

# Education is the Best Investment for Our Future

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There should have been a representative of the government here to give us feedback in this regard. The Parliamentary Standing Committee in this regard can see how the state can intervene more effectively. There is also the matter of devolution of power.

The spade work has already been done. It is mainly how to deepen the reforms which are already there. Whichever government may come, the Awami League government is here now with another year ahead, they must carry out the reforms. The education-related institutions must be strengthened and improved. There is also the matter of resource mobilisation.

**Dr. Quamrunnessa Begum, Director, Institute of Education Research:** Good and sound planning is lacking in our country. We have failed till now to take up planning with commitment. We have taken up many plans, all too often limited to Dhaka City alone. Planning should not be restricted to mere slogans. Education for All, this is still just a slogan. We have to take up plans that can be implemented at grassroots level. We do not have such planning. We have failed to create a mechanism in this regard. Many things have taken place here and there, I admit that we have come a long way. From 1990 till now there definitely has been a lot of work done. This was started way back from 1980. There has been a new Directorate, adult education, non-formal education. But there is a wide gap.



Dr. Quamrunnessa Begum

It is said that out of the country's 20 million children, 15 million go to school. Of these, most of them are of Class One and Two. It was 60 per cent some time back, I don't know the exact percentage now. From 25 years ago we have seen that most of the children study in Class One and Two. Undoubtedly, in Bangladesh the parents send their children to school. They have become conscious. But most of them study in Class One and Two. That is what the statistics show. They study for one or two years and drop out.

We should plan our primary education so that they come to school for five years, attend school properly and remain in school for five years and gain quality education. That is what primary education is all about. We have failed to plan this. So we should think about plans which start from the capital and go down to the grassroots.

We have to include all the people in this planning. We have formed many committees, but these have not been effective. These are not functioning well. There are school management committees, parent-teacher associations, and many other bodies, but their work is not effective. These have to be included in national planning. To see how they can be monitored, supervised and assisted. So I just want to stress the importance of planning.

**Mushtaque R. Chowdhury:** I would like to speak about the changes that Mr. Mahmudul Alam was speaking about, the increase in net enrollment rate and the disappearance of gender disparity at the primary level, in terms of enrolment and attendance. Other changes have also occurred. Completion rates have reached about 70 per cent. So 70 per cent of the children attending primary schools really complete primary education.

The other changes that have taken place, though small, is that there is indication in increase in the quality of education, their learning achievement.

**Mahfuz Anam:** Can you tell us what is the enrolment rate at the moment?

**Mushtaque R. Chowdhury:** As Mr. Mahmudul Alam said, the gross enrolment rate, as we found in the Education Watch, is 107 per cent and the net enrolment is about 77 per cent. This shows a 30 per cent difference between net and gross which means 30 per cent of the children beyond the primary school age group are coming to primary schools.

**Mahfuz Anam:** So enrolment is 107 per cent and the retention rate is 77 per cent. That is, 77 per cent complete primary education, are up to there till the end of Class Five.

**Mushtaque R. Chowdhury:** In that past which were the groups being disadvantaged, excluded? The girls were excluded. Children from rural areas were excluded. Children from poorer families were excluded. But here if we compare what we saw in 1993 and what we saw in 1998, over the five-year period, we see that changes have happened mostly in those groups which were hitherto not benefiting much from primary education. So the girls have come as far as boys. In fact, the girls have surpassed boys in enrolment. The enrolment in rural areas has surpassed urban enrolment. The improvement in the enrolment of the poor children has improved much faster than non-poor children. So these are some of the good statistics, the hopes that we see in our pri-

mary education system.

**Mahfuz Anam:** So we see the enrolment rates and the changes. Do all of you agree with this?

**Participants:** No.

**ANM Eusuf:** There is a difference. It is not a subtle difference. It is a big difference. When we say gross enrolment and the completion rate is on the basis of gross enrolment, so those who enroll, 107 per cent, of this gross enrolment 70 per cent is the completion rate. So if you say completion rate is 70 per cent of 77 per cent enrolment, there will be a big mistake.

**Mahfuz Anam:** So you are saying it is better?

**ANM Eusuf:** No, it is worse. The gross enrolment which is 107 per cent which consists of children who are above or below this age group 6 to 10 years. So they constitute the remaining 30 per cent. Of the age group, only 77 per cent which is the net enrolment of this primary school going age 6 to 10. That means primary school children, 23 per cent could not enroll. They still are outside the domain of primary education. But there are others who are above 10 or below 6 maybe.

**Quamrunnessa Begum:** About this completion rate, from '90 to '95, the enrolment and the number of students at different grade levels, I analysed something because I wrote a book on primary education. From '90 to '95 it was about 20 per cent enrolling in Class One who went to Class Five. First I did this from '85 to '90, then '91 to '95, I found that about 20 per cent children enrolled in Class One went to Class Five.

**Shafi Ahmed:** Did you only study the government schools?

**Quamrunnessa Begum:** No, the enrolment. For example, about 3.8 million were in Class One in 1985, then 1.6 million were in Class Two. I did that in 1990 to 1995 also. Only in Class One and two there were 60 per cent students. This is my analysis. I don't know how far it was correct, but that is what I found.

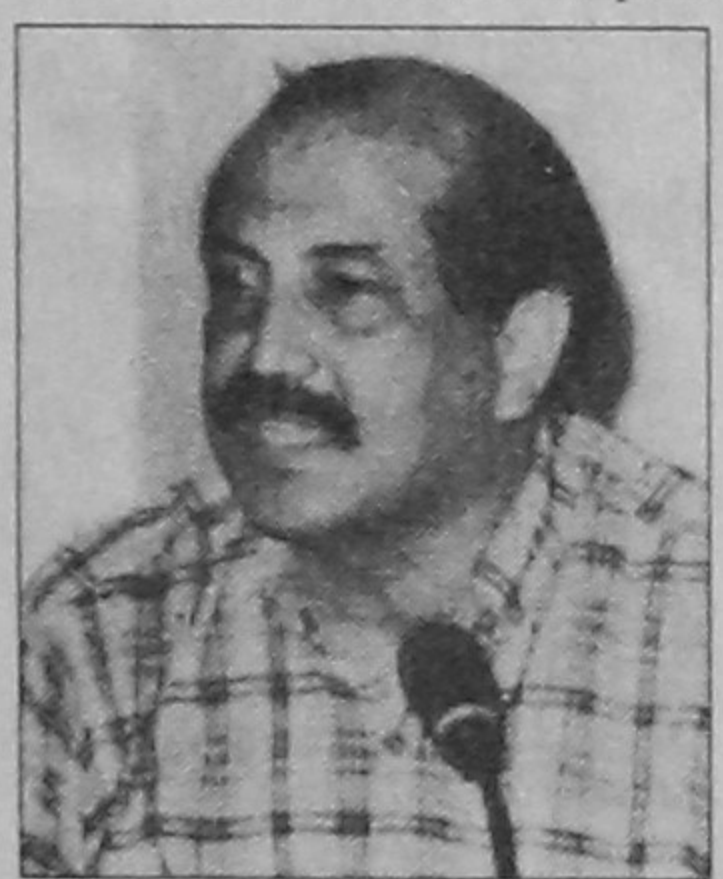
**Mahfuz Anam:** Can anyone rescue us here at this stage? I am looking for dependable, authentic statistics.

**Mushtaque R. Chowdhury:** The results that we have are the latest results, that of 1998. Dr. Quamrunnessa's results might be a bit outdated, the period being '90 to '95.

There is a general consensus that the completion rate has increased. The government says it is 67 per cent, we find it to be 71 per cent. But, 67 or 71 per cent makes no difference.

**Mahfuz Anam:** The government is claiming less!

**Mushtaque R. Chowdhury:** How do we explain this improvement that we are seeing in particular groups, girls, poorer groups, rural sections? I think those are related to certain incentive schemes that the government has instituted, plus



Mushtaque R Chowdhury

some positive discriminatory steps that some of the NGOs have followed. For example, the government has started the secondary school stipends programme for girls which gives stipends to girls attending schools in the rural areas. The schools which enroll girls also get an amount of money for this. So this is a big incentive for the parents to keep their children in school.

The second important thing is the Food for Education Programme which gives food ration to poorer children from rural areas. These are the two public sector interventions or incentive schemes which might have led to an increase in enrolment for girls in the rural areas.

In addition to that, some of the NGOs have certain programmes which are, as some call them, positively discriminatory in the sense that they prefer girls; 70 per cent of so of students going to NGO schools are girls. They also enroll children from the poorer sections. These are some of the reasons probably, according to my analysis, why we are seeing improvement in enrolment.

Now the question is, what will happen in this situation? Is it going to be a really fragile improvement? Or is it going to sustain over a longer period? That's a question we have to think about.

**Mahmudul Alam:** Dr. Mushtaque talked about the disadvantaged groups, but those who are the poorest are still not being included. Things are not that good.

**Professor Shafiqul Alam:** Mr. Mahfuz Anam raised a question whether any national action plan was drawn up following the Education for All decision. As far as I know, there had been a committee instituted for the purpose. They worked and were supposed to submit a report. I don't know if there was any final report from this.

Then, Mr. Rasheda K Chowdhury said that the participation of children from a lower level should be ensured. I don't know

if many people know that the government has formally recognised pre-primary education two years ago. I think this is a very positive step. I was involved in developing the material called *Dekha Shuna*. This was introduced in some primary schools. The children were attracted to this. It was a nice book with pictures drawn by Mr. Mustafa Monwar.

About the gender issue, when a competency-based curriculum was introduced in 1991, there was a study to see how to reduce gender bias in the text books, like English, Bengali and Social Science. Special attention was paid to reduce gender bias. A lot of changes were brought about in the illustrations and the content and the previous gender bias has been reduced to a considerable extent.

Then the programmes taken up by the government, like Food for Education, have brought about some positive results. The Minister for Education has recently initiated a national education survey. It is surprising to note that even in *madrasas*, girls' education is higher than boys. In secondary schools, the participation of girls is 56 per cent. When this survey was going on, I personally visited a school near the Banderban bus stand and saw in Grade Six 26 girls and seven boys sitting in the classroom. This was because of the girls' stipend programme perhaps. Maybe some of you will find that a balance is not being maintained. But this is what is happening and the number of girls in the schools, in *madrasas* too, is increasing steadily.

About NGOs, in our country we have Proshika, BRAC and other big NGOs, working in the education sub-sector, in non-formal education, but what is their actual picture? How far is their achievement? Will they be able to give us an accurate picture in this regard?

**Mahfuz Anam:** Our discussion is becoming a bit diverse. I am not getting any real direction. Can we have a direction? How can we go ahead with more strength? At what level is free and compulsory primary education in Bangladesh and what steps do we have to take to make it 100 per cent? How to banish adult illiteracy? Can we spend some time on these issues?

**Shafi Ahmed:** Is Education For All a Phrase? Is it a catchword? What we have been talking about is literacy for all. There have been so many controversies over the definition of literacy as itself. When we say Education For All, we are concentrating more on literacy which is good. In that case, we have to see what we really mean by literacy and whether we have literacy when we say completion in government schools or condensed syllabuses being structured by the NGOs. Does it give a competency to make me an educated person or a literate person?

About this Compulsory Education Act, like all these references to which Ms. Rasheda K Chowdhury very frustratingly referred, the Compulsory Education Act is like that too. You pass it in the Parliament, but you don't enact it in reality. We speak so much in international conferences, in our Parliament and in our public meetings. We say so many things, but we really don't translate these into action.

It is the political will and political will has been so politicised in our country, it is so frustrating for us to know as educationists, that this country in this span of 29 years had so many education commissions. But we must have a direction. Every government, whoever succeeds, if Jamaat succeeds, I will not accept a government of Jamaat. I will morally say I don't want you. But if that type of government succeeds, I want education to be such a kind of an agenda, such an important national agenda that whoever starts, we have to take the positive things of the education commissions or the education policies.

Education is a continuous process. But we have seen that with the change of government, we bring in changes in the education policy. What is this? The aims which are to be achieved by education, do they change with the change of BNP and Awami League? Or are there certain universal achievements, very common achievement which we must know and which we must achieve. Education should be taken as a continuous process.

What is most important is the political will and that the political will should be nation-based, of a wider tolerance. It shouldn't be a BNP education policy and an Awami League education policy. We cannot undermine the wisdom that many of the education commission members and their chairmen had. But we have changed it and changed it again and again. That is not giving us any direction of where we should go. This should be a national continuous agenda. All the political forces should really commit themselves to educating this country, to have an educated country.

One important thing noted in Dakar and all kinds of conferences, and has some way been translated into action in our country, is that education shouldn't be dictated from the Secretariat. It shouldn't be the Secretariat's business, or the Minister's speech or somebody speaking in the Parliament.

Decentralisation is there. In our country, there is a very good, effective kind of delivery system from the centre to the zila to the upazila, everywhere. We have Thana Education Officer and all. So we have the decentralised system, but it is not being made effective. Every de-

cision is still hanging on that 15-storied building in Topkhana. NGOs are running good schools with community participation.

The government should also believe that investment in education is the best investment. This means not only education, but investment in human capital.



Shafi Ahmed

The role of civil society is also very important. What is the civil society doing? There is an organisation now from the ex-left wingers from various political parties and in their meetings I say what kind of movement are you all planning? Let's do this. We have a Compulsory Education Act in the country. Let's really assemble in Sutrapur or anywhere and see how many children of school going age are out of the schools. And then we call the education officer concerned and say look at these children. In that way, we can really concentrate and strengthen the forces of civil society. The civil society should have a very definite agenda, a time-bound action agenda.

**Prof. Muzaffar Ahmed:** I refer to the Dakar declaration. The first issue is the vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Mahmudul Alam has already said that we have not been able to reach the poorest of the poor. Even if they come to the school, it's very difficult to retain them. Drop out rates are high amongst the poorest households. But one thing which has not been mentioned here, is that the literacy rate in the urban slums is lower than the literacy rate in the rural areas. Illiteracy in the urban slums is increasing over the years and attention has to be given to this.

The other issue that has been raised is about the ethnic minorities. My trip to the Chittagong Hill Tracts identified one very important problem. And my visit to Rangpur to the schools of the Santals introduced another problem. First is, so far as the Santals are concerned, because of social stigma, they are not allowed to sit in the same bench or the same school. Discrimination is there.

The problem in the Chittagong Hill Tracts is that the children speak very little Bengali. So you need a teacher who can translate this for them so that they can learn from the Bengali textbooks. This should be recognised and proper action must be taken.

I have great problems with NCTB textbooks. In our days there were no textbooks as such. There were various publishers



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The Dakar declaration has clearly placed a lot of emphasis on the Early Child Development and Care issues to be addressed in the future planning. Bangladesh as one of the developing countries could not address the ECCD issues with high importance in previous educational planning documents. Despite willingness and sincere desire from the authorities, it was also clear to what and how to address the issues concerned. Lack of knowledge and institutions are the prime concern in this respect.

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) is not merely an educational issue, rather a combination of Growth, Survival and the Development aspects of the children from age 0-5+. Survival and growth at the early age including joyful learning atmosphere can ensure proper development thus prepare the child for future actions (actions in formal learning environment). Integrated nature of ECCD programmes is, however, neglected and almost untouched in our Child Development Plans.

We are talking about Quality Basic Education, which calls for strong foundation, insightful learning that reflects the self-esteem and creativity in teaching learning situation. Only a strong beginning can ensure the same where the learners (children) feel free to ask questions, initiate things that they judge better working, accept and reject thing with reasoning and reflection and consolidate learning points from their maturity. Early stimulation is firmly anchored with brain cell development, which

who would publish books and then the DPI would basically say that these books can be adopted. Now, since the mid-sixties since the Swedish government gave us grant for publishing textbooks, we have standardised textbooks. This has taken away the creative approach to teaching by the teachers and creative learning approach of the students. It is important that first if there are NCTB books, there should be other books encouraged to come to the market and whoever are the authorities should basically say that these books cover the curriculum and thereby the school should have the autonomy to select the books which they think the best. This was the case when we were students. We have seen from the experience of GSS that it's not the textbooks, but also the creative supplementary reading that helps them learn essential vocabulary quickly.

At the moment if a primary school student has to read all the textbooks which require a 35,000 word vocabulary. It is an impossibility. Developed countries require only 5000 words. So in writing textbooks also we have to be careful what sort of vocabulary we use in reducing the textbooks.

**Mahfuz Anam:** Let me clarify that. You are saying that the primary school textbooks that are to be read require a vocabulary of 35,000 words.

**Prof. Muzaffar Ahmed:** Yes, and this is basically impossible. That is why they commit it to memory and the teachers encourage them to commit this to memory and that is what they write. I will give you an example. My child used to study in one of the best schools in Dhaka run by Dhaka University. I will not name it. He wrote: *Pakhir diti dana achhey* (The bird has two wings). The teacher said this is wrong. You should have written *pakhir diti pakha achey*. So this is the kind of teaching that is going on. Because that is the exact sentence written there in the book, he has to reproduce this. So this is the problem. We are pushing our students towards non-creative ventures and to memorising. We should get out of this.

Then comes the question of adult literacy. Adult literacy programmes need special re-orientation. Unfortunately, the independent reviews of adult literacy programmes are quite adverse and the government does not really own these reports. The government's own departmental review is of course very different, saying that we are achieving targets. Various districts and sub-districts are said to be free of illiteracy. But if you go there and conduct a survey, you will see a lot of illiterate persons. So this is basically hypocritical. We need to get out of this hypocrisy. We want an educated, literate, value-oriented society.

About gender disparity, saying that the number of girls going to school is equal to boys is a one-dimensional way of thinking. You will find that girl students in the field of science are fewer than the boys. This is something which needs remedy. This is the picture not only at the tertiary level, but also at the secondary level. Girls' participation in science education is

take place mostly up to the age of four. Good behaviour, affection, examples, practices do give a good shape in their future personality which is very much essential for basic understanding in the formal educational institutions. Most of the learners are dropped out from the schooling system due to lack of confidence in themselves, basic understanding, unfamiliar and unfriendly environment in schools and easy cooping pattern between home and schools.

To address the Early childhood issues, the next cycle of achieving EFA (2015) should devote and concentrate the following actions.

- Search for the initiatives already made by national and international NGOs (Save the children alliances, PLAN International Bangladesh, VERC, Grameen Shiksha, BRAC, Nijera Shikhi etc.)

- consolidation of the learning so far experienced by these organisations

- follow up the NICEF conference in late 99 (Future Search Conference)

- prepare a National Plan of Action for ECCD issues
- mainstreaming the ECCD issues into the primary schools (preparing the future learners through feeder approach)

- reorientation of the role of NGOs and other partners towards early childhood issues
- integrated development strategy between the health and education department for pre-primary education.

Bangladesh have achieved significant progress in terms of learner's enrollments, gender equity, reducing dropout etc. in public schools. However, the quality education is still far from standard. A general survey by PLAN in primary schools of Gazipur, Dinajpur, Nilphamari and Dhaka slum area revealed that the students of Class V did not achieve the competencies of Class II even, especially in English, Mathematics, science and language.

Experience from some NGO projects like BRAC, GSS, PLAN and have they own significant changes in learner's behaviour, learning style, interest to learn, better competencies and most importantly, the parents' cooperation. If the quality education is to focus for EFA, these models, in one or another way are to be investigated thoroughly for replication within the existing primary school structure.

much lower. Even though we find girl students in Vignarunnessa School are doing very well in SSC examinations, that does not tell you the whole story. The other side of the story is that there are no trained science teachers. Most of the secondary schools and primary schools do not have good English and Maths teachers. So that is one of the problems of primary education students who do not get the necessary orientation for numeracy which will help them learn at a secondary stage.

Incidentally, the recommendation to make primary school up to Class Eight has been there for the last 20 years. It has not been acted upon. This has been accepted, I understand, as a draft education policy, but this has not been made public.

There is a primary education report besides the national education committee report which was prepared by Late Dr. Al-Muti Sharifuddin, but that has also not been the light of the day. These recommendations are there, but the government has not acted on this. The reason possibly is science education is more resource oriented and the government is not willing to make commitment for more resources.



Muzaffar Ahmad

Then quality education. What makes quality education? Quality education is not made by the buildings. It is the quality of the teachers and the quality of the teaching materials. We do not have quality teaching materials. We do not have quality teacher training programmes and we do not have quality books. How can we ensure quality education? This is a problem. And we have to answer those questions, if we are serious about quality education.

Political commitment, national action plan. An education policy has been framed. It got the okay of the Cabinet, but it has not been allowed to be debated by the public. This is important. Since the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Education is here, I would request him that public hearing on national education policy should be held by the parliament, parliamentary committee and the people should be allowed to make deposition there before the national education policy is endorsed by the parliament.

The sixth plan is under formulation. What are they doing? They are commissioning certain individuals to write a chapter on education. That's not the way to frame plans. If you want to have plans, then you have this education sector input-output relationship with the other production sectors. This is not being considered. So this lateral incremental sort of way of planning is not giving us the right kind of output from the plan that we would like to get.

Sustainable education for poverty alleviation. This means that education needs to be related to income generating skills. None of the primary schools provide this. There is an issue, how do you integrate the poverty alleviating income earning opportunity with education? This issue has not been addressed. The only time in my memory this issue was raised and addressed was during the national school movement during the twenties. This is also addressed in the 1939 development plan developed by the Congress for the Indian development opportunities. This was considered even by Rabindranath Tagore when he thought about the Shanti Niketan approach to life and living. But nowhere in our plans we have integrated education with skill development. So that is something that needs to be addressed.

The World Bank study mentions that the returns to primary education, if someone completes five years, it is 18 per cent of the investment that is made. After that, in secondary education it drops to three per cent. In Higher Secondary Education it drops to two per cent. In the tertiary education, if you take out the professional education, it becomes negative. But our resource allocation does not take account of this. If primary education is giving us that much of return, and primary education is important for poverty alleviation, we need to augment our allocation in primary education. But look at the government budget. In 1981 it was 49 per cent. Today allocation to primary sector is 41 per cent. So relative allocation to primary education has gone down.

Civil society's role. I understand civil society differently from the NGOs. My feeling is that civil society here should mean the society that should own the school. And this ownership of the school when it was there, in my childhood days, we saw the schools performed. Now the school is owned by the government or the NGOs. The social ownership of the school is gone. So if the civil society has to play a role, it has to be social

ownership of these institutions. Neither the government nor the NGOs basically promote it. If you look at even the school management committee formation, I have seen school management committees where the head is a local thug belonging to the government party, who did not even have primary education, as Chairman of the school management committee. This type of practice should go.

Gender equality I touched, but again, in gender equality, macro figures hide a lot of micro disparities. These micro disparities need to be addressed. This is not only in terms of the place of living, parental education or parental income, but also in terms of skill formation and their opportunity to utilise their education in post-educational period.

The other issue is that the international community is very concerned about HIV/AIDS. In our country there is a programme for HIV/AIDS. A lot of money is going there and the government is accepting the programme. The best of my knowledge, it is not yet a big problem. It can become a big problem, but does it require a special programme? It probably could be a health and education programme. Health and hygiene is not properly stressed in education.

Educational resources should be equitably distributed. Look at the per capita expenditure or subsidy for the Laboratory school in Dhaka. The subsidy that is given to a primary school in a village. The reason is you have more qualified teachers, their salary is higher and that sort of people in the Laboratory School.

I was talking to the former Governor of Virginia, USA. He told me that in the early sixties he was given 10 computers and there were a lot of claimants for those. And then there were lobbies for the good schools to get those computers. He said, on equity grounds, I gave it to the most disadvantaged ones which were basically in black ghettos. He said that he was happy to see that those had changed the lifestyle of the ghetto people in Virginia.

Similarly, our resource allocation is influenced by the interest lobby who can get it. I think there is lot more resources given to universities than they should get. They should generate their own resources. So resource allocation, not only between sectors, but between the sub-sectors and between schools of different locations, need to be looked at and attention paid to the disadvantaged one. The government had adopted this policy. The ADB Secondary Education policy is like that. The ones that did not get government support over the last five years should get the priority in terms of the ADB-assisted programme. So the reverse of the allocation of resources in favour of the disadvantaged schools help them a lot. That is the capability, their standards can be maintained. That way, equitable education across the country could become a feasibility.

The next issue is professionalism of teachers. This is possibly at a discount. This needs social mobilisation, proper advocacy from the guardians. In fact, I am sorry to say guardians today want that their students should pass, get good numbers. They unfortunately no longer seek education. I am sorry to say, I had to tell my students, I take my allocated hours, three hours for a course, and I take six hour classes. I do not follow any textbook. I have to repeatedly tell my students that you have become so conditioned to textbooks that you do not want to look for knowledge in journals, periodicals, even in daily newspapers. There are a lot of news which have implications for macro-economic policy in Bangladesh. We can analyse this in the class. So seeking knowledge which professional teachers can help augment in students, that is the capability that the teachers have disowned because of the system, the way it has developed. So you need to develop professionalism among teachers. It's not just the primary or secondary sector.

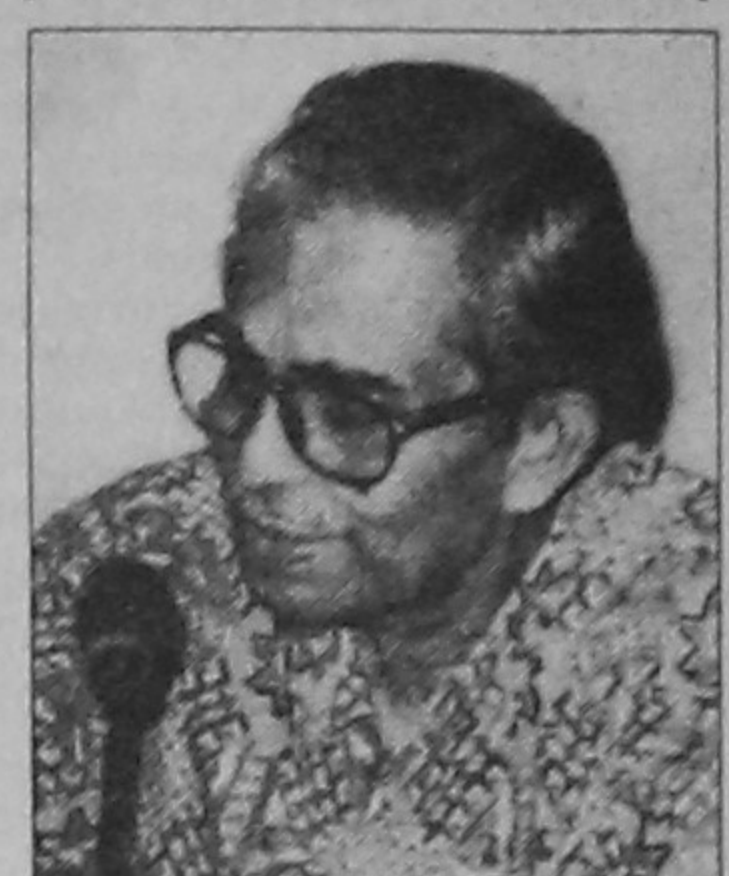
Information Communication Technology for EFA. I suggest that we develop report cards to be maintained by a community person for each school, not the school. I know from my research that the schools now maintain two or three books in terms of their attendance, in terms of their school registration, in terms of the money spent. In fact, the amount of expenses that are being talked about, the private expenses that the schools extract in the name of fees, in the name of private coaching is much higher than what is mentioned in the reports.

The external finance. The one worrying factor is the projection of population. World Bank's report says, the projection given by the current population, our primary schools will become surplus. I doubt this. That is something which we need to take into consideration.

I will complete my submission by saying that the contact hours with teachers have gone down. The teacher-student ratio has become unfavourable because of a change in the government policy. Earlier the government had two teachers for 60+ students. If there were 61 students, two teachers were given. Now the government has said that unless there are 120 students, they cannot claim another teacher. So teacher-student ratio has become very unfair. So if we are looking for quality, sustainability and all that, that is something which we need to look into. And we need to in-

crease the contact hours. On routine we have 400 contact hours, now it has increased a little bit, 450 according to the government reports. In primary schools, China has 1200 hours. So if we have that kind of difference we cannot expect the same kind of quality. So that is something which we need to take into consideration.

**Abu Hamid Latif, associated with IER & Institute of Primary & Non-Formal Education, Ashanullah University of Science & Technology:** ECCD, Early Childhood Care & Development. Following the Jomtien conference, we had a national plan of action in the Ministry



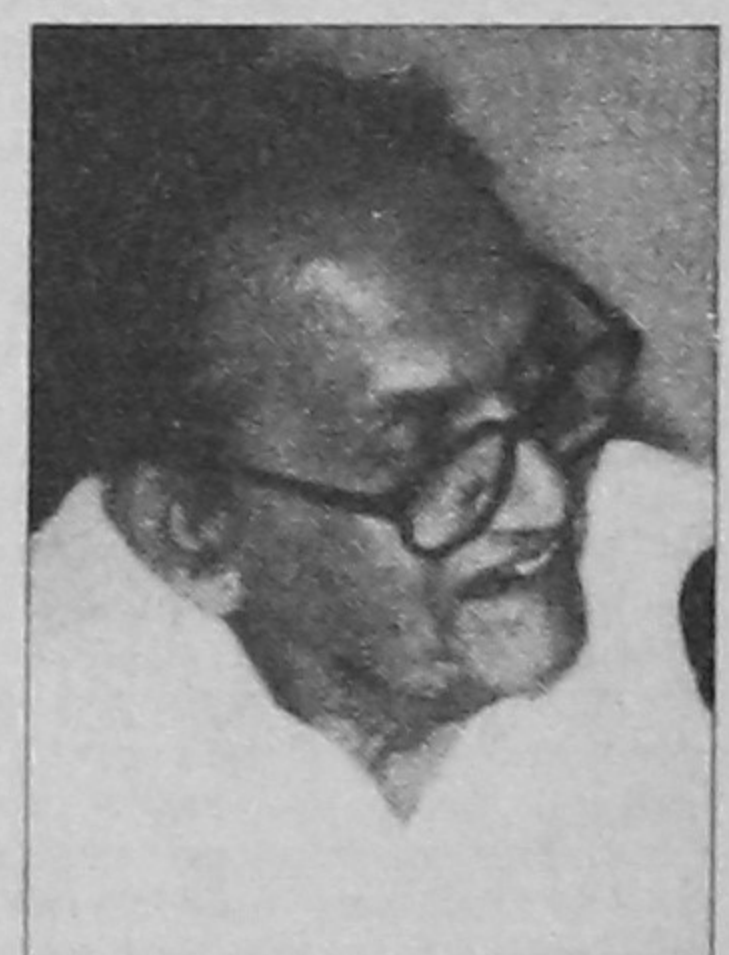
Abu Hamid Latif

of Education. In our country early childhood education sector is still neglected. If we want quality education then we have to give proper attention with concrete action plan. Minimum qualification of primary school teacher should be graduate. Teacher Training Programme of NGO should be improved. A special cadre of people should be created in education sector for ensuring quality education.

**Professor Shamsul Haque:** The time allocated for the national policy was three months but we took six months. After that we submitted the report. The day when we submitted the report, our Hon'ble Prime Minister was present. She was asking how could you do it in six months. We said, you have given only three months, we did it in six months, double the time. We really worked hard to produce it and I hope you will also give equal importance to it. She told me, yes, I will do that, but now almost that period is going to be over very soon, but it has not been given any importance. I don't know why.

**Mahfuz Anam:** When did you submit the report?

**Professor Shamsul Haque:** Long ago, more than three years ago. Gives you an indication of the importance given to it by the government. Whatever deliberation or discussion you have here or there, ultimately it goes to the government for implementation. If the government shows a cold shoulder, you don't know what benefit there is in this deliberations or formulation of the policy. I think it would have been better if this committee would see the Prime Minister and talk to her. That whatever we do, ultimately the government is to implement it. If the government doesn't take any notice of that or goes slow in implementing, things will not take shape ever nor can we make any progress. Anyway, I congratulate you for having this deliberation here and we have seen that many learned people are here and they have given their opinions. I do not know what more I can add.



Prof. M. Shamsul Haque

Primary education as it is now. If you go to the primary schools, sometimes you will not see any teacher in the class. If the teachers are not sincere, if they don't give education, what is the use of primary education, for that matter secondary or higher education? It is a teacher-based system. Teacher first, teacher in the middle, teacher in the last.

The government universities are not in a good shape either. There are always politics there. There are strikes or something or the other coming up. Out of 12 months, I don't think there are even three months education. I don't know in which direction the country is moving. I am a very aggrieved person. Whether we make any policy or not, the educational institutions, even the guardians' attitude is not favourable for education. This is my honest opinion. Unless guardians ask for it, unless students ask for it, the teachers will not do it, nor will the government do it. I therefore appeal to the guardians to come forward, to the students to come forward.

Student politics is one thing which is damaging the whole education system. No political party should have any student wing. This is my earnest appeal to this body. Students may go for politics, they may discuss politics, but they should not belong to any party. It is all right for students to discuss politics. They may be politicians later on. That's all right. They can discuss politics, the problems of the country. That is not

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