

The Role of Education and its Impact on Socio-Economic Development in Bangladesh: An Analytical Exercise

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Abstract

Education is considered to be the ultimate driving factor in the socio economic development of any country around the globe. Education is responsible for increasing labor efficiency, hence production. In addition, it influences social improvements, like higher living standards, lower fertility and birth rates and food security. In the recent past, Bangladesh has invested heavily in the education sector. However, despite the efforts of the government, Bangladesh has failed to foster the benefits from this sector because of some constraints. On the other hand, in an attempt to combat the constraints, several government and non-government initiatives have been undertaken. With an intention to discover the impact of education on the socio economic development of Bangladesh, this paper makes an attempt to delve into the educational structure of Bangladesh along with the challenges faced and actions needed in the education sector.

Keywords: Education, Productivity, Socio-Economic Development

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1. Introduction³

Education is considered a vital weapon to achieve socioeconomic development for any nation across the world. Being a driving factor, education can increase the efficiency of labor, which in turn, boosts the overall productivity of the country, aiding the country to take a further step towards attaining development. Recently, the world market has been characterized by changes in technology and production process for which it demands a malleable labor force. If any nation wants to adapt with such changes and process, it can be highly catalyzed by education. Education can also bring about social changes such as higher living standards, food security, lower birth rate, lower fertility rate and reduction in population. It is obvious that spending on education provides returns much like investing on fixed capital; therefore education can be considered analogous to investment.

Bangladesh is a relatively young democratic country, which got its independence in 1971. It is a developing country with a large supply of cheap unskilled labor. According to “Bangladesh Economy Profile 2010”, Bangladesh has a labor force of 72.35 million, the majority of which (45 percent) are involved in the agriculture sector, 35 percent are involved in industry and 25 percent earn a living from the services sector. The unemployment rate is 5.1 percent and about 40 percent of the labor force is underemployed. The literacy rate of the country is 47.5 percent but the government is taking substantial initiatives to improve this figure through increased budgetary allocation to the education sector. Despite praiseworthy efforts made by the government in the education sector, however, Bangladesh is yet to be able to convert its growing population into human resource. Bangladesh, with due effort, can definitely achieve high economic growth by increasing the productivity of its huge unskilled labor force through education.

Although some researchers have made attempts to examine the role of education towards economic development of Bangladesh, in our knowledge, very few studies have so far focused on the socio economic context of education in the country. Having focused on the current educational condition in Bangladesh, this study makes an attempt to critically analyze the role that education can play in the country’s socio-economic development.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents a review of the available literature. Section 3 discusses the relationship between education and socio economic development in general. The national education system in

³ All the information provided in this section has been compiled from BANBEIS and Bangladesh Economy profile 2010.

Bangladesh is discussed in Section 4. Major policy recommendations appear in Section 5. Some concluding observations are made in the sixth and final section.

2. Literature Review

On 2nd January 1999, while addressing a group of educationists in New Delhi, the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen stated that “elementary education is a central component of any kind of economic development, and economic powers, such as Japan had high levels of education before they advanced towards industrial development” (Rahman, Kabir & Alam, 2005).

Card (2001) and Heckman (1974, 1996, 2003) said that years of schooling had an increasing effect on the earnings of the individuals and that there was a positive marginal benefit between the ages of 6 – 11 years, which was incidentally the appropriate age group for primary education.

In a recent report at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) used economic modeling to associate cognitive skills to economic growth. It found that a small enhancement in cognitive abilities could have considerable impacts on the future of a country’s economy. The report argues that in order to make long term investment in economic health, countries are required to improve the quality of their education. The study also states that if all the 30 countries improve their average PISA scores by 25 points in the next 20 years, there would be a total gain of \$ 115 trillion in GDP over the lifetime of the generation born in 2010. In 1997, the Paris-based OECD initiated the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). After every 3 years, PISA holds a competition for 15 year olds from countries around the world. Here, they are tested to find out the performance of their educational system on the basis of results achieved by the students.

Asadullah M. Niaz (2005) used an adaptation of the Mincer-Beckerian model (See Appendix) and found that the returns to education in Bangladesh were 7.1 percent. The model controlled for the effects of unearned income, gender and marital status and also delved into the differences created due to employment in private vs. public sectors. It also looked into the wage gap due to gender and rural vs. urban employment. In addition, the study included an experiment controlling for family background for a sub sample. It was found that the effect of maternal education was not quite noteworthy. However, spousal education in wage regression was highly significant. He also mentioned that in Bangladesh a large part of the labor force was employed in the informal sector, thus creating biased samples and leading to estimates which did not correctly reveal the average returns to education.

Hanushek and Wobmann (2007), on the contrary, questions the acceptability of the estimates derived from Mincerian models. In their study, they attempt to show that quality of education is a far more important factor of economic growth in comparison to the number of educational institutions. They imply that returns to quality may be larger in developing countries than the developed countries. The study analyzes the effect of attainment of cognitive skills (measured as standardized test scores) on earnings. The authors admit that the measurement of quality is a major obstacle and there are substantial errors which lead to downward biases in estimated coefficients.

Francesco Burchi (2006) states the instrumental role of education can be seen in two different ways; i) economic production and ii) social change. The author argues that education is a fundamental factor for achieving food security for rural populations in developing countries and that basic education improves the ability of individuals to live a respectable life and to evade hunger traps. The study examines theoretical as well as empirical causalities between education and food security. It also includes a cross section model that shows the impact of education on household food insecurity. The model expresses education by school attendance rate and food insecurity by a combination of adequate survival status, adequate nutrition status and food adequacy and female malnutrition. The study shows that there exists a high linear correlation between food insecurity and basic education which tends to decrease for advanced education and is statistically insignificant for higher education. Burchi (2006) further states that increasing children school attendance rate by 100% may reduce food insecurity by a whopping 19%, thus creating a better, nourished world for all to live in.

Islam and Nesa (2009) focus on the role of education on fertility reduction in Bangladesh. The authors suggest that fertility declines with women's education and that the relation also holds even after controlling the factors like place of residence, region and household wealth status. The paper also states that length of education is related to the start of one's reproductive life, child bearing and use of birth control and therefore women with better education show lower fertility. This is backed by a finding of the study which shows that the Total Fertility Rates (TFR) of urban dwelling, secondary educated, rich women were close to replacement level. In addition, it is observed that the level of fertility gradually declines with the increase in the level of education, which undoubtedly implies that there exists an inverse relation between women's education and fertility in Bangladesh.

3. The Relationship between Education and Socio-economic Growth

An educated population contributes more to economic growth. In this creative, competitive and innovative world, there is no substitute for education to enhance the economic scenario of a country. Specialized knowledge and technical skills lead to enhanced level of production and higher income. However, the effects of education are not limited to economic gains only. Education not only enables people to become better parents, voters and citizens but also creates better human beings. Education can also play an important role in changing the quality of human life, like reducing poverty, increasing social networks and understanding and abiding social rules.

Education, undoubtedly, enhances worker productivity and skills which ensures higher production in the economy. Skilled workers are more literate and numerate and capable of doing more complex tasks. They are easy to train and are more punctual and dependable. Moreover, highly educated individuals imply greater number of scientists, analysts, technicians and inventors who can increase the stock of human knowledge through development of new procedures and technologies. Different studies show that countries with higher levels of economic growth have labor forces with higher educational attainments. According to the report of “Investment in Education on Private and Public Returns” (2000), over the period of 1915 – 1999, in USA, the growth in education caused an estimated 10 percent growth in GDP.

Higher education is also responsible for higher income. The amount of education of an individual has an important impact on labor market experience. Education increases the productivity of an individual and hence earnings. Increased education means that an individual has higher capability to absorb new information and skills and can familiarize with new technologies rather easily. By having higher levels of education, a worker increases his/her human capital and is thus able to improve not only his/her own productivity but also of the other capitals s/he uses. Therefore, highly educated workers are paid an increased wage premium compared to the less educated workers.

In addition, level of education can influence the quality of employment. Jacob Mincer (1993) stated that educated workers have three advantages over their less educated competitors: i) Higher wages, ii) Greater employment stability, and iii) greater upward mobility in income.

Higher levels of education increases labor force participation and decreases probability of unemployment and job turnover. Higher educated workers have

higher wage, hence they provide more working hours to obtain more income and thereby get primary preference. "Investment in Education: Private and Public Returns" (2000) further shows that possession of a college degree in 1993 in USA increased the chances of having a job by 23% over high school graduates. Today, men with lower level of education are less likely to hold on to a job than they were 20 years ago. Educated workers have also been found to have better health. Owing to their knowledge about diseases, higher earning and employer provided healthcare, they are able to dispose more on treatment and check ups. A second reason for better health is that these workers, drawing a large amount of money from their workstations, prefer preventative measures against diseases to falling ill and losing out on income.

The never ending demand of the world's massive population is creating stress on our mother Earth. Population growth has become the name of a formidable adversary for many countries. Education plays a major role in reducing fertility, and hence, population. Female education increases the age at first marriage, decreasing the number of years devoted to child bearing. Increase in education also decreases the dependence of parents on their children for support at old age. So the demand for children decreases. Educated parents want their children to be qualified as well. This aspiration leads them to arrange for higher education of the children. Therefore the cost of upbringing of a child increases and so demand for more children decreases. Highly educated women are usually paid employed and mostly have to work outside home. An educated woman takes into consideration the loss of income she will incur due to having more children and thus the demand of children decreases still. Additionally, having children narrows down the freedom of individuals to go for better job opportunities and since the opportunity cost of children is high, couples settle for fewer children. Besides, educated couples are more informed about contraceptives, which play a vital role in reducing fertility.

Milton Friedman (1964) says that a stable and democratic society is impossible without a minimum degree of literacy and knowledge on the part of the citizens and without widespread acceptance of some common set of values. Education can contribute to both. So, education creates a better society for people to live in.

4. The Education Scenario in Bangladesh

The development of a country depends on the nature and quality of implemented educational policies of that country. Bangladesh is a developing country with a throbbing population of an estimated 16 million (Source: UN data). One and the

most effective way of fostering this enormous resource of human capital into a weapon to achieve economic growth is to educate the mass population. Increasing educational attainments of an individual enhances the human capital, thus an educated labor force can be a driving factor for Bangladesh's economy. Therefore, an effective education system can help us to move up from current economic condition.

4.1 Current Education System in Bangladesh⁴

The education system in Bangladesh is categorized into four parts:

I. General education

Primary education

It is the preliminary level of education and comprises of 5 years of formal schooling (class/ grades I - V). At this level, education usually begins at 6+ years of age up to 11 years. This stage is mandatory, free and universal. Moreover, 40% of the enrolled students (lower income group) are granted stipend at a rate of Tk. 100(1.52 US\$) per month per student in order to ensure the enrollment of all school age children. Primary education is commonly conveyed at primary schools. There are around 82,218 primary schools of which 37,672 are run in public sector. The others are at private, NGO and community level. A total of 365,929 (41.8% Female) teaching staffs serve in these types of schools. Female graduates are encouraged to serve in primary level of education. A total of 16001605 students were enrolled in the primary schools in 2008, 50.51% of which were female students. The gross enrollment rate in primary schools is 97.6%.

Secondary Education

On completion of the primary education, students are admitted to the second level of education, the secondary education. It is comprised of 7 (3+2+2) years of formal schooling. The first 3 years (grades VI-VIII) are referred to as junior secondary; the following 2 years (grades IX -X) as secondary and the last 2 years (grades XI - XII) as higher secondary. There are around 18,756 secondary level schools for about 6,819,748 (53.69% female) students in Bangladesh, of which, 317 are run in the public sector and the others in the private sector. 209496 teachers, of whom, 22.33% are female, are serving in secondary level schools.

⁴ All data in this section have been compiled from an article by Fazle Kabir titled "Growth Strategies for Secondary Education: Interface between Government and Non-Government initiatives in Bangladesh" and BANBEIS.

However, the gross enrolment rate drops down to 39.67% for the secondary level. The drop out rate at this level in 2007 amounted to a staggering 62.45%, and 66.16% for males and females, respectively. For grade XI-XII, there are 1185 institutions, of which, only 11 are public and the rest are private. 21,032 teachers are devoted to instruct a total of 210,026 students.

In 2008, around 8,796,201 students reached the 5th grade. Surprisingly though, only 6,819,748 students were enrolled in secondary schools. Sadly, 22.5% of the students were lost from the stream of education.

Tertiary Education

This is the third stage of general education. It consists of 2-6 years of formal schooling. Having influenced by lack of employment with low levels of education and attracted by high rates of return (over 10% annually), about 3 out of 4 students passing the higher secondary certificate examination, continue on some form of higher education. The minimum requirement for admission to higher education is the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC). HSC holders can enroll in 3-year degree pass courses. While for honors, they may enroll in 4-year bachelors' degree honors courses in degree level colleges or in the universities. After successful completion of a pass/honors bachelors' degree course, an individual can enroll in the master's degree course. Master degree courses are of one year for honors bachelor degree holders and 2 years for pass bachelor degree holders. For those aspiring to take up M.Phil and Ph.D courses in selected disciplines or areas of specialization, the duration is of 2 years for M.Phil and 3-4 years for Ph.Ds after the successful completion of master's degree. Higher education is being offered in the universities and post HSC level colleges and institutes of diversified studies in professional, technical, technological and other special types of education.

II. Madrasah education

This is the parallel system of formal religious education for Muslim students. It was introduced in 1780 with the establishment of Calcutta Madrasah. For Madrasah education, Ebtedayee, Dakhil, Alim, Fazil and Kamil are the equivalent to primary, secondary, higher secondary, bachelors' and masters' levels, respectively.

III. Technical – Vocational education

Students who do not prefer academic education might find technical-vocational programs to be more appropriate and useful for their future career. The government tries its best to ensure that the course prospectus is relevant to the students' interest and aspirations, while at the same time, it fulfils the requirements of the job market.

This form of education is relatively small in Bangladesh, receiving only 6.5% of the education sector budget. Only about 40,000 students in total are enrolled at both certificate and diploma levels. At the present, there are 24 polytechnic institutes in the public and 87 in the private sector, all of which provide diplomas in various departments of the technical and engineering sector. Good models for skills training are also provided by some NGOs.

IV. Non-Formal Education in Bangladesh

Non Formal Education (NFE) in Bangladesh is monitored and supervised by the Bureau of Non- formal Education (BNFE). NFE is an organized form of learning that usually takes place outside the formal educational institutions. It is an extremely important sector for Bangladesh simply due to the country's enormous population and high illiteracy rate. NFE provides a second chance for the dropout and un-enrolled children, adolescents and also illiterate adults to enter into the mainstream education. Generally, the sector consists of disadvantaged people. NFE provides basic education, life skill training, functional literacy and awareness building that helps the underprivileged in employment sectors and thus helps them improve their social and economic condition.

4.2 Government Initiatives in the Education Sector in Bangladesh

Even though the 70's and the 80's saw little progress in the growth of the primary education sector of Bangladesh, the education programs improved dramatically in the latter half of the 90's. The renewed dedication was mainly catalyzed by the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA), where all participating nations were encouraged to expand their vision to meet goals in the education sector, particularly the goal of making primary education universal. The Government of Bangladesh made five year primary education program free in all government schools and also declared education for girls in rural areas free till 8th grade in the Compulsory Primary Education Act in 1993.

The Government-funded Food for Education Program was commenced in 1993 in order to compensate the opportunity cost of the poor parents because they would have to pay for sending their children to school. This program successfully increased enrolment and attendance in schools and reduced child labor. From the financial year 2002-2003, the Food for Education Programme was replaced by another program that produced cash support to school going children. In this program, parents received a stipend of Tk.100 for each child who was admitted to school.

The Government introduced the six-year Primary Education Development Program in 2003, supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and 10 other

development partners. The objective of the program is to make sure that each child has access to minimum acceptable standard of primary education. The program attempts to increase access, attendance and completion of primary education, improve the standards of education by the introduction of Primary School Quality Level Standards and to take up an approach which is child centered. The project has undergone 81.38% financial and 81.63% physical progress. In July 2008, the second phase of the 5 year Primary Education Stipend Project was initiated. The project aims at increasing the enrolment rate, increasing the attendance, reducing the dropout rate, establishing equity in the financial assistance to children and enhancing the quality of primary education. Until November 2010, the project achieved 31.4% financial and 46% physical progress.

In 2004, the government launched a six-year project named Reaching Out-of-School Children. Annual allowances, ranging from Tk 800 for those students in Grades 1 to 3, to Tk. 970 for Grades 4 to 5, are paid to children. Some 11,000 learning centers have been established in partnership with NGOs which serve more than 300000 children. The project targets the neediest communities, which includes landless people, families of widowed women, day laborers, underprivileged marginal groups by occupation (e.g. fishermen, artisans, blacksmiths, and cobblers), socially deprived groups, ethnic minorities, children of floating populations (who live for less than one year in a particular place) etc.

The Government has created Non-Government Teachers Registration and Certification Authority (NTRCA) through an Act of the Parliament in February, 2005, to ensure the recruitment of well qualified and competent teachers at non-government secondary schools, colleges and madrasahs. The education institutions must recruit their teachers from the pool of registered teachers, meticulously tested by the NTRCA.

From January 2006, a new approach had been taken in the curriculum for grade 9-10. The new curriculum prepares students for the challenges of the 21st century by including seven compulsory subjects (Bangla, English, Mathematics, General Science, Social Science, Business Studies, and Religious Studies) and an optional subject from ICT, Agriculture or Home Economics.

By enacting the Retirement Benefit Act, 2002, the Government has met the demand for pension benefits of teachers and employees of non-government education institutions. As a result, quality teachers have been highly motivated to take up teaching in non-government institutions, improving the quality of education.

4.3 The role of NGOs in the Education Sector of Bangladesh

Non-government organizations or NGOs have played a major role in the education sector of Bangladesh by enhancing the socioeconomic transformation of the country. Since 1971, the active role of NGOs in the education sectors has slowly, but steadily, increased. Recently, there are well above 400 NGOs in collaboration with the donors providing basic education to the poor and unreached population of Bangladesh. Even though the number of NGOs involved in catering education is quite high, the type of Non-formal primary education (NFPE) is similar. Most NGOs provide 3-4 years of schooling for basic education. However, NGOs like Friends in Village Development (FIVDB) and Gonoshahajjo Sangstha (GSS) offer five years of primary education. Approximately 4-8 percent of the primary school aged children in the country receive non-formal primary education at NGO programs.

Government of Bangladesh has recognized the NGOs for their extensive involvement in the field of education and has even handed over certain non-functioning government schools to some of the leading national NGOs like BRAC. According to Sharafuddin (1998), some of the education programs undertaken by different NGOs are:

GSS Primary Education Program: This program has been initiated by the Gono Shahajjo Shangstha (GSS). Children unable to be admitted to formal primary schools are enrolled here. The children are taught up to grade 3, which is now being extended to grade 5. Classes are usually held in brick schoolhouses built by GSS.

BRAC Non-Formal Primary Education Program: This program has been developed by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). This caters to children 8-10 years of age who were unable to be admitted to formal primary schools. Hence, the pupils are older children who never attended school. The program covers grades 1-3.

CMES Technology School: The Centre for Mass Education in Science (CMES) is a science and technology oriented NGO and has initiated this program. The students are offered general education. Then in grades 4-5, some science lessons are included in the syllabus which covers environment, popular science and technology. The aim is to make people aware of the importance of scientific education in real life.

Dhaka Ahsania Mission Alternative Primary School Programme: The target groups are children within the age group of 6-8. The 27 month course consists of

3 grades, each of which takes up 9 months. The school premises are provided by the local community.

UCEP School: The Under-privileged Children's Education Program (UECP) school is a specialized program intended for the working children between the age group of 6-14 years. The program is a mixture of general and technical education and has duration of 7 years.

Terre Des Hommes (TDH) Street Children Program: The target group of this program is children aged 8-10 years, working at railway stations, bus and launch terminals. These children are grouped under railway station sheds or bus or launch terminals with the help of local authorities, including the police. BRAC curriculum and materials are used.

NGO-run schools perform better than rural government schools. This is because NGOs focus on building schools in isolated corners of the country in an attempt to spread the light of education throughout. NGOs carry out community based education, often reaching out to the ethnic minorities. NGOs also offer incentives for students coming to school. Cultural and sporting events are held and, occasionally, food is also offered in order to boost attendance.

Observations of the Study

With a net enrolment rate of approximately 90%, Bangladesh is one of the few developing countries which is nearing the U.N Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of achieving 100% enrolment in primary schools by 2015. However, even after taking a number of significant initiatives and reaching remarkable successes in many of the implemented projects, there are yet many drawbacks that need to be addressed. At least 15% of the primary school age children are not enrolled in schools. This amount, combined with the 25% primary school dropout rate implies that around 40% of Bangladeshi children do not receive a complete primary education. However, some of the drawbacks are mentioned below.

Low spending on education: Government spending on education in Bangladesh is 2.3% of GDP, which is the lowest in South Asia and is also lower than the regional average of 3.5%. Even though primary government schools are free for all, the hidden costs of uniforms and supply may add up to a fairly large amount at the end of the year. Also, a large portion of money has to be spent in order to hire private tutors to assist the students in completing their assigned home tasks. The cost may make education too expensive for many poor families.

Quality differences: Difference in the quality of education is a big problem faced by Bangladesh. Most importantly, significant quality difference is visible between the government-run schools and the NGO-run schools.

Lack of access to education: Government schools are usually concentrated at urban centers. Majority of the people in Bangladesh dwell in rural areas. Due to the concentration of schools in urban areas and also due to the lack of schools in the outskirts, many children are deprived of their right to education. Since many schools are too far, parents are discouraged to send their children to school.

Gender inequity: Due to low achievement rates in primary level, the enrollment of girls in secondary level is remarkably low. Girls are more prone to getting dropped out of secondary school than boys and their achievement scores are considerably lower.

Gender discrimination: The act of considering women as inferior beings is deeply embedded in the context of Bangladesh. Many families deprive their daughters from going to schools simply because they think girls have no need for education. Child marriage is a common practice in Bangladesh and many young girls get married against their will, eradicating any chance of their education. Although gender parity has been somewhat attained in the context of enrollment in primary level, the attendance of female students remains low as many girls are kept back at home to do household works.

Urban poverty and child labor: Urban poverty has been ignored over the past years by the government and has also gone quite unnoticed by the NGOs. This is mainly because the rural population has always been much larger than the urban population and the lion share of the educationally deprived children have dwelled in the rural areas. Even though the enrollment rate in the cities is much higher, it is because the cities are the dwelling places of the rich and the middle class citizen. Enrollment of urban poor in schools is very low. One major reason is that 40% of the population live below the poverty line, unable to meet their basic needs. Therefore, they have no option other than to turn to their children for income. Due to this reliance of the family on their income, many child laborers naturally find the opportunity cost of losing a day's earning too expensive to attend a day of school.

Inadequate school facilities: Many schools face constraints in terms of basic necessities like textbooks, blackboards and working toilets. The pupil-tutor ratio is very high in Bangladesh, that of 63:1. Small, unclean, stuffy classrooms cannot accommodate all the students. This coupled with the low tutor-pupil ratio,

deprives students from proper attention of the teachers and acts as a contributing factor to higher rates of absenteeism. Almost half of the schools have no playgrounds, and proper mental growth of children is hindered.

Curriculum: The textbooks supplied in government schools often fail to grip the student's attention and interest. In most of the cases, the contents are considered irrelevant to their lives. Government schools also lack in extra curricular activities.

Teacher training and supervision: To teach at a government school in Bangladesh, teachers are required to attend a yearlong training at a Primary Teacher Institute (PTI). Yet, teachers seldom make use of the knowledge obtained from the course and there is almost no supervision and very few refresher training sessions.

5. Policy Recommendations

In order to create skilled labor force out of the huge population, education has no alternative. Quality education has to be ensured to enhance the human capital. Certain measures need to be taken in order to improve the education system of Bangladesh, which in recent times have managed to obtain the attention of the Government.

The share of education in the budget should be increased in order to attract quality tutors into the profession by offering handsome salary packages as well as other incentives. School buildings, class rooms and working toilets could be maintained and looked after properly. In addition, teachers might be trained continuously and kept up to date with modern teaching methods.

Provisions for mid-day meals can be made in order to attract the poorer students to attend school. Some NGOs are already providing mid-day meal and so they can be consulted for advice.

A unified education system should be introduced. That is, all schools should have common curriculum, facility and goals in order to ensure quality education. Thereby, if the school is in an isolated corner of Bangladesh or in the heart of Dhaka city does not matter; all students will learn exactly the same lessons.

A highly centralized system like that of the education system of Bangladesh, fails to respond to local needs effectively. The government may decentralize the system, making the district responsible for planning and management in order to provide better support and supervision to the education system.

It has been seen in the recent past that a change in Government brings about a change in the syllabus. This should be thoroughly discouraged. The education quality should be improved only on the basis of learning skills and not on the basis of political influence. It is also important that teachers are hired on the basis of their capability and not how well connected one is.

Female participation in all sectors of education should be encouraged. Better transports for female students, better environment at schools and drastic actions against eve teasing should be taken in order to provide a suitable atmosphere for female students to attend school.

More efforts should be made to reach out and provide non-formal education to the numerous underprivileged children who either get dropped out of education or who can never enter the education stream. Night schools may be created in cities to cater education to the urban poor children.

Advanced technical and vocational education should be provided for those students who are incapable of doing general education and the curriculum should be up to date to teach them what they will require in the professional life.

6. Conclusion

Education is a human right. It has been responsible for improving social and economic conditions of nations through developing human capital, increasing human productivity, increasing income and reducing unemployment as well as by reducing fertility rate, thus reducing population growth, increasing female awareness, reducing crime, poverty and improving the health of individuals. Bangladesh has an enormous resource waiting to be turned into a priceless asset – its population. Educating the population will boost Bangladesh's productivity manyfold and hence the nation will race forward towards achieving economic feats. The education system of Bangladesh has had dramatic improvements in the last few years. The net enrollment rate in primary level has exceeded 90% and is soon reaching the Millennium Development Goal of 100%. The female enrolment in education sectors has also risen sharply and the percentage of female teachers has been gradually increasing. However, the attainments are being held back by certain offsetting factors like lack of access to education, high pupil-tutor ratio, low salary packages of teachers etc. Although steady growth in GDP as well as growth in educational attainments of children may suggest a positive relation between education and growth of the country, further empirical research is needed on this topic in order to draw any policy conclusions.

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