



Secondary education

A LONG WAY TO GO

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The impact of education or lack of it, is felt throughout a person's life. Education was declared a basic human right for all and protected in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948. Since then, it has been endorsed in different international human rights instruments. In 1990, efforts were boosted towards the right to education in the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) adopted by over 150 governments. In 2000, the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal reaffirmed this commitment and adopted the six EFA goals for up to 2015. Post-EFA and MDG, a comprehensive goal for education (Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote life-long learning) has been adopted under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the year 2030.

As signatory to different international commitments, Bangladesh has worked towards achieving education-related goals and targets. In 2010, the perspective plan for 2010-2021, titled Vision 2021, was adopted by the government. In it, education, amongst other issues, was strongly emphasised. It aims to provide quality primary and secondary education to every child and ensure that no child is left out by the education system on grounds of his/her family's income, gender, religion, ethnicity, or disabilities. Additionally, secondary schools would be established at every Upazila headquarter in phases and IT education would be made compulsory

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at secondary level by 2013. It also included measures to improve the training and quality of school teachers. Up till 2015, Bangladesh achieved considerable success in education, particularly in enrolment, gender parity, and the adoption of the 2010 Education Policy. At present, Bangladesh is working towards achieving the SDGs, and as part of it, the SDGs have already been aligned with the targets of 7th Five Year Plan (2016-2020).

There are three main educational systems in Bangladesh: (i) General Education System, (ii) Madrasa Education System, and (iii) Technical and Vocational Education System. The first two are divided into primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Secondary education in Bangladesh is divided into two major sub-levels: secondary education (grades 6-10, or 9-10 as prescribed in the 2010 Education Policy) and higher secondary education (grades 11-12).

An equivalent level of education is offered in madrasas. Dakhil offers the educational equivalent of secondary school. The government legally recognises this equivalence, and graduates from madrasas are given the same opportunity to continue schooling at higher levels. Secondary education terminates with a public examination leading to the Secondary School Certificate (SSC). Diversification of courses and curriculum is introduced at the beginning of secondary education (Grade 9) in both general schools and madrasas. Technical and vocational education is also available at the secondary and higher secondary levels in vocational and trade schools, as well as in business management institutes.

Secondary education is managed and administered by the Ministry of Education (MOE) which is concerned with policy formulation, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and execution of plans and programmes. This oversight also applies to technical and madrasa education. MoE works in association with the attached directorate and boards. The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), attached to MOE, is responsible for administration, management and control of post-primary, secondary and higher education (including madrasa and other special types of education). It is assisted by subordinate offices located at the division and district levels, and project offices at the Upazila level. The District Education



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Office is responsible for the academic supervision and regular inspection of secondary schools and madrasas, as well as the particular inspection of newly established schools. There is also a Upazila Secondary Education Office for the monitoring of stipend programmes for girls at secondary and higher secondary levels, academic supervision, and data collection of annual surveys conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS).

There are nine Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education for supervising SSC and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) level public examinations, and recognising private sector educational institutes; the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) administers the examinations and awards the certificates and diplomas. In secondary vocational education, certificate programmes of one or two years long are offered from grade 9, besides diploma programmes which require an SSC for admission. Diploma programmes are provided by polytechnics and technical schools and colleges.

The secondary education bodies have been managing a huge number of

schools (20,297 in 2015), where 243,117 teachers are providing education to nearly 10 million students. The growth in girls' enrolment is commendable. Girls now constitute 54 percent of secondary enrolment, outnumbering boys. But of the huge number of secondary schools, there are only 804 public management institutes. More than 96 percent are privately managed. The number of schools is on the rise, but classrooms continue to be overcrowded and school buildings unsafe and inadequate. In underserved areas, there are shortages of schools and classrooms. The government provides subsidies to 15,984 of the total privately managed schools.

The number of secondary schools by division reveals unequal distribution. Sylhet contains only 5 percent of all institutions, while Dhaka contains 27 percent. In regards to enrolment, Sylhet has 6.3 percent, while Dhaka has 31.17 percent. The 2015 Education Survey reveals that 85.38 percent of all institutions had electrical facilities. The number of institutions with computer facilities was 87.29 percent, while multimedia was available in 71.9 percent. It was reported that 60 percent of all institu-

tions offered computer education. This figure was 19 percent for junior schools, 64 percent for secondary schools and 96 percent for higher secondary institutions. On the contrary, it was found that only 59 percent of institutions had computer teachers in 2013, indicating that institutions offered computer education without having the relevant faculty.

Regardless, Bangladesh has made considerable progress in improving access to education at all levels. At the secondary level, the gross enrolment ratio rose to 72.78 percent in 2015 from 43.1 percent in 2001. In 2015, the net enrolment rate was 67 percent (for boys and girls together), while the gender parity index was at 108 percent. Efficiency parameters saw significant improvement. In 2015, the completion rate was 59.71 percent, compared to 58.06 in 2014. The dropout rate reduced to 40.29 percent in 2015 from 41.94 percent in 2014, and the survival rate went up to 69.24 percent in 2015 from 63.83 percent in 2014.

The gross enrolment ratio (GER) at the higher secondary level was 38.99 percent, while the NER was 28.25 percent in