

BUDGETARY ALLOCATION IN PRIMARY EDUCATION OF BANGLADESH: A RIGHT BASED ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Education stands out as the best cost-effective means increasing human capital, reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development. Universal primary education is likely to give developing countries the human capital boost necessary to bring large segments of the population out of poverty. This is why investing in primary education becomes the top priority to policy makers of many countries including Bangladesh. Bangladesh is facing gigantic challenges like variations in teacher student ratio, lack of qualified and trained teachers, variety in primary education systems, disparity and lack of coordination among primary educational institutions, which constrain the attainment of universal primary education and its effort to increase enrollments and quality education. Bangladesh, despite of being signatory state to international treaties and having national legislation, is yet to enforce right to education as fundamental right and there is no instrument to compel State to the full realization of right to primary education. Hence this article emphasises on increasing the financial allocation of primary education as a tool to reduce these challenges. Budget analysis through right based approach can examine this priority as it can help to quantify the steps that the State is taking to achieve progressively the full realization of the right to education.

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INTRODUCTION

Human rights mainstreaming necessitates integrating human rights throughout education policy-making and practice at all levels, from global to local (United Nation, 2001, Para. 201). Education for all is not only an end in itself but also a means for attaining all globally agreed commitments (Tomasevski, 2004, p. 14). RBA is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards (Robinson, 2006, p. 33). It uses thinking about human rights as the scaffolding of development policy (Overseas Development Institute, 1993). The RBA, in fact, emphasizes on the human development upon the full realization of human rights without any division among those rights and regarding this context RBA contains the explicit recognition of those rights, equality and non-discrimination among the right holder, in realizing the rights it specially focus on the vulnerable and marginalized population and on the participation and inclusion of the particular relevant right holder and to examine accountability and benchmark in RBA model by continuous monitoring. The budgetary procedures a government establishes to develop its country's education sector play an important role in the quality of education for the citizens of that country and thereby education can boost a nation's economy (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2009, p. 77). As resources are limited, human desires are not; available resources are divided among competing services (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2009, p. 21). Hence this article aims at scrutinising budget through right based approaches to identify how far the government, as a duty bearer is active in implementing international obligations arising out of treaties and conventions and education policies the government enunciated consistent to those obligation. Bangladesh ranks in the bottom tier on government spending for education internationally, and a majority of the cost of primary education is met by families. Right based indicators like accountability of ministry of Education and finance and other department concerned, implementation of principle of equality and non-discrimination as well as active participation of children at primary level irrespective of in budget processing have been discussed here. Government's commitment to international as well as constitutional obligations for progressive realization of right to education by prioritising it in budget allocation is analysed through another indicator, benchmark.

EXPLICIT RECOGNITION

The International Human Rights Framework:

The GoB has demonstrated commitment to education since independence by formulating relevant national policies and laws, and ratifying relevant conventions and declarations at regional and international level (UNISEF, 2012). Bangladesh is signatory to three key international instruments that guarantee the Right to Education – Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.

National Framework:

Primary education to all children is not guaranteed by the Constitution of Bangladesh. In Bangladesh it is the fundamental responsibility of the State to attain, through planned economic growth, a constant increase of productive forces and a steady improvement of living of the people, with a view to securing to its citizens the provision of education (The People's Republic Of Bangladesh, 1972), Art. 15(a)). This article does not denote that right to education is denied by the State rather it emphasis on the State to achieve it gradually upon achieving sustainable economic development and technical know how. Bangladesh, by introducing The Primary Education (Compulsory) Act 1990, is trying to realize the right to education ,specifically in primary level. The responsibility for regulating education is divided between the central and regional and/or local administration. Moreover, secular and religious law may apply in parallel, which create additional disparities between national education systems and international conventions on human rights, and this can particularly affect girls and women. India and Sri Lanka recognised right to education as constitutionally guaranteed free and compulsory education for all (Tomasevski, 2004, p. 15). Education policy (2010) says: “The process of nationalization of primary education should continue. The responsibility for primary education cannot be transferred to the private sector or NGOs.” The policy ambiguously agrees at the same time that a non-government organization or an individual can run primary schools subject to approval of authorities and state regulations (Government of Bangladesh, 2010: 4-5). To implement the Primary Education (Compulsory) Act 1990 and to co-ordinate, monitor and observe the progress of implementation of this Act at the field level, Compulsory Primary Education Implementation Unit is working.

Bangladesh has had three primary education development programs. PEDP II aims at obtaining six results, they are: learning outcomes; participation; regional and other disparities; decentralization; effective use of budget allocations, and programme planning and management (Directorate of Primary Education, 2014, p. 6). The compulsory education law, however, did not explicitly specify the roles and mechanisms of sharing responsibility between different kinds of education providers. The

new education policy 2010 adopts remarkably similar language and tone as of the 2000 commission, thus maintaining, as before, a degree of ambivalence in addressing the dilemma faced by the earlier policy formulating bodies. Key provisions in the 2010 policy relating to primary education are: free and compulsory primary education up to Grade VIII, Pre-school education for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, with emphasis on family and community-based programmes (Minamide & Oshikawa, 2012, p. 40).

ACCOUNTABILITY OF DUTY BEARERS: MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Children's issues most often alleged to receive less attention and are given low priority in the state budget. Ministry of Primary and Mass Education Bangladesh recognized the importance of primary and non-formal education in achieving education for all and eradicating illiteracy, the government has a full-fledged ministry, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MPME), which is responsible for policy formulation, planning, evaluation and execution of plans related to primary and non-formal education (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2009, pp. 83,84).

Two ministries are responsible for education in Bangladesh, one is the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2009, p. 33). The country's development budgets are elaborated on the basis of projects that have been approved in the Annual Development Plan by the Planning Commission, and for which funding has been secured. No specific indicators are used to monitor the implementation of the budget, except indicators for the follow up of specific projects (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2009, p. 39).

Monitoring:

The financial management units (FMU) within each of the two ministries of education are responsible for the Non-development budget. Internal monitoring is conducted by the head of the agency carrying out the project for the given Ministry of Education, while the Monitoring and Evaluation Division of the Ministry of Finance is responsible for external monitoring. PESP implementation, record-keeping and monitoring will be carried out at the upazilla level by the Upazilla Primary Education Officer (UPEO) and Assistant Upazilla Primary Education Officers (AUPEOs) (Karen, 2003, p. 6). Findings from budget monitoring conducted by community audit groups have been linked up to national level advocacy by Bangladesh's first parliamentary caucus on education which challenged the government about the share of GDP committed to education, and was successful in achieving a small but significant increase in education expenditure. Analysing budget gives CSOs or NGOs means to create effective advocacy strategies for holding the state accountable and

ensuring more effectiveness and transparency in the expenditures (Save the Children, 2010, p. 12).

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Children budget should reflect the principle of non-discrimination and promote inclusion of children with disabilities. Rural children are nearly twice as likely to be out of school as urban children (United Nations , 2015). Girls are still far more likely to drop out before completing primary education, have markedly worse experience in school, often characterized by violence, abuse and exploitation, and have scant chance of progressing to secondary school and tertiary education (Global Campaign for Education, 2012, p. 3). Other challenge include raising quality of education,giving priority to the most poorest and most disadvantaged groups,the world bank's \$US300 million commitment to the government's third primary education development programme,focuces on improving school quality and emphasises inclusion of the hardest-to-reach children from the most disadvantaged groups. Under Primary education (compulsory) Act 1990 policies, such as elimination of official school fees, the provision of text book free of charge are enunciated to ensure that no child is deprived of primary education (Karen, 2003, p. 4). Rate of poverty in family having illiterate household head are more than in family having less than primary level literate household head (Osmani & Latif, 2013, p. 18). The new Primary Education Stipend Program (PESP) targeted children from poor families throughout rural Bangladesh. The new Primary Education Stipend Project is designed to provide cash assistance through a stipend program to poor primary school pupils and their families throughout rural Bangladesh (Karen, 2003, pp. 4-6). The estimated 65,051 primary schools are eligible to participate in the PESP. The final project completion report for PEDP II concluded that, "due to the lack of institutional experience and capacity, opportunities for special needs, tribal and vulnerable children have not been created to the expected level".

PARTICIPATION

Bangladesh's budgeting processes are handled at high government levels and are strongly centralized. Lower administrative levels of the country's government play a very small role in budgeting activities (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2009, p. 39). At the same time, there has been a reluctance to take on the additional burden of direct financial and personnel management that the expansion of a fully government managed school system would impose on the government. Apparently, an acceptable compromise was to support the expansion of registered non-government schools and madrasas (Ahmed, 2011, p. 13). In Bangladesh the budget proposal is examined and discussed at a meeting of senior ministry officials and, following its approval, is sent to the Ministry of Finance for consideration. It is worth mentioning here that both ministries

of education face problems due to a lack of coordination. Bangladesh's budget nomenclature seems to reflect more a concern for control of the government's administrative structure and the nature of expenditure, than a concern for the programmes' contents and outputs. Following Parliament's vote, the Minister of Finance of Bangladesh sends the approved budget book to the Ministry of Education for allotment of funds to subordinate directorates or departments. After receiving their allotment orders, the concerned directorates or departments issue separate allotment orders to regional districts, offices and educational institutions. Several organizations are involved in monitoring, controlling, and auditing budget implementation (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2009, p. 66). Although ministries of education devote much of their time to preparing policy documents and the budget, their involvement in monitoring the implementation Education budgeting is marginal. This can cloud the overall vision of education, and hamper the meeting of priorities set in the budget (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2009, pp. 67-68). Budgets are not prepared on the basis of teacher-student ratios, but on the basis of staffing patterns for teaching and non-teaching staff at each level of education.

Children's Participation in Education Budgetting:

In Brazil, a civil society organization has generated first ever initiative to empower the young to intervene and participate in public policies through budgetary legislation. So children come together each year to take part in a debate on their municipality's budget distribution (Save the Children, 2010, p. 10). In South Africa, the Budget Information Service (BIS) began analyzing the allocation and use of public resources in South Africa .It advocated for a better allocation of resources and monitored yearly trends and improvements. Over the years, child budget analysis has been experimented in several countries across the world such as Vietnam (Save the Children, Sweden, 2000), Palestine (Secretariat for the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children, 2000), Suriname (Klein, 2008) and China (Hong & Xiaolin, 2010) etc. Most of them have focused on a sector (such as education, health) or a group of children (such as children with disabilities) etc. Such sort of steps are yet to be taken in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, national civil society organizations have sought to build the capacity of community audit groups to monitor the allocation of resources and to assist the government with decentralization and to hold it accountable for policy and budget commitments. (Save the Children, 2010, p. 12).

BENCHMARK AND PRESENT CHALLENGE FACED BY BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh the overall primary education budget is reasonably balanced across the main economic categories. In the current year, the allocation for textbooks grew notably, but this had little effect on the

overall input mix because this item accounts for a fairly small share of the total budget.

GAP BETWEEN GIRLS AND BOYS, AND RICH, URBAN AND RURAL PEOPLE

Household poverty is the single most important factor keeping children out of school. Children and adolescents from the poorest households are at least three times as likely to be out of school as their richest counterparts. Similarly rural children are nearly twice as likely to be out of school as urban children (United Nations , 2015).

Education budget and subsidies:

In Bangladesh education at any level depends heavily on subventions, subsidies, tax-exemptions and other forms of government/public. Due to this dependency on government revenues, education budgets cannot be regarded as independent of the government budget as a whole (comprising not only government department expenditure but also resources derived from taxes, loans, and various other generators of income) (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2009, pp. 30-31). Public expenditure management is strongly affected by either high outstanding foreign debts or grants provided to each country. In Bangladesh, public debts represented 48.3 per cent of GDP (2004), with foreign debt making up 29.5 per cent of GDP. A strong dependence on foreign aid for public expenditure creates uncertainty when planning for the medium term and preparing the budget. In addition, the Bangladesh government is approaching to sound and efficient management of its resources for the educational purpose gradually (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2009, p. 69). The annual public sector expenditure on education is 2.2 per cent of GDP (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2009, p. 79). On the other hand, whilst improving availability of girls' education will require investment, an analysis (Global Campaign for Education, 2012, p. 6) shows that there is no simple link between a country's income level and its performance so appropriate policies can successfully be implemented regardless of countries over all wealth.

CONCLUSION

As educational budget includes all the expenditures, from appointment of teachers to construction of new school buildings, providing new books to the enroll children and other stipends and tendencies; regarding this context the primary concern should be that the allotment on education from GDP ought to be increased. From the right based analysis of the budgetary allocation its understandable that there are various problems in the expenditure of the budget as the budget is allotted among the primary educational institutions through a centralized direction and process that vitiate the remote rural participation as right holder . This also shows there

is discrimination between rural and urban area . As enrollment in primary education is compulsory the government can ensure enrollment by the functioning of the compulsory primary education committee which composed of local people and the teachers of the institution but compelling government is not possible even the Primary Education (Compulsory) Act 1990 itself does not cover all the territory rather the territory government thinks fit time to time by gazette notification To ensure social inclusion and children participation in primary education sector we need in fact, a children budget system participated by the children and their guardians through consecutive discussion in every territory in the country and legal frame work regarding this context .

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