme has substantially contributed to the Education for All (EFA) by addressing the problem of low enrolment, low attendance and high dropout in primary schools. PROSHIKA is aware of the rights of women. It tries to develop participation of women in education sector. So parents are hardly reluctant to send their female children to schools both formal and non-formal. Because of its motivational efforts PROSHIKA was able to change the value of education. PROSHIKA considers education as a basic need, and believes that the deprivation from education is an impediment to economic, social, political and cultural development of the nation. Its education programme is aimed at supplementing national efforts towards building an illiteracy-free society which ultimately helps the poor to empower themselves to come out of poverty. PROSHIKA believes that successful implementation of this education programme helps to attain the objectives of socio-economic empowerment of the poor. By

²⁰ *Universal Education Programme, PROSHIKA, available at <http://www.Proshika.org>.*

acquiring literacy skills; the poor becomes aware of human rights, democratic values, environmental concerns and analysis of their poverty.²¹

3.5 CENTRE FOR MASS EDUCATION IN SCIENCE (CMES)

CMES is a technology based basic education programme. It has established basic schools which are designed to provide non-formal primary education to disadvantaged children along with the integration of technology training and marketing. Twenty basic schools are served by a Rural Technology Centre for Basic School (RTCBS). There are four levels of education in the system and each takes about one year. The first two levels deal with the attainment of literacy, numerical knowledge and some life skills. The second two levels in addition to basic education provide opportunity to learn one or more technological skills directly relevant to the present generation. The students of CMES are from those children who have never been to school or dropped out. There is no age bar for enrolment. In each of the levels, there may be 20-30 pupils at a time. It gives emphasis on girl enrolment and care is taken to enroll 50 percent girl children. CMES organizes workshops for adolescent girls and mothers at the premises of RCTB schools. The purpose of these workshops is to begin and continue a dialogue with the families on all aspects of the programme. It provides for the older generation to understand the problems through their own life experiences and lend their support to the new generation's effort towards emancipation. The service centre located in the capital city functions as the head quarters of CMES. The basic school system is planned, developed, managed, monitored and evaluated from the service centre. It carries out research on appropriate technology for the basic school system. It also innovates technology suitable for the villages. It designs and

²¹ *Universal Education Programme, PROSHIKA, op.cit., n.2.*

develops curriculum, teaching methods, instructional materials, teaching aids and training courses for teachers and monitor their effectiveness. There are 20 RCTBS centres with 400 basic schools enrolling 23,000 learners. In addition to the basic education programme, there is also an adolescent girl programme. Its aim is to free the girls from social constraints and free their creative energy. CMES programme has produced some visible results, which were reflected in the positive change of perception about women's life, greater mobility of the girls beyond the village, participation of girls in educational, social and economic process.²²

CONCLUSION

So a good number of NGOs have been working in areas of primary education in Bangladesh. NGOs have acquired considerable experience and expertise by working for the last two decades at the grass root level. They have also initiated some innovative programme in this area. Providing education to the vast number of people in the country is so large a task that all the relevant forces and resources in the country must be mobilized to carry it out. In order to fulfill this task, it would be very helpful to ensure effective participation of the NGOs at every level from planning to implementation. Some of the NGOs have made significant role in the primary education sector and their contributions are praiseworthy

Although NGOs started working in the literacy field immediately after the liberation war, there were voluntary associations working in this area since the British period. In 1990, a coalition was formed of the mainstream NGOs implementing major education programme. In 1992, a survey was conducted on the capacity of NGOs in the field of primary and mass education in the country. It

²² *Innovations in Primary Education in Bangladesh*, op.cit., n.2.

was found out that as many as 326 NGOs had operational programme in this area. Over the last two decades these 326 NGOs educated some 2.7 million illiterates including children, adolescents and adults. In 1996, the number of NGOs involved in education programme increased to 435 with 2.52 million learners. NGOs are working in every field of non-formal primary education. In Bangladesh, local NGOs are associated and running two-thirds of all non-formal education centers. The remaining one-third of the centres is administered by the Directorate of Non-Formal Education.²³

If we see the school statistics, we find children enrolment has gone up, and drop out rate has gone down. But this is not enough. So it is important to look at the gaps in the system. But Bangladesh has made important gains in making primary education accessible to its population such as girls, children living in rural areas and those belonging to poor households. This change has taken place because of certain deliberate and focused intervention made by the public and the NGO sectors.

²³ A Mushtaque R Choudhury, Rasheda K Choudhury, Samir R Nath, Manzoor Ahmed, Mahmudal Alam,(eds.), Vol.1, *A Question of Quality, State of primary Education in Bangladesh, Major Findings: A Synthesis*", (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 2001), p.50 .

Chapter – IV

GOVERNMENT-NGO COOPERATION IN PRIMARY EDUCATION SECTOR

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The 1972 constitution of Bangladesh provides the basis for the policy on universal primary education. The policy has three components. They are,

1. Establishing a uniform, mass oriented and universal system of education;
2. Extending free and compulsory education to all children;
3. Relating education to the needs of society and removing illiteracy.

The policy also involves adequate supply of trained teachers, books, educational aids and school facilities. Since independence Bangladesh has expressed its determination to create an educated civil society through implementation of universal and compulsory primary education programme. In order to deal with the problem, Bangladesh government has taken so many important steps.

Bangladesh is committed to the goals set in the World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990 and the World Summit on Children held in New York in 1990. Participating in World Summit for Children, Bangladesh government adopted certain goals for the development of children. Bangladesh government passed the Compulsory Primary Education Act in 1990 and the Compulsory Education Programme in 1993.¹

¹ A Mushtaque R Chowdhury,, Rasheda K Choudhury and Samir R. Nath, (eds.), *Hope not Complacency: State of Primary Education in Bangladesh 1999*, (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 1999), pp.5-7.

4.2 BACKGROUND

If we see the history, the relation between government and NGO in Bangladesh was full of indifference, confrontations, mutual distrust, grudging acceptance and pragmatic partnership. So there exist a number of ups and downs. After 1971, when the country got independence, the relation between these two can be summarized as a decade of neglect because at that time both the government and the NGOs were new and did not pay much attention to each other. During the 1980s, the NGO started to grow and they came with a number of successful projects. But the period of 80s was marked with suspicion and distrust on both sides. With their successful projects the confidence level of NGOs was getting higher, the government became suspicious and jealous of NGOs during this period. Government bureaucrats often view NGOs as having a luxurious life style, working in skyscrapers and driving out money from other international donors. On the other hand, NGOs see the government as authoritative, bureaucratic and ineffective. So a certain degree of jealousy and resentment exist till today.²

Government agencies expect a greater transparency from NGOs regarding their reporting on project activities and disclosure of financial statements. Government seems to have a wrong understanding of the whole idea of development and NGO function. Because of lack of communication and coordination between NGO and Government, the latter remain suspicious about NGO activities. On the other hand NGOs have a feeling that if they become too close to government providing them all information, it may encourage the government to impose more rules and control over NGO operation. This may allow

² Miwa Kaiko,, "Government –NGO Partnership and Children's Right to Education in Bangladesh" in Naila Kabeer, Geetha B Nambissan, Ramya Subrahmanian, (eds.), *Child labor and the Right to Education in South Asia: Needs versus Rights*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), pp.244-246.

the bureaucrats to press some undue request like staff selection and asking for some financial benefit. Government staffs are often jealous of NGO staffs seeing the higher pay scale of NGOs. NGO staffs in contrast, have appreciation about the permanent nature and job security of the government staff and the value and status of the position they hold.³

Since the independence of Bangladesh, the policy makers are conscious about the regional imbalances in the education sector, particularly, in primary education. So they want to expand the vision of basic education to achieve this government introduced compulsory primary education programme. Objective behind this programme was to develop basic competencies and life skill among the children and also enable them effectively pursue further education and productive life in the society. This programme has been introduced nation wide. In 1993 the government launched the food-for-education programme. The aim was to improve the enrolment and class attendance and reduce drop outs. But the result was not like that all schools were not covered by FEP programme. As a result over crowding in FEP schools and under crowding in non-FEP schools emerged constraining the former and depriving the latter. In addition the distribution of food under FEP involved a cost not provided for in the budget.⁴ The main purpose of this programme was not that satisfactory and drop out rate goes on increasing. In this context, if we see government achievement in previous years, enrolment in 1980 was less than that in 1975. Over million children were enrolled class five in 1975, in 1980 it is down to 0.7 million. Enrolment declined from almost 8.6

³ M.H Zaman, "Synergizing Development activities of small NGOs" *The Journal of Social Studies*, (Dhaka: Center for Social Studies, April-June 1999, No-84), p.78.

⁴ Muzaffer Ahmad, "Financing Of primary Education" in A.K Jalaluddin, A Mushtaque R Choudhury, (eds.), *Getting Started: Universalising Quality Primary Education in Bangladesh*, (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 1997), p.162.

million in 1975 to 8.2 million in 1980 with the higher classes the worst affected. Boys' enrolments also declined. Enrolment of student was affected by many factors. It does not matter whether the school is in urban or rural, in a poor slum or a wealthy residential area.⁵

4.3 COOPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND NGOs

If we make a comparison between formal and non-formal organization, it can be said that in Bangladesh non-formal education is defined as intentional, focused instruction that occurs outside the formal government school system and incorporates flexibility in the organization and management of the programme and curriculum. Currently, most non-formal education in Bangladesh is provided through NGOs, or other voluntary organizations According to the statistics the drop out rate of non-formal primary education is around 3 percent.⁶ It can be said that non-formal primary education offered by NGOs is more formal than government schools in a sense that they have a more structured supervision system, well tested curriculum and teaching method, established management system, regular refresher training and effective management to retain the students. The government is criticized for being mechanistic, rigid and vulnerable to political interests. Its strength is its authority to make binding decisions in the public interest and a capacity to influence large number of the population.⁷

Building confidence and trust among poor community by the NGOs took enormous amount of time and efforts. Government makes good policies but they face problems in the implementation phase. There is no coordination between

⁵ Ellen Sattar, *Universal Primary Education in Bangladesh*, (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 1982) pp.35-37.

⁶ Kaiko, op.cit., n.2., pp.245-249.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 245-249.

various ministries and government departments. NGOs face difficulties in running around different ministries for their different work nature. Their bureaucratic attitude and slowness in government bodies has forced donors to think alternate ways of funding some of their development programs through NGOs to ensure a speedy and effective implementation of the project activities.

NGOs work very closely with the poor people. This way they can earn respect and confidence of the target group. On the other hand, government maintains a distance with the same target people because of their official status supported by bureaucratic mentality. People do not see them as partner but a different class. Poor people always prefer to discuss their problems with NGOs staff rather than going to government offices. Because of their strong motivating power, strong local identity and above all, the commitment to serve have put them in a commendable position.⁸

Bangladesh has adopted a pluralist system in its basic educational provision. Its educational scenario is dominated by public sector. It has a private sector share of 15 percent and NGO sector share of 8.5 percent. The policy of NGOs like BRAC and others to recruit at least 70 percent girls and children of poorer families seem to have a tremendous influence in the matter of parents sending their children to school. Gradually the gender gap in enrolment has disappeared and poor parents are sending their daughters to school more often now than before. In many societies poverty has been identified as major reason for inequality in enrolment and other parameters of education.

The investment in non-formal primary education is less and the children attending such schools are not expected to perform equally well as formal school

⁸ Ibid, pp.245-249.

students. However, the NGOs who run most of the non-formal primary school are not only facilitating increased access to schooling by girls and children of socio-economically disadvantaged families, but are also contributing to their better performance in school. Since NGOs constitute only a small proportion of about 8.5 percent of all enrolments, the chances of their having a major impact on the educational scenario is limited.⁹

The least privileged in our society and deprived section such as girls and women are taken special care by these NGOs. So that poor parents are now attracted to send their children to primary schools. Class time is allocated through various segments which will suit all the sections of the learner. Another reason of the success of NGOs can be extensive community involvement, mobilising the members of the community. Not only this, steps are also taken to involve parents in this educational process. To achieve this objective, NGOs establish committee comprising of parents and managers of the school. The aim is that parents themselves must realize the utility and usefulness of imparting education to their children. The committee will discuss the issue like drop-out, enrolment and progress in primary school. Active involvement of the community has produced many well accepted results such as low drop-out rate and high attendance rate. Mobilization of community members and involvement of parents can be said an important step for the success of NGO in primary education sector.¹⁰

A positive development during the last couple of decades has been a new partnership emerging between the government and nongovernmental organizations

⁹ A Mushtaque R Chowdhury, Samir R Nath and Rasheda K Choudhury, "Equity In Primary Education Provision in Bangladesh: Hopes and Concerns" in Asit K Biswas, JSA Brichieri-Colombi, Amirul Islam Choudhury, K B Sajjadur Rasheda (eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Development* (Dhaka: Academic Press and Publishers Ltd., 2002), pp.288-291.

¹⁰ Sattar M Ghulam,, "Social Movement Through Basic Education, Experience of BRAC in Bangladesh", Paper Prepared for the Conference, *Asia in The 1990s: Meeting and making a New World*, Queens University Kingston, Canada (Dhaka: October 1993), pp.6-7.

in the area of basic education. The efforts of large NGOs in Bangladesh such as Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Gonoshahajjo Sangstha (GSS), and PROSHIKA have demonstrated that even the NGO sector can contribute significantly towards universal provision of primary education. Several international NGOs such as Action Aid, Plan International have also expanded their primary education portfolios in recent years. NGO action in primary education has enabled them for reaching the unreached and marginalized section and provide quality education to all children. Another important point is the response of civil society in the way of increased community participation in the area of basic education. Effort of Bangladesh NGOs have clearly shown how essential is community participation for successful action in primary education.¹¹

4.3.1 In The Policy Level

Both government and NGOs are helping each other by the decentralization process of government in primary education sector. Compulsory Primary Education Act of 1990 also emphasizes the significance and the values of a decentralized primary school administrative system for the achievement of the nations cherished goal of education for all. Governments' decentralization process reduces central administration control on primary education to the extent that it can offer professional services and finances to the decentralized school, organizations and communities. It involves local decisions and initiatives to growing local educational needs. It facilitates effective mobilization of local support to education and creates conditions for local educational planning. It also institutionalized linkages among school organizations, people, power and communities. Gradually,

¹¹ R Govinda "Educational Provision and National Goals in South Asia: A Review of Policy and Performance" in Naila Kabeer, Geetha B Nambissan, Ramya Subrahmanian (eds.), *Child Labour and the Right to Education in South Asia: Needs verses Rights* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), pp. 178-180.

government is also realizing that existing local government structures, functions and roles are barriers to development of an efficient primary school system administration in Bangladesh. Decentralization leads the way for NGO to participate in education sector. Education as a human resource development philosophy requires an expanded vision on teacher and teaching. In this context government is following the teaching style of NGOs. Government realized that for qualitative development of class room teaching, districts school boards will required to hire non tenured teachers and community subjects specialists to take selective classes and arrange shows, events and performances of social and cultural significance.

4.3.2 In The Curriculum Level

The government has taken many steps to improve the curriculum. The government sponsored study found out that NGO schools face equivalence, and enrolment and achievement challenges. In the curriculum sector, NGO School confronts at least two challenges, first, NGOs follow a variety of curriculum. For example, some NGO followed the government school curriculum, some developed their own and some used a mixed curriculum. In 1982, the National Development Curriculum Development Centre merged with the Textbook Board to form the national curriculum agency for the country as a whole and entrusted with the curriculum and instructional materials development activities. During the Third Five Year Plan (1985-1990), the NCTB undertook comprehensive curriculum renewal and modification activities in the area of primary education. The main thrust of this activity was to restructure and reform the primary curriculum to meet the demands of universal compulsory primary education with particular focus on improvement. The outcome was a competency based primary school curriculum.

In Bangladesh competency based curriculum development was attempted not as an adhoc activity but as a process in which all the interrelated elements which lead to effective curriculum implementation were looked at simultaneously. A distinguishing feature was the process of curriculum renewal. This constituted a major departure from the previous highly centralized curriculum. It was an integral exercise of which the various components of curriculum development and its implementation were planned as integral components of the total process of primary education improvement

The new curriculum was implemented during the Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-95) with new approaches towards the evaluation of pupil's achievement. Government also follow some approach which was followed by NGOs like BRAC and GSS such as it trying to diversify teaching-learning activity involving project work, reading, games, creative writing, primary health care and extra curricular activities. In order to make learning an enjoyable experience, the curriculum includes colorful and interesting materials which relate closely to the children's own environment. Government also develops a range of teaching learning materials for the use of teachers and students. Teachers are also encouraged to develop game, learning aids in order to organize teaching-learning activities.¹²

The new curriculum is being considered as more inspiring, imaginative and expected to carry the interest of young minds vis-à-vis the old curriculum. The old curriculum was criticized for being content based. The new curriculum defines an "Essential Learning Continuum from grade 1 to v and a learner is expected to achieve the terminal competencies at the end of primary cycle. If we go through

¹² R Govinda and Shahjahan Tapan, *Quality Education through School Based Supervision and Support: The Case of GSS Primary Schools in Bangladesh* (UNESCO: International Institute for Educational Planning, 1999), pp.17-18.

the terminal competencies we find that the current curriculum is a good combination of ideological, historical which was trying to include religious and moral values, historical sense of nationhood, duties and responsibilities of a good future citizen, and some knowledge of foreign language such as English. About 95 percent of the primary educational institutions including the mainstream schools, schools run by large NGOs such as BRAC, GSS of the country follow the syllabus fully or substantially developed by NCBT.¹³

The primary level curriculum has been formulated on the basis of Bangladesh's socio-economic situation as well as children's physical and mental make-up and their cultural awareness. The government has developed "National Education Policy 2000" which gives emphasis on creating awareness. One of the main strategies of the policy is including environmental studies in the primary level. An education policy giving priority to female education and for eradicating illiteracy by 2005 has been formulated. NGOs are playing vital role through implementing non-formal basic education for children, adolescents and adults. They are making a great contribution in achieving Education for All by running non-formal primary education centre supplementary to the formal education system.¹⁴

In direct response to the World Conference on Education for All, the government and the NGOs have taken many steps in the education sector of Bangladesh. The Primary Education Act was passed in the parliament just after the Jomtien Conference. A separate ministry level division under the name of Primary and Mass Education was established in 1992. Television, radio, and the newspaper

¹³ Mahmudul Alam, *The Bangladesh Development Studies*, Vol. XXVI, n.4., December 2000, pp.46-47.

¹⁴ *Bangladesh Education Scenario* available at <http://www/BRAC.net>.

have been used to create awareness among the people about the importance of education. Primary education is free for all children in government schools and education for girls is free up to grade eight in rural areas. Provision of scholarship has also been introduced to keep the girls in schools and the Food for Education programme is operating in some areas to protect against drop-out among children from poor families. A National Plan of Action was also prepared to meet the goal set by the World Conference on education for all. Complementary to the government efforts, NGOs are also strengthening educational activities with their non-formal education programme for the young children. The NGOs are trying to increase the number of schools in different locations. Nearly about 40,000 non-formal schools are currently operating all over the country. To achieve Education for All require cooperation between the formal and non-formal education sectors implying cooperation between the government and non-government organizations in education sector.¹⁵

4.3.4 Level Of Community Participation

In educational system community participation in school matters and supervision by the respective authorities play significant role in its development, quality improvement and sustainability. In Bangladesh, almost all schools providing primary level education have their own School Management Committee (SMCs). Because of a government directive to form SMC in all schools, around 99 percent of the government and non-government primary schools and the *Madrasah* reported existence of committees. The average size of the SMC differs from formal to non-formal schools. Women's share in school management committee was

¹⁵ Samir R Nath,, Kathy Sylva and Janica Grimes, "Raising Basic Education Levels in Rural Bangladesh: The Impact of a non-Formal education Programme", *International Review of Education* (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers,1999), p.8.

relatively poor. The women's share in School Management Committee was highest in the non-formal school that is 56.7 percent and insignificant in the *Madrasah*, only 0.2 percent and 13.2 percent in the government primary school. But the share of women in SMC was slightly higher in urban areas than rural areas. In spite of all, the efforts both by government and NGO in mobilizing people to take part in the educational process helps them to get girls into schools and in this effort both government and NGO has been highly successful.¹⁶

Girls enrolment increased from 45 percent of the total in 1990, and is now almost at par with boys enrolment. Relating to poor children, Bangladesh government has also taken steps. About 70 percent of the eligible children from poor families enroll in primary education. About 70 percent of mothers and 50 percent of the parents of children currently enrolled in school cannot read and write. A few years ago these parents would not have seen the need to educate their children, but the community mobilization schemes and awareness campaigns both by government and NGOs of the early 90's have had impressive results. Several measures adopted by the Primary and Mass Education since 1997 for the improved management of primary education is impressive. For the first time effort, Government of Bangladesh introduced school evaluation system on the performance basis to provide grades to primary schools. The grading system applies to both government and non-government institutions. They use innovative approaches and teaching methods to have high efficiency rates.

Schools run by non-government institutions have very high proportions of female teachers at the primary level but the state primary system employs only 28 percent female teachers. It has been found out that a high proportion of female

¹⁶ Choudhury, op.cit., n.l., pp.51-53.

teachers is an important factor in promoting enrolment of girl in schools. Female teacher who out numbered male teachers in non-formal centres have been tended to be more effective in terms of their regularity in attendance and creating a caring environment in the class room. The government has plans and taking steps to raise the proportion of female teachers to 50 percent over the next several years.¹⁷

4.3.5 Financial Level

If we see the budgeting system of government in primary education, the government expenditure on education is one of the lowest of which the maximum is spent in meeting salaries and allowances. Education in Bangladesh is basically state financed. Due to the low revenue, the government however is highly dependent on external sources for financing its development project. External aid finances more than 50 percent of government development expenditures on education. The full cost of government primary schools are borne by the government. The non-government schools also receive grant from the government for repair of school building. It also provides free textbooks to primary school students. BRAC is also one of the several NGOs which have received government funding to run 225 schools catering to children working in factories or as domestic servants.¹⁸ Gradually, in every Five Year Plan the government is increasing its budget on education. As a share of GDP, government expenditure on education averaged 1.2 percent during First Five Year Plan, 1.3 percent during the second, 1.8 percent during the third, 2.2 percent during Fourth Five Year Plan. In Fifth Five Year Plan also the amount has increased little bit. So in budgeting,

¹⁷ *Bangladesh Education Sector Review*, Published for the World Bank, (Dhaka: the University Press Ltd., Vol. I, 2000), pp. 8-10.

¹⁸ *Policy Brief on Education Policy CPD Task Force Report*, (Dhaka: Centre for Policy Dialogue, 2001), p.5.

government wants to cooperate with NGOs to implement the policies effectively and attract donors of the foreign countries to invest.¹⁹

Some of the NGOs especially experienced ones debated within their organization whether to be a partner of the government. Although, it is usually easier for these NGOs to carry out their own projects with their unique norms and frameworks with foreign funding, but, many decided to be partner of government with the vision of influencing government policies by working from within. Another critical reason was the NGOs realization that they needed to find alternative sources of funding other than foreign donors in order to sustain their programme for the long run

In spite of this, the NGOs raised more negative than positive aspects of working with the DNFE (Directorate of Non-Formal Education). Some NGOs were frustrated with the uncooperative attitude of government officials towards NGOs. They are saying that government servant harassing them by their master like attitudes. Inflexibility of the project design, an excessive and complicated reporting system and the poor use of monthly meetings were also raised as issues. At the very basic level of management practice, a majority of NGOs stated that irregular disbursement of funds and delays in printing and distribution of textbooks by DNFE have been an obstacle in implementing the project. While bigger NGOs are were able to continue with the project implementation by advancing the funds from their own resources, smaller or newer NGOs had no temporary reserve to cover the cost. It was also pointed out that the poor quality of classroom supplies provided by the DNFE was causing problems in the project²⁰.

¹⁹ AHM Sadiqul Haq, "Review of Primary Education in Bangladesh", in A K Jalalludin, A Mushtaque R Choudhury (eds.), *Getting Started: Universalising Quality Primary Education in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 1997), p.37.

²⁰ .Kaiko, op.cit., n.2., pp.253-255.

Besides this, with their cooperation, access to primary education over the last 20 years has increased steadily. The gross enrolment rate has risen from nearly 60 percent in 1980 to 73 percent in 1990 and 95.6 percent in 2000. We can say that in the last two decades, primary education enrolment has more than doubled from 8.2 million to 17.6 million. The current estimate of net enrolment rate has also narrowed to a ratio of 51 to 49 between boys and girls. The rate of drop out in primary school has gone down from 60 percent in 1990 to 35 percent in 2000. The achievement in enrolment has been made possible by legislative support, massive social mobilization and effective cooperation between government and non governmental organizations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that, Bangladesh is still one of the poorest countries of the world. For a country like Bangladesh, education is the key to attain success. It is extremely difficult to educate the people when the population is as large as that of Bangladesh. BRAC and other NGOs understand the situation of Bangladesh primary education because of their close ties with the general population. The fruitful efforts of NGOs are evident as the education level of the country is higher than ever before. For the first time, women are encouraged to study and attain higher degrees. Educating women is a major step towards the improvement of literacy rate because they can later teach their children to read and write. This change has taken place because of certain deliberate and focused interventions made by the public and NGO sectors. Education has opened the door of the poor class and those living in villages. The challenge is how to keep the change rolling in the same direction for these groups and improve the performance

of others who are trailing behind. In this task the government as well as the private and NGO sectors will need to work together.

The success of quality primary education depends upon harmonious partnership and collaboration between government and NGOs. The NGOs must accept that the government does have the legitimate authority to ensure accountability of NGOs. The comparative advantages of NGOs in dealing with poor and subordinate groups must also be appreciated in national primary education development context.

Chapter – V

CONCLUSION

Education is an important instrument for a country's national development. It can change human life drastically. South Asian countries including Bangladesh realized this quite late. However, for the last two to three decades there has been some momentous change in their social, political and economic life. It was possible because they individually as well as collectively worked for the development of their level of education and specifically primary education as it is the most effective tool to bring any change in the society. In this field they are showing their commitment. Though so many factors are responsible for their low education rate, for the last few years, these countries have intensified their efforts to provide a right direction to the national policies and programme of basic education.

They have been working to heightened awareness on basic education among political leadership as well as educational bureaucracy in all countries. They increased substantially the resources for education. Some countries have doubled their expenditure on primary education. They recognized the importance of basic education for all. In the process they have tried to involve the whole society and develop a genuine partnership among the government, communities, families and non-governmental organizations. These countries gradually realized that partnership and decentralization effectively go together when there is enormous support from the community, individual and various organizations.

If we see Bangladesh in particular, one of the important characteristics of this country is high level of illiteracy. But the state is taking a number of measures to sustain the education sector. In this process nationalization of primary education in 1973 is the first step. The Compulsory Primary Education Act 1990 to provide

free, universal and compulsory education by the government is an important step in this field. Government is providing food to the families of the poor children to increase attendance in the primary school. In this project, both governmental and non-governmental institutions are included. In 1994 the government started scholarship scheme to attract students. A separate ministry level education, known as primary and mass education division was established. From 1980 onwards, NGOs are also active in this field. They have started some innovative programme in this sector. NGOs like BRAC, GSS, CAMPE, and PROSHIKA are mainly occupying important places. Now, in Bangladesh near about 500 NGOs are involved in primary education programme. Among them BRAC is the largest. The NGOs have a good influence in the villages which have surely changed the attitudes of the people towards education. Their priority to education programme results in the development of education level.

In the second chapter, while analyzing the government policy towards primary education it is found out that the government has taken steps in the policy level to promote overall development of the children as it gives exposure not only to new knowledge but also add new skills. In the first five year plan the government had set a target to achieve enrolment up to 8.5 million, reduce dropout from 63% to 53%. Policy also involved educating housewives to teach in primary school. But none of these targets had been achieved till 1978 or 80. The reason was the famine of 1974 and increased price of textbooks in 1978. Dropout rate has been reduced. Educated housewives were not used to teach in primary school. But in spite of all this, it provided a framework within which education could be more critically reviewed.

The second five year plan had a target of removing illiteracy and expanding opportunities for gainful employment. But the plan did not emphasize the constitutional provision of establishing free and compulsory primary education. But it considered that the quality of life of the mass depends on the development of primary education. Therefore, it considered removing illiteracy is a strategy for social and economic development of the masses. The second five year plan felt the importance of decentralization of administration of education, particularly primary education because the centralized education system leads to inefficiency, corruption and lack of local initiative. The main aim of the policy is to decentralize the education system and the rest is in the hands of the local management committees which is formed at the village level.

In the third plan government realized the importance of mass educational programme to increase the rate of literacy. That is why it launched a mass educational programme in 1988. The part of the programme is also managed by the local NGOs. The fourth five year plan emphasized low cost development programme and also mobilized NGOs to take part in the education sector. In the fifth five year plan government adopted various programmes to attain gender parity in school education. The objectives of this plan are to reduce poverty and accelerate economic development through the process of education.

Besides this, the Primary Education Act 1981, Compulsory Primary Education Act 1990, Food-for-Education programme, all these policies introduced by government provide help to accelerate education process in Bangladesh. In budgeting, the financial allocation of money to primary education increased enormously in every five year plan. Intra sectoral allocation for education in the

the plan allocation and it consistently increased up. Inter programmes relating to girls' education has also been taken by the Bangladesh organization.

The third chapter deals with the role of various non-governmental organisations in the primary education sector in Bangladesh. NGOs came to participate in primary education sector in late 1980s. Some of the important NGOs are BRAC, PROSHIKA, GSS, CAMPE, etc. BRAC was one of the first NGO which started work in primary education of Bangladesh. The success rate of BRAC is high. It has more than 40,000 schools and its enrolment level was over one million children. Not only BRAC, but other NGO's success rate is also high. They are playing an important role to promote non-formal education for women and weaker section of the society. They have brought significant changes in the existing participation rates in the field of primary education. NGO's experience in community participation and behavior of village people are essential ingredients for the success of non-formal primary education.

A coalition formed by the mainstream NGOs in 1990, to implement major education programme, also helped them in their target. Over the last two decades 326 NGOs educated some 2.7 million illiterates including children and adolescents. The learners also increased day by day and in 1990 it was 2.52 million. In Bangladesh, local NGOs ran two-thirds of all non-formal education centres. Through NGOs, Bangladesh had made important gains in making primary education accessible to its population. This change has taken place because of certain deliberate and focused intervention by the NGO sectors.

The fourth chapter deals with the cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental organizations. It was found out that in the past there was confrontation, mutual mistrust and pragmatic partnership between government and

NGO. From statistics it was found out that NGOs are more successful than the government. This is because the NGOs are working to meet the needs of the vulnerable groups of the society. The primary education provided by the NGOs are more formal than the government education, in a sense that they have a more structured supervision system, well-tested curriculum and teaching method, established management system and regular refresher training. They are able to build confidence within the people. But for the last two decades a positive development in the partnership between governmental and non-governmental organizations was seen in the area of basic education. Government realized that proper implementation of policy can be done by working together with the non-governmental organizations. In this process, the government decentralized its education sector to some extent so that local decisions and initiatives involved are able to fulfill the local educational need. It also provides NGOs the way to participate in education sectors. With their joint effort, enrolment of girls also increased. From poor families children were sent to primary schools. Parents are taking interest to educate their children. They are promoting enrolment of female teachers in schools because they have regularity in attendance and they are creating a caring environment in the classroom. With their cooperation, access to primary education over the last twenty years has increased steadily. The achievement in enrolment has been made possible by massive social mobilization and effective cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations. NGOs understand the situation of Bangladesh because of their close ties with the general population. Now because of their cooperation education level of the country is higher than before.

In addition to this, the roles played by the international donors are quite significant in promoting primary education in Bangladesh. Besides this, from the study suggest that in order to achieve and improve the status of primary education, life-related curriculum, that is the curriculum which develops skill among the children and also facilitates them to meet their basic needs in the latter part of their lives, should be included in their syllabus. The school atmosphere must be friendly so that they do not feel reluctant to go to school. Quality of teaching must improve which is possible through the appointment of qualitative teachers. In this, especially the appointment of female teachers should be emphasized because participation of female teachers ensures the better participation of girl child. Both government and NGOs should cooperate and create an atmosphere so that education reaches the poor class. Their main challenge is to channelise the change in the proper direction.

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