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Transforming education: Five tasks

The ambitious aim of curriculum revision and new textbooks is to equip the new generation with relevant skills and competencies for the 21st century, weaning them away from memorizing guidebooks and relying on private tutors and coaching centers to pass tests without real learning.

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sector plan in 2020, which remains a hardly noticed document due to a lack of interest and ownership by the two ministries of education. The draft sits on the website of GPE, an international education funder based in Washington DC, as a document sent as a draft by the former Minister of Education, but cannot be found on the website of either of the Education Ministries even as a provisional draft.

Secondly, the divided jurisdiction of education, especially school education, between two ministries unlike in any other country, has become a major obstacle to adopting a holistic and comprehensive view of K-12 school education. Bangladesh has accepted for a long time the state obligation to ensure quality school education for all children up to class VIII. Now under SDG4, it is also pledge-bound to provide equitable and free secondary education of acceptable quality to all children by 2030. However, the turf battle between the two ministries has thwarted concerted action to achieve universal education up to class VIII and preparing a plan to move towards fulfilling the goal of universal secondary



ILLUSTRATION: REHNUMA PROSHOON



PHOTO: UCEP

education. The divided jurisdiction is also partly an impediment to resolute leadership for preparing an education sector plan.

Thirdly, under the Awami League government, in power since 2009, the National Education Policy 2010 was adopted and endorsed by the Parliament. However, a coordinated and comprehensive action plan and mechanism for its implementation have not been taken up by the government in the last 15 years. As a result,

not much progress has been made concerning major objectives of the policy, such as ensuring school education of acceptable quality for all children adhering to minimum common standards of facilities, teaching staff, and a core curriculum shared by all; major moves towards decentralization of education governance and management; and significant departures in teachers' professional preparation, standards, performance and adequacy of their numbers.

Recognizing the complexity and barriers that have to be overcome to realize these objectives, the 2010 policy recommended the formation of a permanent, statutory education commission to monitor, guide, and report on the nation's progress toward implementing the policy objectives. The decision-makers have remained averse to heeding this advice.

FRAGMENTED APPROACH TO REFORMS

The pattern of partial, reactive,

and fragmented approaches to problems is illustrated by the new curriculum and textbooks for school education being rolled out in 2022. The ambitious aim of curriculum revision and new textbooks is to equip the new generation with relevant skills and competencies for the 21st century, weaning them away from memorizing guidebooks and relying on private tutors and coaching centers to pass tests without real learning. Major changes are foreseen in classroom pedagogy

and student assessment.

Outcomes somewhat similar to the above were also promised when national public exams were introduced at the end of Classes 5 and 8 in 2009 and 2010, and when "creative questions" began to be used in all public exams. The objectives of the initiatives or the theoretical justification for the public examinations and the creative questions (structured questions based on Bloom's taxonomy of knowledge used in many countries) were not wrong.

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